

Whately Historical Commission
November 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Present (via Zoom): Donna Wiley (chair), Susan Baron, Allison Bell, Judy Markland, Alan McArdle

Meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm.

1. Minutes of September 25, 2023 meeting approved unanimously.
2. Center School
 - a. Town issued the RFP two weeks ago. Several cars were present for today's walkthrough of the building.
 - b. Special Town Meeting will be held next week with warrants asking for permission to sell the building and to request \$4500 for a proper and complete survey. The posted warrant gives the Selectboard discretion regarding the disposition of the building. The vote to sell the Center School will require a two-thirds majority at the Special Town Meeting. Donna encouraged Commission members to attend the meeting.
 - c. Brian solicited several quotes as basis for estimating the cost of a survey.
 - d. The recent Gazette article regarding the Center School included the option to demolish and rebuild, but the group agreed that is not possible, given that the lot is nonconforming and a variance is highly unlikely to be issued following a sale.
 - e. Judy has heard that three parties may be interested in the site for housing. The State may provide financial assistance.
 - f. Susan believes that the Selectboard intends to keep the Milk Bottle on the site, if possible. Once there is a potential buyer, there will be conversations regarding the best approach to protect the Milk Bottle. The discussions initiated by the Selectboard regarding moving the Milk Bottle are only in case a buyer insists it be moved.
 - g. Donna reminded the group that the Preservation Restriction is attached to the RFP as a draft and is not final. She will ask Brian for the RFP and distribute it to the group.
 - h. Donna proposed we write to the Selectboard to request that a member of the Historical Commission sit on the Proposal Review Committee, as was the plan during the process to seek someone to lease the building. This was passed unanimously.
3. North Street Project
 - a. Judy had previously circulated an outline for an Area Form. Judy will resend and we will discuss at our next meeting.
4. Historic Preservation Priorities in CPA Plan
 - a. Donna read the current priorities, which the Commission developed last year.

- b. Allison raised the question of whether archeological sites or resources are clearly included. Members agreed to add “archeological resources” to the first bullet.
 - c. Judy will investigate whether surveys are eligible for CPA funds.
 - d. We will discuss and finalize the priorities at our next meeting.
5. Other Business
- a. One of the Library Trustees has asked if sealing the bricks at the Library is eligible for CPA funding or would be considered maintenance. We will wait to see if a proposal is submitted before discussing.
 - b. Yellow Cemetery Barn – Two sills on the northeast side of the building need replacing, at an estimated cost of approximately \$4000 (contemporary materials) or \$6000 (historically appropriate materials and approach). It was agreed that the Historical Commission would be the appropriate entity to submit a proposal to the CPA for this work. Judy believes the building is eligible as a contributing building in the Historic District (it is believed to have been built c. 1850) and that it is important that the application make the case for this Town-owned barn as unique and significant, compared with other tobacco barns in town. Donna will ask Keith Bardwell and the Cemetery Commissioners to write supporting letters explaining how the barn is being used.
 - c. Relating to previously approved CPC projects, Judy and Allison reported that all but two windows have been replaced at the Church and the Quonquont silo work is completed.
6. Next Meeting: December 18 at 5pm via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50pm.