



North Hampton Heritage Commission
Minutes of Meeting
September 15, 2011
Town Hall

Present: Carolyn Brooks
Paul Cuetara
Donna Etela, Chair
Tibbie Field
Barbara Kohl
Cynthia Swank

Absent: Jane Currivan, Jim Maggiore

Guest Speaker: Mary Kate Ryan, State Survey Coordinator, NH Division of Historical Resources

Guests and organizations they represented: Kendall Chevalier, Cemetery Trustees; Cindy Jenkins, Agriculture Commission; Lorreen Keating, North Hampton Public Library; Marcie McCann, Centennial Hall

1. Etela called the meeting to order at 9:35AM.

Order of agenda changed. Began with Item #4, presentation by Ryan. During her presentation, Ryan answered questions as they arose.

Ryan's presentation provided an overview of the Survey and Inventory of Historic Resources, one of a Heritage Commission's chief responsibilities. She noted that there are two aspects to a Survey: historical research and on-site inspection (field work). Historic resources include: buildings; sites such as foundations; manmade structures not intended for human habitation such as silos, stone culverts, stone walls; objects; and districts.

She recommended deciding upon a specific geographic location on which to conduct a survey and inventory project. The steps are: 1) develop a plan; 2) do research to understand the historical context of the buildings, structures, sites, and district; 3) do the field work; and 4) organize and present the data. Throughout the effort, public involvement must be encouraged.

At the planning stage, Ryan recommended that the group develop a survey statement of one or two paragraphs describing the purpose of the effort and why the particular location has been selected.

It is important to determine the resources that are available or may be required: people, the time they can devote, and the special skills they offer; equipment, services, and supplies; and money that may be needed. Among the roles in such a project are: historian, surveyor, mapper, assembler, and leader. Some roles may overlap. Match interests and skills to various tasks.

The first level that a volunteer project can accomplish is a “reconnaissance” survey that would result in page 1 of the DHR’s individual inventory form being completed, two maps prepared (showing the building/structure in relation to others and on its own location), and photographs taken and identified following DHR guidelines. A brief history and description of the property, its context within town events, and a bibliography indicating the sources all would be prepared. Such a survey can be used for planning purposes. The initial plan should consider how the data can be used, likely users, and how to make the data available to the public.

Ryan responded to a question that permission to photograph a building is not required as long as one is not trespassing. She recommended that, in addition to general publicity about the survey project, a notification be sent to all property owners in the survey area, the field workers be given identification badges, and that they have a copy of the letter with them. Generally, owners will be eager to talk about their property and offer information and photos.

It was noted that the Town had not followed through on a preservation consultant’s report to the NH Department of Transportation in 1994 that the Depot / Town Center was eligible to become a national historic district. She indicated that fear of historic districts often is based upon misinformation. The restrictions and controversies that make the news are based on local ordinances, not the State or Federal government. That said, being on the State Register can benefit a community in terms of obtaining Mooseplate, LCHIP and Preservation Alliance grants. Studies in other parts of the country suggest that being within an historic district can increase the value of properties.

Ryan responded to questions about preservation easements, and the benefits and possible disadvantages of such easements. She offered to put the Commission or individuals in touch with the Easements Coordinator in the DHR to answer specific questions. She also talked about the 10 year tax incentive for barns for which the State provided enabling legislation. It is up to individual towns to determine whether to offer such an inducement.

A discussion about cemeteries, the buffer around cemeteries, and the process for declaring a cemetery abandoned followed. Ryan will provide information about cemeteries that the Chair can disseminate.

Those in attendance seemed in agreement to focus on the Depot area as the first survey project. It contains a good mix of property owners, and has obvious historical and likely agricultural interest, but perhaps no cemeteries. Ryan noted that the boundaries used in 1994 related to the DOT project, and that the boundaries for this survey may be different.

Ryan's presentation included research resources. In addition to the 1852 map of North Hampton that the Heritage Commission has used often, she showed a detail of a Sanborn Fire Insurance map and suggested such maps are of particular value in describing buildings and other structures around a building at the time the map was created. The State Library can provide access, and perhaps the North Hampton Public Library.

She discouraged any archeological work without contacting the DHR (the State Archeologist is within the DHR). The DHR also can be asked to assist in discussions with the relevant State functional area regarding historic assets in or bordering on wetlands as part of the permitting process.

Ryan did not encourage a formal oral history project but indicated that one town has story nights where residents talked about past activities, events, and people within the town. It may be a good method of encouraging community involvement. Taking along a digital recorder on site visits also may be helpful.

She also suggested that perhaps a 7th or 8th grade class could work on one building or, on an individual basis, have a child accompany surveyors when they do site work. She did not think the training session she provides would be appropriate for students but, if teachers and parents attended, they could provide the necessary instruction and supervision. Definitely share information about the project with the School and classes.

She displayed several Inventory forms. The DHR does not have a database that they can share with municipalities. She suggested contacting Stratham's Heritage Commission as one town that may have developed one. Hampton Falls has an on-line inventory form that individuals can complete and may be another possibility. Kohl suggested a PB member might lend her expertise if it is necessary for the HC to create a database itself.

At the conclusion of Ryan's presentation, most guests departed, and the meeting continued at about 11:45.

2. Treasurer's report - Brooks did not receive a monthly report from the Town Treasurer for the Heritage Fund and operating budget.

Note: The Chair designated Kohl as voting member for the absent Currivan.

3. Approval of minutes - Draft Minutes of the August 18 meeting were approved, Kohl abstaining.

4. Old business

a) Town Hall statement and letter - Etela gave Kohl a copy of the statement Cuetara made on behalf of the Heritage Commission at the August Town Campus Informational Meeting along with a letter requesting that the Planning Board discuss and vote to oppose the moving of Town Hall. A similar letter has been prepared, and Etela will give to George Chauncey, President of the North Hampton Historical Society.

b) Town Campus Informational Meeting, 9/24/2011 -- Neither Cuetara nor Etela can attend this session. Field volunteered to attend the 9 -11 meeting at Town Hall. Brooks may also attend.

c) Trip to DHR, Concord - Etela and Swank visited the DHR offices and looked at the modest files relating to North Hampton. The 1994 DOT study, Centennial Hall report, and Town Hall State Register application were all photocopied. Currivan will photocopy the Little Boar's Head National Register application for the Heritage Commission.

Other resources mentioned were the availability of Ancestry.com at the Library; and all Rockingham County deeds now available online for viewing, not copying.

d) Blasting Ordinance - Kohl reported that a draft has been prepared and will be sent out for expert opinion. Such references will be included when the Heritage Commission receives the proposed ordinance.

5. New business

a) Town Survey and Inventory - A subcommittee composed of Heritage Commission members and alternates and the guests in attendance or organizations they represent will meet to discuss how to proceed with a Survey and develop a plan.

b) Possible missing Memorial sign -- Field reported that the Town Clerk's Office had been informed that one of the memorial signs is missing. Carolyn Brooks who knows where the sign on Walnut and I-95 bridge should be located will check.

c) Jail as part of Halloween activities - Brooks intends to encourage Diane Wheeler, Recreation Department, to include the jail under Town Hall as part of Halloween activities.

Administrative notes – Heritage Commission now has an email contact address on the website that the public can use. It is nhheritage@gmail.com

Etela or Swank will try to get Ryan's PowerPoint presentation on the Town website.

Kohl offered to try to have the Heritage Commission included in the Planning / Zoning Administrator's job description that is being prepared.

6. A meeting of the Survey and Inventory Sub-committee will be October 13 at 9:30 in the Library's New Hampshire Room.

Next regular meeting of the Heritage Commission will be October 20 at 9:30 in the Heritage Conference Room, Town Clerk / Tax Collector Building.

7. Meeting adjourned at 12:07 PM.

Cynthia G. Swank, Recording Secretary