



## **Town of Wilbraham Historical Commission**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Tuesday, June 18, 2019

**Time:** 7 pm – 9pm

**Location:** Wilbraham Town Hall, Conference Room 1

**Member Attendees:** Roberta Albano, Charlie Bennett, Ted Malysz, Diane Testa  
Absent – Art Wolf

**Guest Attendee:** Bob Tourville

### **Summary of Meeting:**

#### 1. Plaque Presentation to Wilbraham Library

Charlie Bennett worked with The Awards Company in Springfield to create a professional plaque commemorating the contribution that the Wilbraham Town Library has made for more than a century and recognizing its location in the center of town for more than 50 years. Library Assistant Director Mary Bell came on behalf of the Library staff to accept the plaque. A professional photograph was taken by Dave Miles to capture the presentation of the plaque by the Historical Commission to the Library.

Dave Miles had also arranged for members of the Wilbraham 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee to sign the 2013 Wilbraham History book, edited by Joan Paris, and this book was also presented to Mary Bell to be displayed in the Town Library.

#### 2. Update on Selectmen's Meeting on 6/17/19

Roberta Albano and Diane Testa attended the June 17<sup>th</sup> Selectmen's meeting to discuss two items of importance to the Historical Commission. Nick Breault, Town Administrator, had arranged for them to be given the first position on the evening's agenda. Roberta spoke first, inquiring about the status of the Memorial School. This is the comment she prepared for the Selectmen:

*On behalf of the Wilbraham Historic Commission, we are putting forth an inquiry to you our Town Selectmen regarding the current historical status of The Memorial School. The intent of our interest in the School building is based on its historical significance to our town as it was named in memoriam and honored the WWI and WWII service members from our town who perished during the war and opened in 1950.*

*Throughout the years, the Commission has assumed an inventory of historical homes, buildings and other landmarks which require continuous review and updates going forward. The charge of the Commission's maintaining the inventory would include the Memorial School and its significance as a town historical building.*

*The Commission is dedicated and committed to the charge of preservation of history in our town. We would appreciate your acknowledgement of our inquiry of Memorial School and provide us with direction and guidance to broaden our scope of interest in this historical building honoring our town WWII soldiers and their service to our country.*

The Selectmen did not provide any information regarding the status of the building. Diane Testa had mentioned to the Selectmen that some towns have a demolition delay by-law, and given that several historic homes along Main Street have recently been demolished by developers, the Historical Commission would like to see some kind of demolition delay take place, with notification to our Commission.

Jeff Smith from the Town's Planning Board was in attendance at the Selectmen's meeting, and said he will bring up the concerns of the Historical Commission at a future Planning Board meeting.

Diane Testa spoke to the Selectmen about the Commission's signage project, to get their approval to go forward with the project. Selectman Bob Russell suggested the Commission pursue funding from the Community Preservation Commission (CPC) for the one-time funds being sought for creation of the signs. The Selectmen were agreeable to the wording of the signs, welcoming people to the town's historic center, given that the Town had voted down 2 or 3 times the creation of an historic district. Diane Testa will pursue obtaining an application from the CPC, and complete it this summer, with review by Historical Commission members. The applications are due by mid-January each year.

### 3. Signage Project Discussion

Bob Tourville mentioned that it would be helpful to talk to Town planners about appropriate locations to place our historical signs, such that the signs could be placed on the boundaries of what could be a future historic district. Bob also mentioned that with the upcoming development of the business and residential building for the center of town by the 6 Burt Lane, LLC, there has been a zoning change to the center of town, allowing for apartments to be built and residences to become taller. The zoning change affects buildings along Main Street, from Woodland Dell to Wilbraham-Monson Academy.

The historical signs are meant to be complementary to WMA's campus signs, with the possibility of our signs being blue with white lettering. Harry Auerbach of Agnoli Sign is looking into the costs of obtaining a sturdy and elegant pole to support these signs. Agnoli Signs estimates an approximate cost of \$7000 - \$8000 per sign, with installation by the Town. The installation of the signs may require a structural engineer to properly place the footings for the poles.

Jeff Smith from the Planning Board had mentioned at the Selectmen's meeting that his wife's business, New England Promotional Marketing, can produce signs as well, so Diane Testa will contact him this week.

### 4. Discussion on Repurposing Memorial School

While exiting the 6/17 Selectmen's meeting, Diane & Bobbi spoke to Jeff Smith about Memorial School. Jeff said the Planning Board had tossed around the idea of using the school as a new town hall, given that the Town has outgrown its present location. In that case, the present Town Hall could become a future senior center.

At the 6/18 Historical Commission meeting, Roberta mentioned that Wilbraham has a long tradition of preserving and reusing historical buildings in town. Therefore, the Commission should remind town planners and Selectmen that future building decisions should consider repurposing existing structures,

especially given their historic nature and charm. Ted Malysz spoke of the Children's Museum once being an old school that was moved from the Burleigh Road area to its present location.

It was mentioned that Paula Dubord, the head of the Town's Senior Center, is involved in planning a future site of the Town's Senior Center. Bob Tourville mentioned there may be a vote this fall as to where to place a future senior center. Ted Malysz noted that our Commission's focus is to preserve and acknowledge the historical buildings and sites in town, so the Commission should have an open dialogue with town decision makers regarding important buildings such as Memorial School. Diane Testa will contact Paula about our Commission's interest in repurposing existing buildings for a potential senior center.

Bob Tourville mentioned that Llewellyn Merrick had been chair of the Historical Commission in the past, and Llewellyn may be interested in being a part of the Commission again.

#### 5. Historical Pictures, Paintings, Songs & Art

Roberta Albano suggested that the Town Hall meeting rooms should have artwork that depicts something meaningful to the town. Bob Tourville may have some artwork that could be fitting for the building. Bob has also been trying to get recorded the oldest folk song in America, "On Springfield Mountain". There are many versions of the song that have circulated around the U.S. Bob does have a voice recording of Llewellyn Merrick singing the song – apparently the original version of the song. Bob is also trying to get a professional musician to record the original version of the song and perform it here in town, perhaps singer Tim Eriksen.

#### 6. Other business

The May 7, 2019 meeting minutes were unanimously approved 3-0, without changes.

Our next meeting is to be in September, 2019.

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413-599-0997

Approved by all 5 Historical Commission members on September 24, 2019.