

The West Brookfield Historical Commission met on Monday, November 4, 2019 at 6:30 P.M. in the Commission office in the Town Hall. Attending were Ron Bullock, Jesse Morrison, Louise Garwood, Dan Hamilton, Anne-Marie Nolan, Rob Lyon, with Dick Rossman presiding. The earlier meeting time was called in order to meet with Bob Haveles of Architectural Insights and review the progress draft of his Town Hall Building Assessment.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Town Hall Maintenance: Bob Haveles of Architectural Insights presented and reviewed a draft of his Executive Summary of the initial evaluation of the current state of the building, wherein he identified the issues, not the causes or solutions. Mr. Haveles had done the major renovation of the Town Hall in 1997 and was very familiar with the history and condition of the building elements.

He was contracted in January of 2019 by the Historical Commission to perform a building evaluation in order to provide information requested by the Board of Selectmen as to building safety, maintenance, preservation, and compliance with an existing maintenance agreement between the Board of Selectmen and the State which had been put in place upon receipt of funding from matching grant in 2001. This information will also be necessary to formulate a responsible financial plan to move forward with needed repairs, as well as being integral to any future funding through preservation grant applications.

The summary accompanied a very thorough and detailed examination of building components, exterior and interior, with photographs and descriptions of each issue. He pointed out that the single largest factor affecting the building's condition was "Deferred Maintenance."

Discussion followed, with questions and suggestions from the members. Mr. Haveles explained that he had yet to complete the financial estimates associated with each item but planned to do so within the month. He will plan to submit a final version of his evaluation to the Commission in December and the Commission will then make it available to the Board of Selectmen for their review. At which time, the Commission and Mr. Haveles will request to be placed on the agenda for a Board for Selectmen meeting in January for the purposes of formal presentation and discussion.

For the purpose of that presentation, the need to prioritize the many areas and items was acknowledged, with safety being the highest priority. Other preservation and financial considerations, including weather related and those items possible eligible for grant funding support, will be evaluated. Each member will do so, bringing their results to our next meeting in December for further discussion and inclusion into a cover letter from the Commission to accompany the report.

Considering that, Mr. Haveles strongly stated that the most immediate and highest priority public-safety concern was the railing on the front entrance. He advised the Commission to notify the Board of Selectmen immediately as to this safety and liability issue, particularly considering the increased public traffic expected at the upcoming White Christmas event on December 8. As the season precludes the needed repair or replacement work on the granite and iron, Mr. Haveles suggested the installation of a temporary wooden barrier around railing with appropriate signage. The Commission unanimously passed a motion to that effect, and Dick will write a letter tomorrow and deliver it to the Selectmen.

Website: The website and the calendar of events are continuously updated as needed.

Treasurer's Report: Anne-Marie provided an updated and corrected financial statement, reflecting a new account numbering system which differentiates between interest-bearing and non-interest-bearing accounts belonging to the Commission and held and managed by the Town. The Town Treasurer will manage the accounts in terms of investment decisions. The Treasurer and the Town Accountant have requested a meeting with representatives of all departments and commissions on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM - 11:00 A.M. Anne-Marie is not available at that time. Dick will attend on behalf of the Historical Commission. (Subsequent to our meeting, email notification has changed the meeting to November 20<sup>th</sup>, same time. Anne-Marie will attend as Dick has a prior commitment.)

After discussion, a motion was made and unanimously passed to transfer the amount of \$25.05 from the Lucy Stone Birthplace Account to the Lucy Stone Donations FB Account to bring the latter to a zero balance and then close the Lucy Stone Donations FB Account.

It was also noted that upon examination, the Col. Fairfax Ayers account is a Town Account, not belonging to the Historical Commission. Therefore, it will no longer be included in our statements.

H.S. Scholarship: Louise submitted a draft of the 2020 Application Letter. After discussion, several changes were agreed upon and she will submit an updated version within the next day or two. When the Letter is finalized, Dan will post it on the website, and it will be sent to the high school counselors in January.

Lucy Stone Nomination: Amy Dugas has completed the revised application and will be mailing it to the State on or about Friday, November 8, 2019.

Old Indian Cemetery: The Fannins report that they have completed Stage 3 of the planned work. Documentation should be completed by the end of the year. An invoice for \$800, received on October 7, 2019 for additional work, has been warranted and paid from the England Fund.

Methodist Cemetery: Jesse and Dan will review the existing land deeds for the properties surrounding and bordering the cemetery, from the town auction in 1945 forward, searching for any metes and bounds description of the cemetery itself within the surrounding deeds. Any such description would rule out the need for obtaining a judgement of adverse possession.

Demolition Delay Bylaw: no further developments.

Master Plan Implementation: Dick reported that the next meeting on November 18 would hopefully be voting on the by-law. Louise submitted a draft of a map showing the area of the Master Plan, along with information on the Historical Commission. Upon approval, Louise will arrange for the printing of the poster size version for display purposes.

Library Programs: Rob submitted a resume for Dennis Picard, who offers lectures and presentations. Dan will distribute the resume to the commission members by email. Holly Takorian of the Mirriam-Gilbert Library submitted a list of possible programs. After review and discussion, two relating to the upcoming anniversary of 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment were chosen as preferable with the final choice and scheduling to be left to Holly.

Cannons within Pine Grove Cemetery: We will invite Mike Seery, the Cemetery Commission Chairman, and the other current Cemetery Commission members to our next meeting on December 2, 2019, to discuss the cannon, as well as the Methodist and Old Indian Cemeteries.

Ayers Memorial: examination of the town's financial accounts shows that the town has a fund in place to cover the maintenance of the memorial.

Fort Gilbert Marker Sign: Dick reported that the sign has just been re-installed but was still covered in plastic and therefore not yet examined. Dan will take photos of the reconditioned sign.

Local Historical Memorials and Sites: Louse is developing a table from the starting list submitted last month and will distribute it to our commission members to expand and use in gathering information.

Foster Homesite Kiosk: Dick reported that Amy Dugas of the Quaboag Historical Society has contacted a carpenter who will build a new kiosk. The schedule for this work is unclear.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### Professional Book Scanning

The commission has received email communication from a local professional book scanning company asking if there is any interest in discussing our book scanning needs. After discussion, it was agreed that there are possible documents and books which would be advantageous to scan for digital copies and display. The question of handwritten documents being eligible for services was also raised. Dan will respond to the company and express our interest in learning more.

### History on the Road

Dick reported that the Old Sturbridge Village might be interested in reviving its traveling program of *History on the Road*, once supported by the Commission and presented in the Elementary School. We will ask the staff at the Elementary School if such a program could be presently used within their curriculum requirements.

There is also an OSV program of providing blocks of discount general admission tickets. A motion was unanimously passed to authorize Dick to purchase a block of ten discount tickets to be then offered at the Library.

### White Christmas

A motion was unanimously passed to authorize the donation of a copy of Jeff Fiske's *A History of West Brookfield* to the Library for their raffle at the White Christmas event on December 8.

Meeting adjourned ca. 8:40 p.m. Next meeting Monday, December 2, 2019, at 7:00 P.M. Historical Commission Office, Town Hall. The Public is welcome.

Respectfully submitted, Dan Hamilton, Secretary