

Minutes of the Princeton Historical Commission
September 18, 2008

Attendees: Joyce Anderson, Sheila Dubman, Alex Fiandaca, Joe Lee and John Wilson.

New Business

Public Lands Review Committee

- At the selectmen's meeting on Monday, September 14, Joe presented the concept of a town-owned land review committee. Joe reports that the concept was well received by the selectmen once they understood that the role of this committee would be to review proposals and make recommendations so that the selectmen could make informed decisions. Joe has been chosen by the selectmen to chair this new committee. He will automatically represent tree-related issues as the town's tree warden. Joe emphasized the importance of small and decisive representation which could include five interested people, depending on the issue. Members wondered about a scenario in which Joe felt a historical bias toward a certain issue. It was pointed out that Joe could excuse himself from voting at any time.
- Joe updated members on the status of the Liberty Elm project which prompted the formation of the Public Lands Review Committee. Five sites were visited and evaluated by Joe, Raymond and Griffin: Dingman Park, the lower part of the common (behind the Veterans bench), the center of the common, the area behind the library and the area near the flag pole in front of the library (between the library and town hall).
- Concerns were raised about the style of benches and plaque that are also part of the Liberty Elm package. The commission would like to have the opportunity to see examples and would prefer historic styles for historic areas.

School House

- Building Inspector John Wilson met with the commission to discuss ways to avoid losing another structure like the School House on Ball Hill Road. John provided back ground information on the attempts of previous owners to enlarge the existing footprint. He also described the poor condition of the school house as well as improper construction that had further compromised the structure. He also described the course of events that led to demolition without a permit.
- Members discussed the proposed demolition-delay bylaw with John. The bylaw appears as a recommendation in the Town Plan and will need to be accepted at town meeting. Considering the recent loss of the school house, John feels the bylaw has a good chance of passing. The commission would like to invite Chris Skelley from MHC to meet with us to discuss the subject further. Chris could also advise us on preservation restrictions. In the meantime, John has offered to include the historical commission on demolition permit applications for buildings older than 50 years.

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Old Business:

Plaques for National Historic Register Districts

- The DeWolf family has granted permission to the commission to place the West Village plaque on their property near the intersection of Hubbardston, Radford and Allen Hill Roads. Members will meet again to revisit the remaining sites (Russell Corner, Town Common and Meeting House Cemetery).
- Joyce has asked members to keep an eye out for plaque designs they may want to consider. Members seem to be in agreement on the Ohio-style in black with gold lettering.
- MHC will not be able to vote on the nomination of West Village until March or June rather than January. This will delay both the purchase of the West Village plaque and the scheduling of its dedication ceremony.

Meeting House Cemetery

- Workshop has been postponed until Saturday, October 4th. Fire Department has not responded to request for water so Alex will ask a cemetery neighbor for permission to use an outdoor faucet.
- Joe was approached by Bruce Rollins (Cemetery Superintendent) who was upset with the placement of the gravel pile. Bruce also had concerns about gravestones being moved and Alex responded to a similar concern from Lou Trostel. No stones have been moved, only the fragments that are found buried when a stone is reset. Joe relayed to Bruce (and Alex to Lou) that the majority of the fragments on the grassy area were found in a pile outside the cemetery on the day of our tour in 2006. Bruce also had concerns about a tree which also concerns Ta Mara, our conservator. Alex will contact Claudia to suggest a joint meeting between the historical and cemetery commissions to address concerns and clear up any misunderstandings.

Next Meeting, Thursday October 16, 2008, 5:00 PM, Library

Respectfully submitted, Alex Fiandaca