

Braintree Historical Commission

Minutes

January 3, 2011

Thayer Public Library

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

Also present: Barbara Donahoe, Cultural Resource Consultant
 J. Williams
 Bob Aicardi, Braintree Forum reporter
 Christine Stickney, Director of Planning & Community Development.
 (Arrived at meeting 7:50PM from Town Council Meeting)

Meeting convened at 7:00 PM

Elm Street Cemetery Update:

Barbara Donohue the consultant hired by the Commission to develop a Preservation Management Plan for the Elm Street Cemetery provided an update on the work to date. Barbara noted that they are in the final stages of the project; historical research has been completed, a ground penetrating radar survey and now the compilation of the report is underway for hopefully delivering by the end of January into February.

Barbara Donohue reported on research she uncovered from the church records of Reverend Niles from 1717 to 1762 that show there was 682 burials in the cemetery during this time period. In 1762 a second parcel was added to the cemetery that is indicated by five (5) granite markers. In 1825 an additional parcel was added where there had been designed sixteen (16) tomb locations however the Town actually only built fourteen (14) tombs. Thirteen of the original fourteen tombs were removed by the Town between the years of 1947 to 1991 and one remains in dire condition.

Barbara also discussed the preliminary findings of the Condition Assessment performed by Dr. Michael Trinkley, from the Chicora Foundation in the late summer and early fall. Using pages from his report, Barbara showed how each stone photographed and documented in an inventory but noted not all burials have stones. Barbara will integrate Dr. Trinkley's report into hers for final presentation to the Historical Commission and the Town. Barbara also agreed that she would be glad to come back and make a presentation at the Cemetery if members and the general public would be interested. All materials will be provided in electronic format for publishing on the website. A major setback in the project has been that there is no surveyed plan locating the plots which Barbara commented has to exist given the layout on the ground. She continues to search for information at the Registry of Deeds and in the Town records. In the interim a plan will be prepared graphically but the Town may want to consider using their GPS equipment to locate the stones and create a plan.

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Elizabeth Mees questioned when the Historical Commission can expect the report to be done and Barbara responded she hopes end of January or February at the latest. Paul Carr asked if she uncovered individual family deeds. Barbara responded yes there some but there others that she assumes the deeds were never recorded. She did note to members that her research uncovered that there were at least thirteen Negros buried in the cemetery which was highly unusual given the time period and that is of interest to Mass Historical. Ron Frazier questioned a particular location where he had witnessed stones laying on the grounds. Barbara was aware of the area but couldn't confirm beneath the ground definitively. Barbara did note that the cemetery has loss a substantial amount of its historical character and the remaining rhododendron is one of the last original species in the cemetery and care should be given to its future protection. In addition Dr. Trinkley will be making recommendations on the vegetative restoration. Barbara did caution restoration of the cemetery will be costly and many times once these reports are completed it is disheartening to learn Towns do not move forward – she stressed this is the role of the Historical Commission. Elizabeth Mees thanked Barbara for coming to the meeting and expressed the excitement of the Commission to review the report once provided to them and Barbara Donohue left the meeting at 8PM.

Upcoming regional workshop – C. Skelly

Elizabeth Mees noted that the announcement of the upcoming workshop on January 24, 2011 was in the Boston Globe. Christine Stickney reported that the announcement went to the local media and cable – she also noted cable is unsure they can cover it since there is a School Committee meeting that same night. Letters have been drafted to neighboring communities to the Historical Commissions and societies inviting them to the workshop. Members discussed possible handouts, presentation boards etc for the meeting. Members also asked Christine to invite the councilors and the Mayor.

Gallivan House Progress report:

Christine provided members with a draft report prepared by Mr. MacMillan, their peer consultant for the inclusion of the Gallivan House and park into the local historic district. Members were asked to review it and provide comments/revisions back to her before 1/24/11. She and Mr. MacMillan will be meeting with Chris Skelly before the workshop to hopefully discuss it for submission to MHC. Christine felt it may be possible to hold the public hearing in March if MHC seems to have no problems with its inclusion.

Historic Inventory Forms:

Christine noted that this is relative to the CPA request for funding. Elizabeth Mees showed members a poster board of locations throughout the town of historic structures that would demonstrate the need for the forms. She will be adding some additional work to the board and returning to the CPA committee at a future meeting to answer many of their questions. Christine noted that with every CPA historical project it must meet two criteria: 1) resource is listed or eligible for listing in the state register of historic places or

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2) The historical commission determines that there is local historical significance to justify expenditure of historical funds from CPA. Kate Nedelman Herbst offered a **MOTION** that a historical inventory of properties, deemed historically significant per the Mass Historical Commission guidelines, are considered historic resources locally significant under the CPA criteria and would be eligible for CPA funding, seconded by Al Varraso. Discussion among the members as to the motion raised concerns by member Ron Frazier as to the issue of historic significance and after some discussion it was agreed that the MHC guidance would be thresholds for which properties would be inventoried. Elizabeth Mees noted on the Town maps most of the properties were built in the 17th century and their local historic significance is easily presentable individually.

American Legion and Old Thayer Library update:

There was nothing to report on the American Legion project

Christine provided members with copies of the structural assessment from Aberjona Engineering for their review. Elizabeth Mees noted that the “knob and tube wiring” shown in the pictures will have to be removed and asked Christine to note to BH+A. Christine also noted they continue to wait for news from Congressman Lynch’s office as to the federal earmark status. In addition Christine noted they are watching for the notice of the MHC Preservation Fund grant fund round that should be out soon.

Administrative:

Al Varraso **MOTION** to accept the minutes of 10/4/10, seconded by Kate Nedelman Herbst – unanimously voted.

Paul Carr **MOTION** to accept the minutes of 12/6/10, seconded by Kate Nedelman Herbst – unanimously voted.

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:30PM

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Stickney, Director
Planning and Community Development