

Minutes  
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission  
October 1, 2012  
Great Barrington Town Hall, Selectmen's Meeting Room

ATTENDING: Marilyn Bisiewicz, Malcolm Fick, Don Howe, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, Bill Nappo

MINUTES OF AUGUST 6, 2012:

- The minutes were accepted unanimously.

NATIONAL REGISTER ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH: POTENTIAL INTERN PROJECT

- To maintain currency and completeness of architectural and landscape architectural histories of NR-eligible structures, Don proposed designing an intern project with the purpose of both encouraging interest and instructing owners to research and document their properties and assemble pertinent material as a resource for the preparation of NR survey and nomination forms.
- The goals would include documenting both historical information and recent work on the property (at a minimum, photographs of projects, particularly of those that post-date placement on the NR or assignment of historic district status); supplementing the work of HC members; preparation of Form B.
- As with any successful intern project there are many considerations: overall project design; recruitment, training and supervision of interns; coordination with colleges; and solicitation of client site-owners.

HERITAGE AREA WALKING TOUR APP PROJECT

In considering the future goals of this successful program, the following observations and recommendations emerged:

- Potential Tour Topics: HC members proposed the following:
  - Cemeteries
  - W.E.B. Dubois
  - Industrial History
  - Residential Architecture and Biography
  - Architectural Styles
  - Housatonic History
- Promotion:
  - *Coordinate with Affinity Groups*: It's important to coordinate with groups and organizations that can help promote the tours, such as the Chamber of Commerce. Bill will talk to Betsy Andrus about including promotion and a link on its website and being a part of the spring promotional campaign.
  - *Main Street Reconstruction Project*: fold in public service announcements, such as changes in traffic and parking areas, to help ameliorate the disruption to business and transit during the project.
  - *Business Underwriting*: seek business underwriters in exchange for prominent advertising on the app. To successfully procure participants, the HC would have to

design all the details of the program to include proving that the expenditure of a nominal fee, such as \$50.00 for a certain period of time, is a productive investment for a local business. Bill will discuss this idea as well with Betsy Andrus about any potential conflict with the Chamber of Commerce.

- *Increase the Number of Links:* search for additional websites that would be appropriate for walking tour links.
- *Expand Brochure Distribution:* in addition to the Red Lion Inn, Wainwright Hall and the Post Office kiosk, other brochure distribution sites need to be added. A significant obstacle is the monopoly of most all key sites by Berkshire Brochure Distribution Service.

#### HISTORICAL COMMISSION FACEBOOK PAGE

- Bill reported that his son Willy has set up an HC Facebook page in July. It is just a skeleton site now and needs to be enhanced with links, additional friends and the Historical Society, etc. The Commission members gratefully acknowledged Willy's contribution as a volunteer.

#### COLLECTIONS

- Mahaney Gift
  - *Training:* on completing the Excel inventory form template has been held, except for scheduling the session for David who is assigned the artifact component of the gift.
  - *Offer of Trunk:* because members had agreed to accept the Mahaney's offer of Amos Baldwin's trunk, Paul will contact them about shipping arrangements.
  - *Offer of Period Magazines:* the Commission agreed to accept the Mahaney's offer of donating late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century collection of *The Delineator* and *Youths' Companion* magazines and other miscellaneous publications only if the Mahaneys would agree to our disposal of them by re-sale with proceeds dedicated to care of the Commission's museum collection. Paul will notify the Mahaneys of our proposal and share it with Kevin O'Donnell. David Rutstein, who is an ephemera scholar, will assess the collection.
  - Fairgrounds: there is a rich collection of artifacts relating to the history of the fairgrounds, such as the scales (used for weighing jockeys?), and the "Barrington Fair" cutout letters sign at the south entrance to the property. These should be rescued for preservation in the town museum. As there is an apparent deal for the purchase of the fairgrounds, Paul will find out who to contact about seeking a donation of artifactual evidence of the fair's history to the Commission.
  - Ramsdell Storage Area: Gary reported that the new library director is expanding program use of the second floor of the Ramsdell Library. Her re-arrangement of the furniture is encroaching on the work and storage areas of the HC and GBHS. To resolve this issue, Paul and Gary will arrange a meeting with the librarian.

#### FY13 WORKPLAN AND PRIORITIES

In discussion, the following projects emerged as the range of priorities for the Historical Commission to undertake in FY13 and, implicitly, FY14. The next steps are to arrange the various projects in priority order and prepare implementation plans with action steps and

assignment of responsibilities. The projects and programs are (priority order to be determined at next meeting):

- *Ongoing Responsibilities*: explicit and implicit in the charges for historical commissions in Mass General Laws, such as letters of support for projects seeking historic preservation tax credits, rescuing artifacts and architectural fragments in face of the wrecking ball, speaking out publicly and making recommendations on current historic preservation issues such as the Main St. reconstruction project, the original fire station, Housatonic School, etc.
- *Management and Care of Town Historical Collection*:
  - ✓ Complete accessioning of Mahaney donation.
    - Undertake Phase 1 Cataloguing:
      - ❖ Secure assignment of computer from the town (Paul will talk to Kevin O'Donnell)
      - ❖ Develop plan and program for using GBHS software to complete a computer inventory of material
      - ❖ Determine broad categories of collection contents
      - ❖ Hold training sessions
      - ❖ Produce comprehensive inventory on Excel: form joint task force with GBHS to clarify ownership (vs. Historical Society);
      - ❖ Work with GBHS archivist in survey of Charles Taylor collection
    - ✓ Purchase archival supplies
    - ✓ Note Future Phases for Collections Program
      - ❖ In Phase 2 use inventory as basis for appraisal and insurance of collection
      - ❖ In Phase 3: transfer collection to GBHS
- *Historic Sites Survey Update*: because MHC defers to survey and nomination work by professional architectural historians, fund consultants through MHC and CPA grants to complete survey update as Phase I and undertake priority nominations in Phase 2.
- *Complete a Second Walking Tour App*: need to determine topic and make assignments
- *Present Demolition Delay Bylaw to Town*: Don will explore the law and potential options for paths to pursue.

#### RAILROAD TUNNEL OVERSTRUCTURE

- Bill reported that in response to a request from Joe Sokol he is preparing a proposal for his firm to restore the building. He has also conferred with Dale Culleton who is working with Joe to transfer his ownership to the town. Mr. Culleton has fabricated windows replicating the originals which he has indicated he will donate to the town. Bill is conducting research, will appear before the GBHDC, and is designing a drainage system. The town will do the work on the tunnel.

#### COMMISSION LOGO

- The logo needs to provide a distinctive, easily recognizable identity for the Commission. Marilyn suggested the incorporation of a landmark, such as the Stanley lights, mills, the Housatonic River or a recognizable architectural detail, such as the Rising towers mansard roofs.
- Bill will continue to produce more conceptual designs using ideas from Commission discussions.

#### COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT

- Because CPA grants would provide high potential matching funds for HC projects and programs, it's important that Commission members promote support in the town.

#### OTHER

- At its next meeting, the GB HDC will complete their findings regarding the Main Street reconstruction project.
- An interview with Gary about local history will appear on a forthcoming segment of Boston's Channel 5 "Chronicle" show.

#### NEXT MEETING

- Monday December 3, 2012, 7pm.

#### ADJOURN

- Motion to adjourn unanimously approved.