

Northbridge Historical Commission

Wednesday, November 29, 2023 @ 7 PM

Approved Meeting Minutes

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Approval of Minutes – September 27, 2023

Motion made by K. Warchol, "To approve the minutes of September 27, 2023". Seconded by D. Potty,

Motion passes with unanimous approval.

Downtown Crossing – Updates

Mark Deweerd provided an update from the Downtown Whitinsville Downtown Crossroads Historic District (DWDCHD). Commission shared that the Operations Handbook has been completed and it was voted that a copy would be shared with the NHC. This is a tremendous initiative to develop a guiding document for all members. The Commission inquired as to the purpose of its review when it involves buildings that fall under the Mass State Historical Preservation or under the auspices of the NHC and the best route to take regarding issuing certificates of non-applicability. A good example of this is reflected in the work at the Cotton Mill Apartments. Questions arose about whether historical buildings, under any State restrictions or other, should be included in the DWDCHD listing of properties within the Downtown Crossing area. The unanimous consensus was to include historical properties of importance in any literature or preservation initiatives to highlight their importance and create awareness within our community and at State or federal levels. It was agreed that it is important to continue the collaboration between the NHC and DWDCHD as it demonstrates a common mindset regarding the importance of preserving our historical buildings, etc. The process allows for the sharing of feedback and information regarding the historical significance, methods of preservation, and any State or local restrictions that may be part of the proposed work. The collaborative efforts will positively demonstrate community engagement if funding is requested from grants, local sponsorship, or the Town. The State has preservation restrictions that supersede local restrictions if any funds are provided to preserve the building. Most of these restrictions are for external modifications; however, an internal restriction may be acquired. The following buildings fall under State restrictions: Alternative Mills, Cotton Mill Apartment, Whitinsville Community Center, Trinity Episcopal Church, and Town Hall. It is recommended that research be taken as a matter of information regarding other structures within the DWDCHD that may fall under State restrictions. K. Warchol stated the State has always come before any historical preservation Town groups to offer feedback and recommendations.

It was agreed that the NHC would complete the non-applicability application and prepare a letter stating the reasons and the desire to continue the mutually beneficial collaboration on all historic preservation projects, including those that may overlap with the State, NHC & DWDCHD authority and historical districting.

Cotton Mill Improvements – Update

K. Warchol stated that the review of the project, including replacing windows, screens, and painting, has satisfactorily met the restrictions required by the Mass State Historical Preservation, NHC, and in collaboration with the DWDCD.

CPC Historic Preservation – Fletcher House

C. Johnson, NHC representative to CPC, provided an update as to the status of the CPC Planning Grant request for funds to be expended from the CPC Historical Resources Account to conduct an architectural and structural assessment of the property and a second request for the replacement of the outdated boiler/burner. The Planning Grant funding requests are now moving forward in the process and will be presented at a public meeting scheduled for December 12, 2024. Final approval by CPC at this meeting moves the projects to the warrant and the spring town meeting. Any funds expended from CPC funds must be approved by the taxpayer at the Town Meeting. The link to the meeting is on the town's website and made available for NHC members to attend. A grant was submitted to the DAR to approve funds for the burner replacement. Discussion regarding a possible project involving the ancestry search of the soldiers who fought in the American Revolution and the DAR, which had a Northbridge chapter until it disbanded in 1963, will continue.

NHC Budget & Grants

C. Johnson provided a brief update on the status of the NHC town budget balance, donations, and awarded grant funding.

Riverwalk Map – Subcommittee

C. Johnson inquired as to the progress of any subcommittee work. Outreach and research has begun. It was determined that multiple maps exist for the area at present. Several options and design suggestions were made regarding what the addition of the Linwood Riverwalk area might look like. It was decided that a special meeting be held in January to determine what can be modified to the existing walking map within the scope of the budget.

Historical Signage

C. Johnson and K. Warchol discussed the status of the non-existent and decaying historical markers within the community of Northbridge, highlighting the demise of the wooden Rockdale sign (placed in 1977) and the fact that not each Village of Northbridge is equally represented. Our signage has no consistency, and the much-needed replacement of the Rockdale sign provides an opportunity. A lengthy discussion ensued, and the following motion was moved and amended by K. Warchol, M. Deweerd, D. Potty, and C. Johnson.

Motion “To approve the expenditure of a not to exceed the amount of \$1,000 from its operational budget for one design of a historical marker, including the scope of materials and work, for each of the five villages in Northbridge and that expending such funds are contingent upon the determination that funding exists to replace, at a minimum the Rockdale sign, and additional 4 village signs.” *Motion passes with unanimous approval*

Coming Events:

Northbridge Historical Society Guest Speaker Series – December 14, 2023, The Spirit of Christmas Past: Four Centuries of Christmas in New England by guest lecturer Ken Turino. All are invited. This event is made possible by a grant awarded by the Northbridge Cultural Council.

The next meeting will be determined based on the potential for two subcommittees to meet.
January if feasible and deemed necessary.

Move to adjourn at 8:30 PM.