

TOWN of HOLLISTON
HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, August 16, 2023

7:00 P.M.

Town Hall, Room 105

MEETING Minutes

CALLED TO ORDER 7:09; in attendance Benjamin Clarkson, Frank Chamberlain, Mary Greendale, Joanne Hulbert, James Keast, and Sara Zarrelli.

Resident Ellen Austin also attended.

New Business

- a. National Alliance of Preservation Commission s messaging guide.

Sara recommends reviewing certain sections, especially framing why preservation matters and the design review process. We discussed who preservation has been previously for (privileged people, often white), how to expand the kinds of things preserved, and how this guide can help us talk with potential allies who are focused on diversity and equity. Mary notes that she talked to an ally about the town strategic plan draft, and they advised her against using the word quaint. Some on the commission agreed that Holliston has never been (and likely never will) be quaint, which called to mind things like “ye olde shoppe”. The group agreed to review the document and work to incorporate the language suggestions when we talk to other people about preservation.

- b. Town Strategic Plan Draft

There is consensus that the draft lacks concrete language and that many of its goals are not supported by actionable tasks. In particular, the document ignores the town’s history and preservation efforts, along with other important threads identified in the Envisioning Future Holliston surveys. We agreed to develop a written statement in advance of the meeting on the public forum on 9/18, as well as to attend and speak. James agreed to draft the initial response.

- c. Welcome back to rejoining member Joanne Hulbert.

2. Old Business

a. Historic Building Inventory / Survey and Grant Application.

Sara sent Travis the write up on the grant (commission reviewed during July meeting) at his request. She will recirculate the piece to the group. Mary met informally with Travis yesterday; he noted that he will put a placeholder in the warrant for the matching grant to support the inventory and we need to present to the Select Board before warrant closes. He thinks our request is most likely to be funded by free cash. September 5 seemed the best date to go to the SB; Mary will suggest that to Travis/SB and confirm with the commission.

b. Town Cemetery Preservation project

Contracts are settled; we are waiting for Village Green to finish their current project. Anticipated start is early fall at Central Cemetery, then proceeding to South, East, Cedar, and Gorwin. We agree that we should make every effort to publicize the work happening at Central to develop public support for this and future projects. One future project could be using ground penetrating radar to confirm the presence of unmarked graves; records indicate that some poorer residents were buried at the cemetery edges without markers. The removal of trees and vegetation in this phase of the project will facilitate this.

c. Preservation of Miller tomb at Hopping Brook Cemetery

Village Green agreed that they can do the repair work on Miller Tomb. This will require a change order. There is a lot of interest from the commission in documenting and watching the restoration. HCAT has also expressed interest.

d. Revisions to Demolition Delay bylaw

No update. Group suspects that Batchelder house is likely to be coming up for review in the next six months.

e. Stone culvert replacement project – Water, Arch & Union Streets

James talked to Robert Walker (Highway Department) about why the culverts are being replaced. Very simply because they are crumbling. Joanne and Ben also made an expedition to examine the culverts and concur they are in bad condition with clear evidence of many layers of repairs since they were constructed. Joanne noted that it would be difficult to make an argument for preserving one layer over another. No additional documentation has been found to support the culverts having historical significance. It is the consensus of the committee that these culverts do not have historical significance. Frank will draft a memo to Travis outlining our findings and decision.

f. New member outreach

We still have one vacant seat. Frank will talk to Travis about it.

g. Explore possibility expanding accessibility/use of Metcalf Pump House

Frank will talk to Brad about his current use/future plans for the Metcalf Pump House.

h. Central Business District Design Review

When we attend the SB meeting on 9/5, we will also make design review committee (called per bylaws, the "Design Advisory Committee of the Planning Board." Sara will re-circulate the recommendations she drafted in July to propose to the SB.

i. Historical Commission records project.

i. We agree that with other activities in process, this should be tabled until the winter, though there is significant interest from the group in developing a better understanding of town-wide historic records and improving their accessibility. Actions to improve accessibility could include inventories to produce finding aids or records guides describing contents and location and making them more accessible to researchers. Currently, Mary, James, and Sara have worked with Liz Greendale to improve access, including developing researcher policies. Long term, some members are interested in trying to manage and maintain more town records beyond required record retention periods.

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. Minutes from May and July reviewed; changes proposed. Will be approved at September meeting.

James made motion to adjourn; Ben seconded. Passed unanimously.

8:48 ADJOURNMENT