



Town of Wilbraham Historical Commission

Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021

Time: 7 pm

Location: Town Hall, Conference Room 1

Attendees: Peter Ablondi, Roberta Albano, Charlie Bennett, Ted Malysz, Bill Steele, Diane Testa, Don Williams

Guests: John Broderick, Don Flannery

Summary of Meeting:

1. Meeting minutes from April 13, 2021 were read by Peter Ablondi to the commission, and were approved 7-0 with no changes.
2. **Membership on Historical Commission** – the Commission welcomed Peter Ablondi and Bill Steele as the newest members of the committee; their membership was approved by the Board of Selectmen in June 2021. Mike Rozolsky had been an Historical Commission member for one virtual meeting in April 2021, but then submitted his resignation from the commission afterwards.

Diane Testa disclosed that she is stepping down as chair, and given that her 3-year term on the Commission was ending as of June 30, she would also step off the Commission. Therefore, there will be one open position on the Historical Commission that will need to be filled. Town resident Ron Haislip had expressed interest in joining the Historical Commission, and John Broderick who is the CPC Chair said he preferred Ron to be our newest commission member since Ron offered to also serve as the appointee to the CPC. Ron has since reached out to Diane Testa, stating that he is no longer interested in serving on the Historical Commission.

Nominations for a new chair of the Historical Commission took place. When the discussion concluded, Don Williams was nominated as chair, and accepted the nomination. A vote of 7-0 made Don Williams the new chair to the Historical Commission. Bobbie Albano agreed to serve as the vice-chair, and Peter Ablondi offered to serve as the secretary for the Commission.

3. **Framing & Preservation of Town Photographs** – the Commission would like to seek funding for preserving and framing professionally a set of photographs that have a common theme, and then hang them in notable places in Town Hall, such as in the meeting rooms or in the lobby. Bobbie mentioned that custom framing will likely cost \$150 - \$200 per photograph. John Broderick stated that if we frame an original photograph, such as from the town library's archives, the project could qualify for CPC funding. It was suggested to invite Mary Bell from the town library to attend a future meeting, to discuss this project in more detail.
4. **Historical Signs by Art-Tec Signs** – Diane Testa updated the Commission that Art-Tec Signs is ready to complete the installation of the signs, in the coming weeks. Charlie Bennett will contact Dave Miles the photographer to come photograph us Commission members in front of the sign near Merrick Farm, once installed.

5. **Memorial School as an Historic Building** – we spoke of the process to register Memorial School with a state historical registry. The process would require multiple forms to be completed, and we'd likely have to pay on the order of \$3000 to hire an historical consultant. Ted Malysz mentioned that since the building was created as a memorial to townspeople in the armed services, we have an ethical responsibility to save some portion of the building. Presently, our town does not have a demolition law to protect buildings before they are torn down. Longmeadow has such a law.

Peter Ablondi has a contact at the Massachusetts Historical Commission who we may wish to contact about serving as a consultant to investigate Memorial School as a historic property. Bobbie suggested we contact Chris Skelly who maintains the Massachusetts Historical Preservation website and listserv, to help us with this process.

christopher.skelly@state.ma.us

There is a bronze plaque inside Memorial School that commemorates the service men & women who served in past wars. This plaque most certainly needs to be preserved.

6. **Future Project** – Peter Ablondi spoke of a future project that the Historical Commission could take on that would look into the underground railroad that went under the beginning of Mountain Road, connecting the basement of the Old Meeting House and the church basement next door. Llewellyn Merrick had spoken of the road caving in between the Old Meeting House and the church around 1928. There is an historical group at U. Mass that could investigate if there was a tunnel there. A ground sensor could detect such a tunnel – the cost may run on the order of \$10,000. If this were an archeological dig, the CPC could potentially fund such a project if a research plan were offered.
7. **Town Registry of Historic Buildings** – our commission has a responsibility of updating the town registry to include Memorial School as an historic building. There was a hard copy of this town registry – Carol Albano, a longtime chair of this commission, may know where this hard copy is. We would like to invite Carol to a future Historical Commission meeting. We would like to review this registry and bring it up to date. We could look to coordinate the listing of historic buildings on the town's website with this registry.

Prepared by: Diane Testa
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