

Braintree Historical Commission
Minutes
Monday, December 1, 2014
Johnson Chambers – Braintree Town Hall

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

Also Present: Jack Glassman & Ed Film, Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype, Inc.
Christine Stickney, Director of Planning and Community Development

Meeting convened at 7:10 PM

New Business:

Town Hall Exterior and Accessibility project – Christine gave a brief explanation on the purpose of tonight’s meeting and the history behind the proposal shown on the handouts that has come for discussion tonight before the Braintree Historical Commission (BHC). The proposal is option “D” – in which BH+A has shown a 1:20 sloping walkway upward along an earthen berm from the parking lot with stairs beneath the portico that brings a person to the first floor of Town Hall. It also proposes changes the parking configuration of the existing parking lot around the proposed walkway. Al Varraso questioned if there was headroom with the doorway and Jack Glassman responded yes and explained the interior renovations that would have to accomplish as well as exterior to make it flat with the first floor. Ron Frazier expressed his displeasure with the proposal. Ron explained in the past, the historical Commission was adamant no change to the front of the building and this proposal changes the appearance of the building drastically from the street view. Elizabeth Mees noted no structural changes to the front of the building are proposed, the structural change is with the door and stairs beneath the portico and that the berm serves the dual process of landscaping enhancements to a large parking lot that is currently seen from the street. Ron Frazier disagreed and is of the opinion it is a major change to the view. Paul Carr questioned is a ramp could be added to the French’s common side of the building at Cahill and members commented on proximity to parking and the need for access to first floor where most Town business occurs. Members did agree the front stair case over the berm should be eliminated they did not like the appearance. The public could go through the front door if parking in front of the building. Christine commented no decision has to be made tonight since this was the first appearance of the proposal it is more a fact finding and sense of what people like and disliked. She also said this is why the BHC is meeting tonight as well with the Commission on Disability to hear their first impressions.

(7:45PM) The BHC members and BH+A representatives left Johnson Chambers and joined the Commission on Disability Meeting in Fletcher Hall.

BH+A representatives provided their presentation again for both the BHC members and the Commission on Disability (COD). Crystal Evans-Pradham, COD member commented that she is in a wheelchair but that walkway would concern her given the side slopes and that railings should be on both sides. Lynn Vaillencourt, COD member and a physical therapist and member of the commission noted that many other conditions impair people who also need universal accessibility – vision, equilibrium, strokes and heart conditions so the walkway surface has to be non-skid and should have railings at various heights. Other COD members questioned the walkway and needs along it such as retaining walls to sit on etc. Christine given the numerous remarks asked the consultants to show the other two options to support why this option was the preferred by the Mayor. The first option shown was a glass enclosure of the

portico with a lift inside it to bring it to the first floor. COD members had a lot of concerns with this proposal and were not in favor of the lift. The second proposal was for an exterior ramp that traversed back and forth from the behind the exterior wall of the vault up to the landing of the stairs to the portico – it included a small wall in front of it at the parking area. Robin Torpey, COD questioned the proximity to the existing ramp – Christine noted the existing ramp is another discussion – it is to remain and be improved so it is not a case of one ramp replacing another but rather two point of universal access. Lynn Vaillencourt, COD questioned if there was room for both ramps to meet together into a landing area and then have HC parking right there. Jack and Ed felt there was not enough room to accommodate the required slope of a ramp to have both merge.

Elizabeth Mees of the BHC, suggested people look at the library walkway – there is a slight curb/wall that provides definition of the travel aisle and then the hand rails could be at different levels and lighting could be added to illuminate the ramp/walkway which is a concern of the COD. Elizabeth noted the 1:20 slope is very flat however COD members acknowledge but feel the walkway needs railings for the side slopes and assistance to people using it. Christine suggested that the architects have heard the concerns and that we will let them return to address and come back with something to show all at a future meeting.

(8:45PM) The BHC members left Fletcher Hall and returned to Johnson Chambers.

BHS Historic House Plaque Program – Chris Barney from Braintree Historical Society (BHS)

Chris attended the meeting to show the Historical Commission a prototype of a plaque the BHS is promoting for sale to residents for their historical homes. Chris explained the work that went into the prototype as to the type of paint, font, available sizes etc. Ron Frazier questioned what is the proposed program and it was explained a residence 50+ years, BHS will sell the plaques and will outreach to residents through available Historical resources. Ron cautioned against using names due to the accuracy and suggested only dates be provided. He also asked who decided on the shape he suggested oval plaque is better and smaller in overall size. Chris noted he did to accommodate the Town Seal and there are two sizes 10 x 14 and 10 x 16 members discussed the pros and cons of the size as to visibility from the street, intent to promote more historic knowledge in the community. Paul Carr also expressed his concern with the size and offered a motion to have the BHC the option of choosing the design – the motion failed to obtain a second. Elizabeth Mees commented that the BHS is handling the program and they should bring before the commission the prototype so that we can approve and because of the Town Seal. Ron Frazier questioned if BHS needs authorization from the Town to use the seal? It was agreed that Chris would take the commission's comments into consideration and go back to the Society and then return to the Commission.

Given the late hour all other matters were tabled until the January meeting. The chair would like to have BH+A come back with regards to the discussion earlier to see what can be done.

Ron Frazier **MOTION** to accept the minutes of 11/3/14, seconded by Kate Nedelman Herbst- unanimously voted.

Al Varraso **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Kate Nedelman Herbst – unanimously voted. Meeting adjourned at 9:15PM

Respectfully submitted – Christine Stickney, Director Planning & Community Development