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Approved March 15, 2022

HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, February 16, 2023 7:00 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING/REMOTE PARTICIPATION

Members present: Kevin Miller, Kate Battles, Jim Blaschke, Annie Pfaff, and Grant Farrington.

Also in attendance: Dr. Greg Walwer, Director of Archeological Consulting Services; Judith Watson, Member of the Master Plan Implementation Committee; David Parry, 22 Main Street.

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Miller called the Historical Commission (HC) meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Discussion: Report by Greg Walwer, Director of Archaeological Consulting Services (Guilford, CT) on the findings of the ACS archaeological survey conducted in the “St. Mark’s Triangle” area in the fall of 2022:

Mr. Miller explained that Dr. Walwer created the report which was accepted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) in the fall of 2022. Mr. Miller thanked Dr. Walwer, a “consummate professional,” for the detailed and extensive report. Dr. Walwer provided a summary of the report. He described the lengthy permitting process which involved significant background research. Dr. Walwer provided a detailed review of what was done in the field as shown on page 25 of the report. He indicated the goal was to document any potential presence of Nipmuc burials based on historical evidence. The stone wall around the perimeter of the Old Burial Ground (OBG) was built in 1727 but likely did not include all of the burials within that boundary. ½ to 1-meter shovel tests were conducted to the substrata layer of soil. Dr. Walwer explained there were 5 meters between each of the testing spots so he stated it was possible that burial features could have been missed; thus, the importance of the shovel tests was principally to establish the subsurface conditions of the site as a whole. A foundation from a Burnett house is believed to be under the pollinator garden near the Southborough Library. A second substantial foundation feature was exposed and appears on an 1870 map. Dr. Walwer felt this second foundation was likely a replacement structure based on other findings such as an oil tank and evidence of concrete. A flat-bladed bucket was subsequently used to strip the soil to reveal potential burial features. Page 31 of the report shows two of the broad trenches created. No traces of burial features were found. Page 32 shows the foundation features that were identified. According to a 1971 map of the Old Burial Ground, the southwest corner (farthest from the project area) contains a very high density of burials. Dr. Walwer indicated that there are likely additional burials west of the wall (near the Town Green) based on the Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) project data. By contrast, the northeast corner of the map shows a complete absence of marked graves, “and that’s probably where your Nipmuc burials are”—that is, within the boundaries of the Old Burial Ground. If any Native American burials are outside the confines of the OBG, they are likely “tucked tightly to the stone wall.” Dr. Walwer emphasized the only areas investigated were where development would occur including the area where a walkway is planned. He opined it was safe to create a garden and walkway. Areas that will be left undisturbed were not investigated. Dr. Walwer indicated the project will not impact any existing burials. The foundation discovered under the pollinator garden was likely a Burnett property occupied by William Washington, a sexton of St. Mark’s Church (and steward of St. Mark’s School) as well as (per Richard E. Noble’s *The Echo of Their Voices: 150 Years of St. Mark’s School*) “Southborough’s first free

51 black resident” (Noble, 85). Various forms of pottery, glass, coal, and brick were found. Limited personal
52 items were uncovered. Mr. Blaschke asked for information on the pattern of the shovel tests. Dr.
53 Walwer said the shovel tests were completed as close to the stone wall as possible but within the
54 project impact area. Mr. Farrington asked if Dr. Walwer saw the map based on the GPR completed in
55 2006. Dr. Walwer stated that he had not personally seen the map, but that it had been reviewed by the
56 firm. Dr. Walwer offered his services to review information to be used for signage regarding William
57 Washington and/or the archaeological dig itself should the St. Mark’s Street Park Working Group
58 (SMSPWG) decide to highlight those stories.

59 **Discussion: Update from Judith Watson of the Master Plan Implementation Committee on suggested**
60 **goals for the Historical Commission:**

61 Ms. Watson provided background on the Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC.) The Master
62 Plan was completed and accepted by the Planning Board (PB) in June 2022. It is available on the town
63 website. It was the consensus of the Master Plan Committee (MPC) that an implementation process was
64 vital to the success of the Master Plan. The MPIC is comprised of the following MPC members: Lisa
65 Braccio, Select Board (SB) representative as Chair, Debbie DeMuria as Secretary and the PB
66 representative, Kathryn McKee, and Will Warren. The goal of the initial meeting was introductory. Ms.
67 Watson reviewed the goals for the HC. Mr. Miller indicated that many of the items were “in process” or
68 being discussed. Mr. Farrington asked how the MPIC would track how the goals are accomplished. Ms.
69 Watson suggested accomplishments be tracked through the minutes.

70 **Chair’s Report/Updates:**

71 **a) Letter in support of grant application by the Southborough Historical Society.**

72 Mr. Miller stated that the letter approved at the commission’s 1/2/2023 meeting was received by the
73 President of the Southborough Historical Society (SHS) and included in their grant application.

74

75 **b) 42 Main Street update.**

76 Mr. Miller provided an update. In January 2023, Mr. Shay, Chair of the Fay School Board of Trustees, met
77 with the Fay School Executive Board, Mr. Gustafson, the Head of School, and the architect. While the
78 demolition delay has expired, Mr. Miller indicated the project continued to be on track with Fay School
79 working towards a solution. Mr. Shay will resign as President of the Board of Trustees after 9 years and
80 will be succeeded by Ann Laquerre who is the current Vice President. Mr. Miller is hopeful that the
81 property will be saved, and the process will come to fruition prior to the end of Mr. Shay’s term.

82

83 **c) Historic District signage. Plans for Historic House Signs program.**

84 On January 30, 2023, the signs were officially ordered for the Southborough Center Historic District. Mr.
85 Miller expressed his thanks to Ms. Pfaff and the numerous boards who supported the project including
86 the ARPA Committee, the SB, and the Capital Planning Committee. Some monies remain which will be
87 used towards any unforeseen contingencies including installation. If the monies are not needed, Mr.
88 Miller proposed the additional funds be used towards the Historic House sign program. If that is not
89 feasible, the monies will be returned to the town. Ms. Battles explained she was in the process of finding
90 a suitable replacement for Robert Leonard of Ould Colony Artisans, the company that was previously
91 used. The owner passed away, and Ms. Battles emailed the person who was taking over for Mr. Leonard
92 and his existing customers. As of yet, Ms. Battles has not heard back from the new artisan. She
93 committed to researching other artisans if Ould Colony Artisans was unable to continue to work with the
94 HC. The expectation is that the signage will significantly increase in price.

95

96 **d) 84 Main Street and meeting with Conservation Agent. Updating of documents on website.**

97 Mr. Miller and Mr. Farrington met with Melissa Danza, the Conservation Agent, on January 20, 2023.
98 The Conservation Commission (CC) is working with the property owner regarding several issues
99 including an outbuilding which houses a generator and other electrical components. Mr. Miller stated

100 the property owner and the CC were close to a resolution. Mr. Miller stated that a landscape plan was
101 provided for 84 Main Street by Michael Weishan to both he and Ms. Danza. Mr. Miller requested Mr.
102 Farrington upload the plans and other pertinent documents to the HC page on the town website. Once
103 the property owner, Jon Delli Priscoli, resolves the outstanding issues with the CC, he will be invited to
104 attend an HC meeting, potentially in March or April, so as to provide an update on the property. Mr.
105 Farrington felt the conversation with Ms. Danza was constructive and he committed to uploading the
106 documents to the town website. Mr. Farrington also indicated he had been trying to locate old HC
107 minutes that are not posted on the town website to create a comprehensive record.

108

109 **e) 19 Main Street: Peters High School Annex and former fire station.**

110 Mr. Miller received a call from the CFO of St. Mark's School, Rob Kuklewicz, explaining that St. Mark's
111 intends to demolish the Peter's School Annex and the old fire station. Mr. Miller explained it was a
112 courtesy call because neither building is within the purview of the HC. The Peter's School Annex opened
113 in 1930 and the fire station was built in 1978. The Demolition Delay Bylaw (DDBL) covers properties built
114 in 1925 or earlier. Mr. Miller reviewed the architectural aspects of the properties. The intention of St.
115 Mark's for the site is to "engage with the community" rather than building something to be used solely
116 by the school. Mr. Kuklewicz has given the HC permission to photograph the buildings for posterity and
117 historical records. Mr. Miller requested the HC be allowed to consider architectural salvage efforts for
118 any remaining features. Mr. Kuklewicz confirmed that would be appropriate. Mr. Miller requested the
119 gazebo remain which St. Mark's will take into consideration and to which they are amenable. Mr.
120 Farrington stated that although the property is not within the HC's demolition delay jurisdiction, the HC
121 could make its views known through a letter or other means if they felt so inclined. Mr. Miller suggested
122 the DDBL should be adjusted with a rolling date rather than a set date of 1925. He suggested 75 years be
123 considered. Mr. Blaschke asked how many houses would be impacted by the suggested date of 75 years.
124 Ms. Pfaff conducted a quick query and found 111 properties in Southborough dated from 1926-1948.
125 Mr. Miller emphasized the importance of ensuring that the DDBL is a "living, breathing document."

126

127 **Discussion: 5 Cordaville Road demolition delay update. Discussion of proposed joint meeting with the**
128 **Select Board, the Southborough Housing Opportunity Partnership Committee, and the Historical**
129 **Commission:**

130 The HC is scheduled to attend a joint meeting with the SB and the Southborough Housing Opportunity
131 Partnership Committee (SHOPC) on February 28, 2023. In November 2023, the property was determined
132 historically and architecturally significant. The Public Hearing was held on January 5, 2023. On December
133 19, 2022, Mr. Miller, Mr. Farrington, Ms. Pfaff, and the Chair of the SB, Kathy Cook, attended a site visit
134 of the property. Mr. Miller emphasized the significance of the location of the property which motivated
135 Mr. Miller to invite the Chair of the SB. The goal of the joint meeting is for SHOPC, the SB, and the HC to
136 have the opportunity to discuss the possibilities for the property. Mr. Miller has also spoken with the
137 current owner of the property, Ms. Sandra Huling, about the DDBL.

138

139 **Discussion: Discuss St. Mark's Street Park Working Group activity:**

140 Several plans have been proposed including a new one presented by Michael Weishan, 189 Cordaville
141 Road, which would link a proposed a history walk throughout downtown (from Sears Road, down Main
142 Street, and including Middle Road and Latisquama Road) with the park area of the St. Mark's Triangle.
143 Mr. Miller reviewed Mr. Weishan's plan. Plans were also submitted by Freddie Gillespie and, jointly, by
144 Patricia Burns Fiore and Sally Watters. A blend of the three plans was submitted to VHB to determine
145 what aspects may be feasible. VHB agreed to do the concept plan for no additional cost. Ultimately the
146 plans will be voted on at Annual Town Meeting (ATM) to be held on March 25, 2023.

147

148 **Discussion: Summary reports on the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund webinar of 1/18/2023**
149 **(Annie Pfaff) and the 1/31/2023 meeting of the Eastern Massachusetts Historical Commission**
150 **Coalition (Grant Farrington):**

151 Both meetings were recorded and are available for viewing. Ms. Pfaff stated the presentation she
152 viewed was very tactical, listing the steps required to apply for funding. While the information was not
153 immediately relevant, it could be a useful resource in the future. Mr. Farrington was enthusiastic about
154 the meeting he attended. There were discussions about grants and how historical preservation applies
155 to long-term planning goals in the MetroWest/Boston area. Technical assistance which is provided
156 through the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) was also discussed. Mr. Farrington indicated
157 the MHC presenter works with towns and helps with DDBLs. Overall, he felt the Coalition would be a
158 good resource moving forward.

159
160 **Discussion: Discuss Community Preservation Committee and PILOT Committee representation. (Vote**
161 **may be taken):**

162 Mr. Miller stated the discussion on the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) representative would
163 be on the agenda for a future meeting. Mr. Miller read the Charge for the PILOT Committee to the HC.
164 The HC decided not to vote on a representative for the PILOT Committee but will table the vote for a
165 future meeting. Mr. Miller stated that Michele Hokinson, 10 Main Street, may be interested in joining
166 the HC.

167
168 **Discussion: Form working group to review language of the Demolition Delay Bylaw:**

169 Mr. Miller requested participation from the HC members to create a working group to review the
170 language of the DDBL. Mr. Miller felt the Peter's School Annex was an example as to the importance of
171 making adjustments to the DDBL. Mr. Miller emphasized the DDBL, in the "larger interest of the
172 community," can be a positive tool as based on the potential success of 42 Main Street. Ms. Pfaff and
173 Mr. Farrington volunteered to work on the group. Ms. Battles and Mr. Blaschke offered their services as
174 well but deferred to the other two volunteers.

175

176 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES: MOTION** by Jim Blaschke to approve the meeting minutes from January 5,
177 2023 as amended. **Seconded** by Grant Farrington. **ROLL CALL: Miller-Yes, Battles-Yes, Blaschke-Yes,**
178 **Pfaff-Yes, Farrington-Yes. VOTE to Approve: Yes-5, No-0.**

179

180 The next meeting is scheduled for March 15, 2023 at 7:00 PM.

181

182 **Discussion: Any other business that may legally come before the Commission, with the understanding**
183 **that substantive deliberation may need to be postponed to a subsequent meeting to accommodate**
184 **Open Meeting Laws:**

185

186 Mr. Miller reminded members to complete their conflict of interest training by March 1, 2023.

187

188 **Public Comment:**

189

190 Mr. Parry, 22 Main Street, explained he is looking to purchase two properties which include a historical
191 barn, located next to Walgreen's on Route 9, and would like to attend a future HC meeting. Mr. Parry
192 stated the current owner wants to demolish the property. He has filed a Citizen's Petition for Annual
193 Town Meeting (ATM) on March 25, 2023, to propose a zoning change. Mr. Miller will send the MACRIS
194 information he has on the properties to Mr. Parry. Mr. Parry requested to be on the next HC agenda.

195

196 **ADJOURN: MOTION** by Kate Battles to adjourn at 9:30 PM. **Seconded** by Jim Blaschke. **ROLL CALL:**
197 **Miller-Yes, Battles-Yes, Blaschke-Yes, Pfaff-Yes, Farrington-Yes. VOTE to Approve: Yes-5, No-0.**

198
199 **Documents Used at this Meeting:**

- 200 • Archaeological Consulting Services Report
- 201 • Master Plan HC goals
- 202 • Photos of St. Peter’s High School
- 203 • Plans submitted by Michael Weishan for the “St. Mark’s Triangle”
- 204 • Charge of the PILOT committee

205
206 Respectfully Submitted,
207
208 Kathleen Battles
209 Vice Chair, Historical Commission