

Peterborough Heritage Commission
APPROVED Minutes
January 14, 2016

Present: Bruce Batten, Richard Estes, Debby Kaiser Peggy Shaughnessy, Melissa Stephenson, Tyler Ward, Selectman

Absent: Sheila Kirkpatrick, Mose Olenik

Also Present: Rodney Bartlett, Town Manager; Doug Ward

The meeting opened at 5:30 pm.

Debby Kaiser volunteered to take minutes as Melissa would be arriving late.

1. Greeting and Welcome

Doug Ward expressed interest in becoming a member of the Peterborough Heritage Commission and sat in on the meeting. He is willing to become an alternate, along with Sheila Kirkpatrick who requests to move from a standing member to alternate. Commissioners followed up with a motion and approval for these actions.

Motion:

Peggy S. moved to that Doug Ward become an alternate to the commission. Bruce seconded and the motion was approved.

Peggy will contact Nicole about this addition to the committee and to change Sheila's status to alternate.

2. Report from Town Manager

Rodney Bartlett updated the commission on Mitigation for the Main Street Bridge, suggested changes to Preservation Easement GAR building/property, and the proposed town house renovation.

Main Street Bridge:

All members present received the mitigation document and moved to accept the MOA agreement. Rodney clarified that the planter boxes would be made of wood and set into a recess (with drainage) in the capstone of the bridge. The town will work with Carl VonMertens on design.

Tyler Ward observed that medium sized trees had been capped, leaving tall trees down the slope towards the river at the Center Town lot and asked whether the new owners had consulted the town or if it had anything to do with plans for pedestrian stumps bridge (negative in both cases).

Proposed Town House Renovation:

Rodney passed around a hard copy of the proposal for our review and pointed out that the plans were available on the town web site. Commissioners are asked to take a look.

The cost of replacing the slate roof and solar tiles on the south side and synthetic slate were brought forth as options.

Tyler queried whether or not the town could put off replacing the roof until truly necessary. Rodney explained that because of the estimate the town has qualified for a grant from LCHIP that would cover 50% of the cost and that in this case, it is sensible to get the roof done. The final decision will be made by May 2017; architectural engineering would begin around July 1st 2018, and actual construction in May 2018.

The committee inquired about issues of accessibility. There are several options including additions to the back of the building to incorporate space for performance prep.

Town Hall:

Rodney explained that the town will make a cost benefit analysis regarding improvements to the upper hall in consultation with Duncan Webb (who consulted town on general issue of need for further artistic space and would meet with other stake holders such as “Fill the Void” and the Library so as not to duplicate or undermine fund raising efforts. Peggy mentioned the need for better lighting in the town hall main stairwell, especially for exhibits. Tyler suggested the town could fundraise by selling the used slate tiles, perhaps as mementos.

GAR Hall Plans and Preservation Easement:

Peggy voiced the committee’s concern that no plans have been presented to date, or even alternative plans as to future use.

Rodney concurred that none have been submitted to the town officially.

The committee explained its reservations about issues of major changes to the landscape. The Preservation easement text that was drafted during negotiations for a prior potential sale (to Jason Hackler), and the template always used by the Preservation Alliance, expressly states the *importance of preserving historic structures in their historic context*.

The commission assumed that this text would be the basis for negotiation with the new buyers. The commission agrees—and has stated from the very beginning of public discussion—that the GAR Hall should be preserved in its present location. Section 3 (g) of the current Preservation Easement prevents any change to the topography of the site, precluding any possible move of the GAR Hall down hill, closer to Grove Street.

Discussion followed about the potential conflict of interest if the town were to hold the easement should future pressure from business interests request inappropriate changes to the GAR Hall. The town lack of experience in holding this type of easement was also brought to attention.

The Commission generally agreed that the option to subdivide the property (Preservation Easement, section 3(f)) would be acceptable to the Commission, since the only legal recipient is

the town (as abutter), and that the subdivided piece of riverfront could be incorporated into the future park.

Discussion followed about the MacDowell Riverwalk Park Design Competition. It was noted that some imaginative designs had been submitted and winnowed down to three finalists (note there is a \$5,000 prize to be awarded to winner) and that there was no commitment on the part of the Town to implement any of them.

Rodney exited the meeting and the commission moved into Executive Session.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m. with it agreed that PHC will meet January 21st at 7:00 pm to continue its discussion of, and draft its response to, the following:

1. Whether or not to recommend that the Town should hold the GAR Preservation Easement
2. Whether or not to recommend that the Town allow subdivision of the GAR property in the future
3. Whether or not to recommend to remove the restriction to limit changes to the GAR topography
4. To what extent does the Commission want to encourage involvement from the press and feedback from town taxpayers.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Stephenson