

**Minutes**  
**Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission**  
**February 7, 2011**  
**Great Barrington Fire Station (Conference Room 6)**

ATTENDING: Marilyn Bisiewicz, Don Howe, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, David Rutstein; Guest: Mary Beth Merritt, Great Barrington Agricultural Commission

REVISED MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

- Approved by the committee

RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

- Paul approached Mike Fitzpatrick who declined.
- The Commission will continue its informal search for a new person in order to reach the authorized level of seven members.

BROADBAND REQUEST TO HISTORICAL COMMISSION

- In response to Bob O'Haver's request to provide Mass Broadband with a list of what the Historical Commission specifically needs to make an informed decision about any impact of their installation on the Town's historic fabric, Paul will ask him via e-mail for the exact route, a description of the equipment and where it will be set up.

ANNUAL REPORT

- Members approved the draft of the report which Paul will transmit to the Selectmen's office.

HOUSATONIC VILLAGE REVITALIZATION PROJECT

- The Historical Commission supports the economic development of Housatonic in the context of sensitive and sustainable rehabilitation and reuse of its historic assets. The Commission agreed it needs to comment on proposals for the proposed Economic Overlay District but only in response to the presentation of specific options and plans.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION FY12 BUDGET

- The draft Town Budget for FY12 allocates \$150 for office supplies and \$500 for restoration supplies.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION COLLECTIONS

- Gary will confer with the Historical Society about their recommendations for specific goals and objectives for the use of any Commission funds to help care for the Town's collections.
- The Commission also needs to determine if the Town insures the collections. Paul will make this query to Laurin Sartori after we have a copy of the inventory and can accurately describe the contents of the collection. Gary will bring a copy of the inventory to the next meeting. An accurate appraisal is needed for an insurance policy.
- The inventory needs to be digitized.
- The Massachusetts Historical Commission needs to be consulted about this whole issue, especially if we can legally transfer ownership to the Historical Society.
- Town Librarian Anne Just informed Paul that the Historical Commission and Society need to remove their collections from the upstairs storage areas in the Ramsdell Library so the space can be renovated for public meeting space. Perhaps the Housatonic School can be designated as an alternative storage site. Gary noted that this action isn't imminent.

HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

Paul summarized a February 11 telecon with Karen Davis, the MHC National Register contact person.

- Existing Survey Needs to Be Updated: The existing survey is very old and outdated and should be updated or redone entirely, along with taking current digital photos of the buildings. The survey should be completed by a

professional architectural historian who has the knowledge of architectural styles and history to make sound judgments for the survey, as well as recommendations for priority order of National Register nominations. Because there are such stringent documentation standards for NR nomination forms, the preferred course of action is to hire a professional. Otherwise, the forms are bounced back and forth between the local Historical Commission and MHC with requests for clarifications, more information, etc. Using a professional makes the survey project more efficient and timely.

- Funding: There are Survey and Planning Grants that we can apply for to help fund this work. The grants come in cycles and we're not in one now. MHC has funds for completing NR nomination forms; some of it is discretionary and can be given outright.
- Existing Hard Copies of Original Survey: MHC has copies of the original survey and we can visit them and use their Xerox machine to make copies. They would probably waive or reduce the .30/page charge. While we're there, we should also make copies of all NR forms, and everything else as well, such as Historic District material.

#### POTENTIAL PROGRAM PLANS FOR FY12

- Historic Resources Inventory: since the inventory is a master database of all the Commission is charged with protecting, a crucial priority is the project to update the survey.
- Town Master Plan: should include recommendations for preservation measures. As a member of the committee, Paul will be a part of the group that confers with local historical and cultural organizations. Perhaps ideas for joint projects with some of these groups will emerge from these discussions.
- Salvage Archaeology Projects: the Commission needs to urge the Selectmen to adopt the policy of granting Commission access to construction sites in historically and archaeologically sensitive areas to document, survey and retrieve artifacts that could help illuminate local history. Perhaps some sort of presentation to the Selectmen would be an approach to consider.

#### "KEEP FARMING" INITIATIVE

- Mary Beth Merritt, Chairman of the Great Barrington Agricultural Commission, described the "Keep Farming" initiative. The program helps develop our community character through advocating the importance of agriculture to the town's economy, open space preservation and tourism interests. "Keep Farming" achieves its goals through a three-phased process. Important throughout is talking with farmers and the parties who buy and sell agricultural products. The program also focuses on the positive aesthetics that farms contribute as well as the history and traditions of local agriculture.
- The Agricultural Commission is holding meeting on March 16 at which her committee will assess the town's interest in becoming an agricultural community. She encouraged members of the Historical Commission to attend and determine if there are any mutual interests that could be explored.
- Paul thanked Mary Beth for her presentation and acknowledged the great benefits that agriculture brings to Great Barrington culture.

#### HOUSATONIC RIVER SKELETON LETTER

- Gary reported that Chief Walsh had not yet responded to his query.

#### NEXT MEETING DATE

- Monday, May 16 at 7:00 p.m.