

**Braintree Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes – Virtual ZOOM
Monday, March 6, 2023 at 5:00 PM**

Approved: June 5, 2023

Members Present:

Ronald F. Frazier, Acting-Chair
Bob Harris, Member
Kate Nedelman Herbst, Member
Rayna Rubin, Member

Staff Present:

Melissa SantucciRozzi, Director – PCD
Elizabeth Manning - PCD

Members Absent:

Santina Giannino, Member

Remote Meeting Provisions

Due to the COVID19 Pandemic remote meetings have replaced physical meetings per the Governor’s Order on March 3/12/20 as most recently amended. Said order suspended the provisions of the Open Meeting Law to promote public health and social distancing. This meeting was not conducted in an open, publicly-accessible space. Public access to the meeting and deliberations were achieved by adequate, alternative means that allowed the public to follow the proceeding in a third-party communication technology known as ZOOM that is readily accessible to the public by the internet and the telephone.

Call the Meeting to Order

At 5:00 PM, Acting-Chair Ronald Frazier called the Meeting to order via Zoom. Acting-Chair Ronald Frazier requested Director Melissa SantucciRozzi conduct a Roll Call vote for Attendance:

Acting Chair Frazier – Here;
Member Giannino – Absent;
Member Harris – Here;
Member Herbst – Present;
Member Rubin – Present;

The Director wished to let the record show four (4) members were present for a quorum at 5:00 PM.

Vice Chair Frazier advises that we don’t have a lot to discuss, but he didn’t think the Commission should go too long without a meeting.

New Business: CPC Project – Update Historic Inventory

Vice Chair Frazier knows that we received a proposal that was 100 pages long, which he went through. As he understands, it is Eastern Architects from New York. He sees they have done preservation work, but he doesn’t know if they have done any historical survey work.

The Director mentions that our CPC Manager, Liz Manning, is here this evening, and she has been doing about 95% of this work. Melissa suggests that Liz provide a summary to the Commission members on the response that we received and then open it up to questions.

Liz Manning, CPC Manager, explains that she is excited to get this project moving along. She mentions that it is interesting because when this Historic Inventory Project went out to RFP in 2020 it was the same type of response, where there was a single response. There actually was a second response, but

they just missed the deadline. They were five minutes late in submitting, and they were supposed to submit both in print form and digitally. They only submitted digitally. Between being late and missing a key piece, that is clearly not a good start with any consultant. So, Eastern Architects remains the only viable candidate. They haven't done a ton of work in Massachusetts; recently they have done two projects – one in Uxbridge and one in Salem. However, they have done a significant amount of survey work in New York and New Jersey. On the cover page of their proposal, they talk about working with Michael Steinitz from Mass Historical specifically on assessing historic structures in Salem. Ms. Manning has put calls out to Uxbridge, the Planner in Salem, and Michael Steinitz, and she is curious to hear whether the concern that they haven't done this type of survey work in Massachusetts will hold them back as being a viable candidate. Ms. Manning put this bid out to about 20 different firms and received a polite "thanks but no thanks", even with an increased budget. Ms. Manning thinks Eastern Architects have excellent credentials, but they don't necessarily have a ton of experience with this specific service in Massachusetts.

Vice Chair Frazier's concern is that one year the Historical Commission had a survey done (he believes it was the East Braintree survey) by an organization that did not fill out the forms that were acceptable to Mass Historical. His concern is that they know exactly what they are supposed to do, and it would be acceptable to Mass Historical. After we spend all this money, we want a product that is usable.

Member Rubin asks if there is any way we can check with Mass Historical to see if they are familiar with them. The Director advises that Ms. Manning has already put a call in to Mass Historical, and we are waiting to hear back. In Eastern Architects response they include the Mass Historical specifications for requirements on their forms. They even get down to the level of type of paper it needs to be on. Mass Historical seems strict. Member Rubin thought Eastern Architects' response was pretty detailed, but she was surprised that we didn't hear from any local firms. She asks Ms. Manning what the budget was, and Ms. Manning states that we had a "not to exceed" \$45,000. This response came in just under the budget at \$44,000. Member Rubin's first thought, when she saw they were out of New York City, was that we were paying for high rent, but their billing rates weren't that high. Member Rubin was concerned about reimbursement of travel and hotel costs, but they said it was included. Member Rubin mentions that she thought we had to ask for more money. Ms. Manning clarifies that the initial allocation for the project back in 2019 was \$30,000, and it has already been voted on by the CPC. We put this bid out at \$45,000 knowing that the \$30,000 wasn't sufficient. In terms of the RFQ, they did come in right under the "not to exceed" amount. We will need to seek additional funds from the CPC to fund the contract if we do hire them.

Vice Chair Frazier advises that the only thing he would do is go back to Michael Steinitz and ask him if Eastern Architects have completed forms in the past that are acceptable to the state. Vice Chair Frazier doesn't want to go through what they did before in trying to get them to redo the forms. Ms. Manning asks Vice Chair Frazier, assuming that they haven't done the forms, but Michael Steinitz thinks they are capable of it, is that acceptable? Vice Chair Frazier would say so. Member Rubin suggests that they do the form and review it with Mass Historical to get the guidance that they need upfront. That would probably ease our fears. Vice Chair Frazier thinks that is an excellent idea. The Director explains that she and Ms. Manning reviewed Eastern Architects' work, and it looks like they have done a ton of work in New York and New Jersey, and they are trying to get more work in Massachusetts. The Director thinks their prices are low. Vice Chair Frazier is not sure what New York and New Jersey require, and he thinks Member Rubin's suggestion is good in that respect.

The Director thinks we could ask them to give us a sample of what they provided to New York or New Jersey, understanding the requirements could be different, but just so we could get an idea of the level of detail and quality that they provide. Vice Chair Frazier is hopeful that this will work out.

Ms. Manning expresses her surprise that there weren't more responses, but the Director thinks maybe it is because it's a small contract. Member Rubin wonders if it is because other potential bidders are short-staffed. Ms. Manning explains that they sent the RFQ directly to multiple consultants because it was under \$50,000.

Vice Chair Frazier would like to get this project off the ground, and he asks Ms. Manning to follow through on the suggestions, including making sure the consultant has a copy of the required form. Vice Chair Frazier suggests that we table this matter until next month's meeting, and at that time we can proceed with whatever action seems appropriate.

Director SantucciRozzi states there are a couple questions. We need to get another \$15,000 from CPC. She asks if the Historical Commission wants staff to start putting that application together. It is pretty straightforward. Vice Chair Frazier thinks it would be a good idea to do that. We need additional funds due to inflation. The Director advises that the CPC is meeting next Monday. The Director asks if the committee is interested in talking with the consultant to ask him questions. Member Herbst thinks if the committee has some samples that is fine. She thinks we could always re-evaluate after samples. Ms. Manning confirms that she will get some samples from the New York and New Jersey work that the consultant has done, she will get feedback from Michael Steinitz, and she will present to him an idea of the consultant doing a pilot form. Member Rubin suggests that, if the consultant cannot do that before being hired, we ask how they would do that as part of the process. Vice Chair Frazier thinks we should explain to the consultant that we have had surveys before that were not acceptable. The Director explains that if staff cannot get the application ready for the next CPC meeting on Monday night, then staff will put it on for April. The Director advises that staff have mentioned this matter to the Chairperson of Community Preservation, Dr. Kurzberg.

Old Business: Great Oak Site Visit

The Director asked Bartlett Tree about doing a meeting in the Spring and if there would be an extra fee. He advised that he would be happy to meet with a few people at the tree in the spring to answer any questions. This would not be something that he would charge for. The Director knows that the committee is interested in having that discussion, and there are additional people that would also be interested. However, the Director doesn't want this gentleman to show up and find 75 people standing in the road. The Director advises that Councilor Boericke also had some deep interest in this, and it being her district, the Director is meeting with her about a couple items of interest, this being one of them. The Director advises that there is some money in a Consultant Line Item under Historic that we can use. The Director will speak with the Councilor and then get back in touch with Bartlett to ensure that he is okay attending a meeting with a bunch of people. The Director wants it to be educational and under control. She is thinking some time in late April would be a good. Member Rubin mentions that, if the Commission is there, it would be the equivalent of a public meeting. Member Herbst agrees. Member Harris sees that tree a lot, and he asks if it makes sense to schedule the meeting for a little later than that to see what part of the tree is still alive and producing leaves. If we do it too early, we won't know that. Member Harris suggests the end of May, as we should be able to see at least buds of leaves. Vice Chair Frazier and Director SantucciRozzi agree.

Member Herbst states that is a valid point, and Member Rubin is completely right. If the Commission is all there together, it must be advertised. The Director confirms that we post site visits. The Director will provide an update at the Historical Commission's next meeting in April.

Administrative Business - Commission Vacancies (2 Members)

Vice Chair Frazier asks what has happened with Carl Johnson. The Director advises that nothing has happened. When she sees Attorney Johnson, she reminds him to get his resume in. Whenever she sees the mayor, she reminds him that we need Commission members. The Director would encourage all Historical Commission members to reach out to the mayor, expressing that we need full membership. That would be helpful. Vice Chair Frazier states that everyone knows Attorney Johnson's capabilities, and he has been on this Commission before. The other thing that Vice Chair Frazier is concerned about is that he doesn't know when they will be starting with proposals for the fire station, and he expresses that the Commission needs someone with some expertise to advise on what is appropriate there. It has to be an architect. The last time there was work there, the Commission had Elizabeth Mees as a member. She understood the terminology. Member Rubin would say, in the event that we do not have an architect on the Commission, that we need to hire an owner's rep to help in the review. The Director advises that the town has an OPM (Project Manager) that is working with the architect. The Director believes they are from a company called Vertex, and they are working on behalf of the town. Regardless of that, the Director agrees that the Commission needs a member that is an architect. Member Rubin states we need someone that is looking out for historic interests. The Director will bring this up with the mayor when she meets with him next. Members Rubin and Herbst discuss calling on Elizabeth Mees to provide a review in the event the Commission doesn't have an architect. Director SantucciRozzi advises that she has been making recommendations throughout the project on items primarily on the exterior of the structure that are absolutely not going to be acceptable or tolerated in the district. She has made that clear; they are making those changes. They will likely go to Community Preservation, but she has made it clear that no engineered materials or plastic or PVC will be acceptable on the exterior. We need materials that are in keeping with the age of the structure and the composition of the district. Vice Chair Frazier also recommends contacting Elizabeth Mees to see if she wants to step in and help with this project. The Director states any way that she would be willing to participate would be gladly accepted.

Adjournment

Member Rubin **Motion** to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Member Herbst. All in favor by Vote: Acting-Chair Frazier – Yes; Member Harris – Yes; Member Herbst – Yes; Member Rubin – Yes.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Louise Quinlan, Planning and Community Development