

Braintree Historical Commission

Minutes

April 5, 2010

Thayer Public Library

Present: Elizabeth Mees (Chair) Kate Nedelman Herbst
Paul Carr Al Varraso
Ron Frazier

Also present: Christine Stickney, Director of Planning & Community Development.

Meeting convened at 7:05 PM

Minutes:

Kate Nedelman Herbst **MOTION** to accept the minutes of 3/1/10, seconded by Al Varraso - unanimously voted.

Sustainable Review Ordinance:

Elizabeth Mees informed members of a meeting she and Christine had with Mayor Sullivan to discuss a potential sustainable review ordinance process – she provided members with meeting notes. In summary, they found the Mayor’s response positive with some concerns/questions for the Commission. Mayor Sullivan suggested considering another name for the proposed ordinance rather than the negative connotation of demolition delay – he like somewhat sustainable review but suggested something referencing historic (i.e.: historical review etc) – members concurred to work on that. He emphasized the need to educate the public as to the “documentation” aspect of the ordinance and it is not a prohibition of development. Elizabeth noted she had brought materials to show the Mayor relative to lost properties to reconstruction. She also noted the need to work with Chris Skelly of MHC to possibly have a meeting with the Commission and the others to talk more about these proposed ordinances. She would like to include Holbrook in such a forum. It was agreed to contact MHC and try to set something up. Members agreed the key component to the ordinance success is the public education and outreach.

Kate Nedelman Herbst provided members with a handout of some recent changes (2/1/10) to the proposed ordinance – she explained that additional language was added to clarify the Intent and Purpose, revised delay from 12 months to 6 months and revisions to language relative to the documentation of portions of the architecture. Ron Frazier felt the change of 12 down to 6 months is good now with staff the Commission can handle these requests. Paul Carr questioned how the process works now if a demolition request is proposed – Christine responded a demolition permit is sought from the Building Department and there is no other entity involved – if this ordinance passes – then the process would include notice to the BHC and no demolition can forward until action has been taken. Elizabeth Mees noted the public outreach and education is fundamental to the successful passage and that will take time. Paul Carr questioned if we should be focusing on activities that will show an accomplishment for this fiscal year – such as the

Page 2
BHC Minutes 4/5/10

Old Thayer Library. Elizabeth Mees felt that this can still move forward but may be more into another year fiscal year before passage.

Old Thayer Library Update:

Elizabeth Mees reported that seven firms responded to the RFQ/RFP with proposals. A designer selection committee appointed by the Mayor has been working through the proposals and of the seven; the committee has invited three to come on 4/12 for an interview. Paul Carr questioned the composition of the committee – Christine responded that E. Mees, A. Varraso, L. Raiss, R. Forsberg and C. Stickney were chosen by the Mayor to review and recommend. E. Mees noted that the proposals are very good making a decision difficult and that in the interim MHC announced the MPPF grant came out and is due 4/9/10. Christine noted that the Old Thayer Library is not ready for submission this round but that the Mayor had instructed her to apply for the remaining portion of the mall design. Paul Carr expressed some reservation about this in that he felt no decisions as to which alternative design is being approved. He also questioned if funded was the Town tied to accomplish the project as designed with no ability to modify? Ron Frazier noted that anything proposed with the Mall will require approval of the BHC given its location within the Local Historic District. Christine noted this merely seeking funding at this point in time, all necessary permits would be obtained – she questioned if the jurisdiction of BHC relative to the district was for structures only – Ron Frazier expressed his opinion anything that goes on in the district is subject to approval of the BHC. This matter will be researched further. Paul Carr again expressed concerns given the issues with Thayer Academy across the street, traffic circulation around Old Thayer Library and what would be on the green area of the mall relative to dedications. After much discussion, the members agreed with submitting an application for MPPF funding for Mall and see if it would be an eligible project.

Elm Street Cemetery:

Christine Stickney reported the contracts have been signed with Barbara Donahue and returned to her – work is expected to commence next week. Al Varraso questioned if the additional CPA funds have been approved. Christine responded the CPA committee will be meeting on 4/12/10 – they will begin reviewing the second round of applications. Christine also noted that the BHC in addition to this article may need to meet with the CPA regarding the second article for inventory funds. Ron Frazier questioned the CPA funds originally approved for the inventory – Christine reported that when the new members of the CPA came on board all funds that hadn't been used or had funds remaining were reviewed and in the direction of the Mayor recommended for return to their original CPA accounts except for the Elm Street Cemetery. The CPA recommended they be returned to their respective accounts to the Town Council. Ron Frazier expressed his opinion that these Inventory forms are critical to many of the historic resources in Town for documentation and efforts to pass the ordinance previously discussed.

Page 3
BHC Minutes 4/5/10

Elizabeth Mees noted the importance of the inventory forms and that she had spoken with the Mayor about date boards on homes throughout the community. Paul Carr noted that this is something the Braintree Historical Society is interested in doing. Members agreed that would be a good thing for the Society to do and Ron Frazier offered his assistance with information about such a program that was successful under him when working in Dedham.

Under Other:

Invitation to Comment – 197 Quincy Avenue:

Christine provided members of a copy of a letter from EBI dated 2/17/10 and plans relative to a proposed telecommunication installation (unipole/flagpole) at 197 Quincy Ave. Pursuant to section 106 of MHC review – local historic comments are offered an invitation to comment. Members reviewed the materials and noted that since it is not within a local historic district that they had no position on the matter. The petitioner will be subject to the applicable town zoning ordinance. Staff will notify the petitioner of “no position on the matter”.

National Historic District:

Ron Frazier would like members to be thinking of the establishment of a National Historic District in the Town. He explained his concern with the federal and state government coming in and taking by eminent domain a structure or property of historical significance. He noted the relationship of the MBTA commuter rail station to Braintree’s Historical Center District. Members agreed to put this item on for discussion on June’s agenda.

Administrative Matters:

Christine asked members to be thinking about a summer schedule – reservation of meeting space is difficult. Members agreed to come back to the next meeting with a possible date for a summer meeting. Members did establish their fall meeting schedule for 9/13/10 and in the subsequent months the first Monday of each month through December 2010.

Kate Nedelman Herbst **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Al Varraso – unanimously voted.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15PM

Respectfully submitted

Christine Stickney, Director
Planning and Community Development