

Minutes of the Harvard Historical Commission

Tuesday April 7 2009

Members present: D. Coots, Chris Cutler, Susan Frechette, Jonathan Feist, John Martin, Rudy Minar, Roseanne Saalfield, Rhonda Sprague

Members absent: D. Coots

Meeting called to order at 7:40 p.m.

Minutes of the February meeting were accepted unanimously.

Susan Frechette announced her resignation from the HHC due to the conflicts in her work schedule out of town.

J. Feist announced a new procedure for choosing and appointing a new member of the commission. First we inform the BoS who will post the form publicly and then request that interested applicants complete the new Volunteer Application.

J. Feist announced that D. Coots, C. Cutler, R. Minar and J. Martin are all obligated to renew their annual commitments to the HHC. They will complete the above-mentioned form.

J. Feist has asked R. Minar (and subcommittee) to bring the newly drafted Rules and Procedures up for final review. Minar will circulate the draft prior to the next meeting. Feist has asked us to read at least Article 2, those pages that pertain to obligations of members.

J. Feist again asked members to contemplate who among them might like to rotate into the Chair's position. Feist feels that three sequential years as Chair is an adequate commitment. The Rules require that we elect Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. Elections of officers are to take place at the first meeting following ATM. Members will therefore vote for new officers following the May 2 ATM. Feist admits to being willing to chair the HHC for another year "unless someone comes forward who would want the Chair's job more than I would."

Members each contributed \$7.00 to Jonathan Feist as their portion of our award for the Bromfield High School Science Fair. Our award was a financial award of \$100, monies pooled by members of the HHC, the board of the Harvard Historic Society and Fruitlands Museums (who contributed an annual membership). The winner of our award was Dylan Winter whose project on acid rain was titled, "We are So Screwed." Feist asked two people to step forward as members of the new Science Fair Subcommittee to brainstorm topics the students might study, suggest a process the group could use for evaluating

students at the Fair, contact the faculty head of the fair to advertise our award. R. Minar and L. Horowitz volunteered to participate in this process.

J. Feist reminded R. Sprague to speak with her daughter-in-law, who teaches school in Bolton, about the various topics that might be studied in the school systems that make use of local history.

Members discussed the jobs that high school volunteers might be able to perform to satisfy their community service obligations. These might include housekeeping kinds of chores (landscaping miscellany) or filing and clerical work or perhaps help with the work of restoring the Shaker burial ground. Feist asked for a volunteer to take responsibility for coordinating student volunteer opportunities with the HHC. R. Saalfield and C. Cutler volunteered for this job.

J. Feist, per request of Elm St resident Jared Wollaston, has agreed to write a letter stating the support of the HHC for the town center septic system whose creation will be voted on at ATM on May 2. D. Coats wondered if the Conservation Commission has taken a stand on the health and environmental advantages of a sewer system versus individual septic systems. R. Sprague is in favor of piping our septic wastes from the Common, down Ayer Road, through our commercial district to the town of Ayer.

R. Saalfield updated the group on her research regarding the restoration of the Shaker Burial Ground. She shared the proposals submitted by three construction consultants/conservators. Prices for their services, which include a thorough evaluation of existing conditions and the design of a restoration program, range from \$5600.00 to nearly \$20,000. No proposals yet include pricing for the actual restoration work. Two members of the town's Cemetery Commission Bruce Dolimount and Jack Spero) were present for one of her meetings on the site. R. Sprague, whose husband is also a Cemetery Commissioner, said she could make the files of the CC available to Saalfield. While Saalfield acknowledged a sense of urgency regarding the restoration of the cast iron markers in the burial ground – unique in the Shaker world – she also urged commissioners to realize that more important than speed is accuracy and care. Saalfield has also spoken to Mike Volmar (curator), Tim Firment (CEO) and Roben Campbell (docent) at Fruitlands Museums, who have agreed to assist this effort in anyway they can.

The CPC is supporting our request for funding for signing our two historic districts. They and the Fin Comm have approved our request for \$7500.00. R. Saalfield will present our proposal to ATM.

C. Cutler is waiting to install a new door at the back of the Hildreth House, due to a grading issue that will be addressed by Ginger Quarles (Council on Aging) in consultation with the DPW.

J. Feist reported that construction consultant Robert Adams' application to leave intact an old well on the former Sprague property in Still River. The Board of Health has approved Adams' application to disable the piping to the well and fill the well with sand. Over this

site a new porch will be installed. The well will remain a historic artifact and not a working well.

D. Coots discussed his draft of the new 'Application for Project Review by the Harvard Historical Commission.' He asked for commissioners' comments and said that he hoped the new document would help petitioners understand the goals and work of the Commission and how property owners could use it as a resource.

R. Sprague asked if anyone had information about Rufus Porter and the murals he painted in the Harvard Inn.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roseanne Saalfield