

Peterborough Heritage Commission
Approved Minutes
May 12, 2016 5:30 pm.

Present: Richard Estes; Debby Kaiser; Mose Olenik; Peggy Shaughnessy; Melissa Stephenson; Tyler Ward, Selectman; Doug Ward, Alternate

Absent: Bruce Batten; Sheila Kirkpatrick, alternate

April Minutes

The chairman called for a motion to accept the April 2016 minutes. Debbie Kaiser so moved. Peggy Shaughnessy seconded and all approved. Melissa will submit them to the town.

GAR Hall/Preservation Easement

It was generally agreed that the commission needs additional time to complete its recommendations for the GAR Preservation Easement. Copies of a previously written rough draft of this easement were distributed to members and discussion followed regarding the language and the easement stipulations.

Peggy spoke about a potential buyer for the GAR building that would include keeping the building in situ. This could be a “best case” solution for all involved.

Dick Estes brought up the idea of leaving the river with a wild buffer — no paths. Benefits include keeping Peterborough’s climate cooler. Discussion ensued about the Grove Street riverside and whether or not a path is necessary at all. He would like to see the Contoocook Greenway efforts actively going again.

State Historic Preservation Office resources have suggested that the Peterborough Heritage commission hold the easement as grantee. Discussion regarding the town’s desire for the option to subdivide the land remaining in the easement, prior to finalized plans for the property.

If the intent is about the town wanting access to the land in the future, the commission agreed that it should be taken out prior to the granting of the easement. The commission feels strongly that an option should not be left open for any future subdivision action. What is going to be conserved should be clearly defined and then conserved.

Mose Olenik expressed the need for more information before recommending who should hold the easement.

Further discussion about the pros and cons of the PHC holding the easement ensued. Mentioned were, the PHC as a legal entity, budget questions, frequency of checking on eased property, volunteers to defend the easement, insurance, professional fees, etc.

Action Item: With the heritage commission's approval, Peggy Shaughnessy will approach the NH Preservation Alliance and the Preservation Company to discuss specifics regarding these issues.

It was reiterated that no subdivision option for the future should be included in the easement.

Tyler Ward noted the heritage commission consists of revolving members, including those with areas of expertise and that this should be considered when including stipulations in any proposed draft. He suggested that the Preservation Alliance hold the easement with the PHC being a local monitoring resource.

Doug Ward noted that the town chose to sell property with the easement on it — so to have the easement held, the town should pay costs of holding it. He concurred that any subdivision be done prior to the granting of the easement, no matter who the grantee.

General discussion followed regarding interest in the repair and replacement of the stone wall along the Main Street bridge; the view of the GAR Hall seen from Granite Street as well as Grove St; and the recent “yarn-bombing” of one of the canons.

Heritage Commission Certificate of Recognition

Bruce Batten is working on a rough draft of the Heritage Commission Certificate of Recognition. He will have a draft for members' review at the June meeting.

Demolition Review Process

Debbie Kaiser outlined the current demolition review process and noted that there has not been enough time allowed to determine if a building slated for demolition has historical value, let alone notify all members of the subcommittee and abutters or make clear and careful assessments of the request, hold a hearing, or otherwise act responsibly regarding these requests.

This has been clearly frustrating when, in general, most projects involving demolition have been in a planning mode for months ahead of the request for review. The Catholic church process was cited as an example of poor timing and action taken prior to approval.

Were a building deemed historic, it's important that a public meeting is scheduled to review the demolition application and that all abutters at least be informed in writing. It was noted that only two people showed up for the Scott Fararr public hearing.

Preemptive outreach ahead of time is one way to counter this concern.

It was suggested that owners of buildings that have historical value be notified in writing of the benefits of owning such a building and how to be listed on the historic registry.

It was also suggested that the PHC identify an historic inventory of downtown and make citizens aware that this inventory exists.

Mose Olenik will approach the Monadnock Museum of History and Culture about holding a community forum on Peterborough's privately

held historic buildings and preservations. She will talk with MMHC meeting planners to see if this is possible in the near future.

New Business/Old Business

Tyler Ward mentioned that at the May 11th open session of town meeting there were no comments about the cost for stone mitigation for the Main Street bridge.

Mose mentioned that the present stairway photography exhibit runs thru July. She suggested asking the Monadnock Camera Club if they would be interested in doing the next show and that the subject matter could be something along the lines of “small is beautiful in Peterborough.” There was general consensus and Mose will pursue.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Stephenson, Secretary