

Braintree Historical Commission
Minutes
Monday, June 15, 2015
Cahill Auditorium – Braintree Town Hall

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

Also Present: Christine Stickney, Director of Planning and Community Development

Meeting convened at 7:05 PM

Old Thayer Library/Town Hall (Accessible Plaza Concept) – Members were provided with a colored handout of two proposals “A” & “B” done by Bargmann + Hendrie Associates (BH+A) that shows a plaza of green space and walkways that would connect the Town Hall and Old Thayer Library (OTL). Elizabeth Mees explained as the process of trying to make Town Hall more accessible on the first floor was progressing and the need to have OTL accessible it became apparent that perhaps a connection via walkways would benefit the review. Working with BH+A different renditions were discussed and the final one recommended by staff to bring to the Commission was this one that utilized walkways at a 1:20 slope. Elizabeth noted that Mayor Sullivan has reviewed this as well and expressed his vision of perhaps a gathering area in the center that could have the Town Seal laid into the stone work.

Ron Frazier did not care for the pergola he noted that it was not in keeping with the local historic district. Elizabeth Mees asked if the pergola were removed what did he think – she commented you don’t have to all be old you can integrate new as well but this proposal brings the buildings together. Al Varraso asked about handicap access how it works – Christine pointed out the access from both sides and to each building. She commented that the intent is to make it as maintenance free as is possible. Al asked about snow and who would be responsible to for clearing – Christine responded that she assumed the same people that do the Town Hall are now – DPW and custodians. Kate Herbst commented it would enlighten the space and Christine added the safety benefits of the separating parking from the farmers’ market area as well as it would eliminate the cut through that happens in the morning and night between Thayer students and traffic on Washington Street that cut through. The parking lot to the rear would be for employees and the front would be for customers and general public.

Paul Carr commented that it would be inviting to skateboarders and that the columns of the pergola deterred from the historical look. Members discussed that lighting could be in the walls or directly down from the pergola and shrubbery would cover the embankment.

Kate Nedelman Herbst **MOTION** to approve concept “B” with the medallion center providing two connections between each of the buildings shown as inclined walkways with walls that would have masonry facades to match the two buildings, seconded by Al Varraso – vote 4:1 (P. Carr against).

Kate Nedelman Herbst questioned if they needed to vote on the “vertical shading” element of the design – Ron Frazier felt it should be open and that it too much away from the two buildings.

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Paul Carr added that we are asking to support something we don't even know how much it will cost and where would the funding come from? Christine noted that CPA funds could contribute to a portion as to the ADA accessibility of the historic buildings and the passive open space/recreation area for the green space. Elizabeth Mees rebutted we are voting on a concept at this point in time – further work and cost estimating would still have to be done but there is no point in proceeding with the architect until we know our concept. Paul Carr felt the complexion of the whole area is being changed and Elizabeth Mees reminded him that the civil war statute was originally in the middle of the two buildings before that was a focal point. Al Varraso commented the problem is the buildings were never designed to be accessible and they have to be to use as proposed.

Elizabeth Mees noted to members that OTL is now on the National Register and with each year it sits there unoccupied it is placing it in greater danger of deterioration – this proposal provides a visible element that does not take away from either of the two buildings – if ramps are proposed that would be a great impact to the structures. Kate Nedelman Herbst added this is a vibrant community and this adds to a sense of community center with no violation of the historic properties. Elizabeth noted that OTL needs more scrutiny to have a matching portico entrance that mirrors town hall and then it would be balanced. Paul Carr stated he had always understood that there would be a review of the OTL rear in particular those windows and the need to restore the granite back – Elizabeth attempted to explain that no matter what is done the granite is to remain and there was never any proposal to restore the windows to their original status. Ron commented again his displeasure with the Pergola and members discussed what the structure actually was a Pergola or shade covering?

Kate Nedelman Herbst **MOTION** that this walkway should have a partial covered structure designed that would be in keeping with the Local Historical District (LHD), seconded by AL Varraso – vote 3:2 (P. Carr & R. Frazier against)

Christine asked the members to discuss the rear addition of the OTL building and their thoughts as to the 1) agreement that the restroom(s) would be in the addition adjacent to the main floor – members said yes 2) a flat roof as depicted – question was asked about snow load that it should be discussed with the architect 3) Idea of the portico to match Town Hall – more information as to the material to be used would be needed and a design. Christine said she would discuss these items with the architects.

Updates:

Town Hall Exterior Assessment – Christine reported it has been completed as has the roof project and the next big step is to work on the ADA accessibility.

John Adams Park – no status report

Elm Street Cemetery – work is coming close to completion and the next steps would be the fence and walls. The chair of the CPA Linda Raiss has been asking about the fence and getting funding for this to be restored. Christine reported that the office has been very busy.

Thayer Grading Permit – Christine informed members that if they see work underway at the rear of the campus that Thayer has a grading permit for updating the ball fields and installing drainage. There was no review under the LHD by the Historical Commission required since no structure was demolished or erected.

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Summer Intern Project – Local Historic District web page

Christine reported that Mike Crawford who is interning with the department will be working on a page that informs the public about the local historic district and the different structures within the district.

We hope to have it go live on the web in the fall will keep the members informed.

Kate Nedelman Herbst questioned the status of the demolition delay bylaw and Christine said she would look into it however there is still no Town Solicitor within the Town.

Administrative

Members agreed to set up a meeting for August 10, 2015

Al Varraso **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Kate Nedelman Herbst – Unanimous voted
Meeting adjourned at 8:30PM

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Stickney, Director
Planning and Community Development