

Webster Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes, February 23, 2021

A meeting of the Webster Historical Commission was held on Tuesday, January 26, 2021 via remote participation / Zoom in accordance with Governor Baker's emergency order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A, §20 due to the public health emergency relating to the Corona virus pandemic.

Present: Chairman Ted Avlas, Clerk Elaine Davies, and Members Curtis Cleaves and Olivia Mason

Also Present: Ann Morgan - Director of Planning & Economic Development; Kelly Balderelli.

1. Chairman Avlas called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and read the Governor's Orders regarding Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A § 20. He noted that the meeting was being recorded for the purposes of note taking. Anyone seeking to record the meeting for personal use must notify the Chairman in advance. The Chairman took attendance of the Board by roll call vote: Ms. Davies – Present; Mr. Cleaves – Present; Ms. Mason - Present; Mr. Avlas – Present.

2. Action Items

- a. **Draft Meeting Minutes - January 26, 2021.** Two minor edits were made. Mr. Avlas asked if there were any additional changes or edits to be made to the draft meeting minutes. There were none. Motion to approve the minutes of January 26, 2021 as edited made by Ms. Davies, seconded by Mr. Cleaves. Motion passed unanimously, 4-0 by roll call vote: Cleaves - YES; Davies - YES; Mason - YES; Avlas - YES.

3. Old Business

- a. **Tercentenary Marker - Thompson Road:** Mr. Avlas stated that he had arranged a site visit to Memorial Beach with Recreation Director, Carole Marchand, for Wednesday, February 24th at 11:00 a.m. to discuss potential relocation of the sign to the Beach where people could view the sign in a safer location. He added that members of the Commission were welcome to join him on the site visit. Mr. Avlas stated that he would file a report with the Commission outlining his findings.

Mr. Cleaves reported that he had received a price from the State to repair and refurbish the sign. Depending on the extent of work required on the crack, the total price would range between \$13,000 and \$15,000. Ms. Davies stated that the restoration cost was a lot of money and who would pay the costs. Mr. Cleaves noted that the sign would be restored by the State in accordance with specifications set by the Secretary of the Interior.

Mr. Cleaves noted that, when first installed, the signs were placed along highways and byways for public viewing as they travelled along those roads. Moving it to another location would require permission from the State. But the question remains, who actually owns the sign. Ms. Morgan noted ownership likely falls under MassDOT and that would be a good place to start an inquiry.

Mr. Avlas noted that more research is required along with public outreach to determine a safer location for relocation. He further noted that he's finalizing the presentation about the history of the marker and will send it out to the Commission for review and feedback.

- b. **Donation of Old Photographs Update:** Mr. Avlas noted that he had tried unsuccessfully to reach out to Ms. Wilson who contacted the Commission via the Town Administrator's office regarding a potential donation. He called several times but got no answer. Ms. Morgan said that she'd reach out to the Town Administrator's office to see if Ms. Wilson had contacted them again. Mr. Cleaves

stated that time is of the essence when receiving these requests. The matter requires further thought on how to direct people in the future as to where the donations would be most appropriately placed such as the Webster Dudley Historical Society or the History Room at the Library.

Ms. Davies stated that the Commission should work with the Library once the Local History Room reopens to discuss their process for accepting donations. She suggested that the Commission invite the new Library Director to a meeting to discuss the matter.

- c. **Membership Update:** Mr. Avlas welcomed newest member Olivia Mason. He noted that Kelly Balderelli (present at the meeting) had applied to Board of Selectmen to fill a vacancy on the Commission and thanked her for applying.
- d. **FY22 Budget Update:** Mr. Avlas noted that he met with the Town Accountant, Tim Bell, to discuss the items that the Commission would like to have budgeted for the upcoming fiscal year. He also recommended that the Commission be given a regular line item in the Town budget to move future projects forward. Mr. Avlas will attend various meetings relating to the budget. Mr. Cleaves asked when the next fiscal year starts for the Town. Mr. Avlas noted that the fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30.

4. New Business

- e. **Roles of Historical Commission vs. Historical Society:** The Commission had a discussion about how best to assist people in understanding the role and location of historic resources in Town such as the Local History Room in the Library, the Webster Dudley Historical Society (WDHS), and the Commission. It can be confusing and it would be helpful for all groups to have a better understanding as well when people are seeking out research locations and what to do with donations.

Ms. Davies noted that the Commission can work on understanding those roles and provide information through the website and other means. Working with the new Library Director would be a good start. It was her understanding that the Local Library Room as established when the new library was approved for state grants and that there were some stipulations as to how that resources was to be managed. The Commission should find out that information.

Mr. Cleaves reviewed the work the WDHS has been doing with Digital Commonwealth, a statewide consortium of libraries, museums and other historical resource groups. It provides access to photos, maps, books, etc. that have been digitized. He noted the WDHS has a limited number of volunteers and that COVID created a further reduction of volunteer time. There is no paid staff which makes it difficult. He noted that there are a number of other local resources such as the Black Tavern Historical Society in Dudley and the Samuel Slater Experience set to open in Webster. Ms. Davies suggested that maybe, in the future, the Commission could sponsor a meeting with all the local groups to cultivate coordination and a better understanding of how everyone can be of assistance to each other.

- f. **Updated the Historical Survey - Recommendation from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), Drafting a Basic Historic Preservation Plan, Building a 1-5 Year Action Plan - Achievable Goals:** Mr. Cleaves noted that he attended a recent workshop hosted by MHC which provide recommendations on how to update a local historical preservation survey and plan. Webster's survey has not been updated since 1978 and the Commission should budget to do so. The survey would identify resources lost and resources not originally identified in 1978. Some resources such as the Veterans' Home were not originally included because it had been altered too much and

was no longer considered authentic. Development of a plan should identify weak points after assessing the updated survey. The preservation plan leads to identifying action items and other tools for a 1-5 year period. Both efforts are needed to build historical value.

Mr. Cleaves noted that he's looked at some plans some of which too large a scope and were unwieldy. The Commission has a lot of options and approaches. Mr. Avlas noted that the Commission could hire someone to update the 1978 survey as a first step. The Commission discussed the pros and cons of updated the survey through volunteer work versus hiring a professional. A volunteer effort would require a large coordination effort at no cost and a professional would have a fee. Concerns were raised about what was required by the State and how the Commission would manage that effort including the need for a subcommittee. Mr. Cleaves noted the Commission should review goals set forth in the Town's Master Plan relating to historic preservation.

g. **Annual Report Submission - Timeline:** Mr. Avlas noted that he would contact the Town Clerk to find out the submission requirements and deadline for submission.

h. **Historical Commission Official Email Account:** The Commission had a discussion relating the use of personal email accounts for Commission business. Commission members should not be using personal email addresses given the framework of the Open Meeting Law requirements. Could Commission members receive individual email accounts from the Town? Ms. Morgan explained that individual email accounts cost the Town a monthly fee. However, the historical.commission@webster-ma.gov address is used only as a distribution list sending to personal email addresses of the Commission members. Those emails are captured by the Town's server which is in compliance with the Open Meeting Law. This distribution list email can't be used to respond.

Mr. Cleaves noted that the distribution list still included Mr. Heroux who has since resigned from the Commission. Ms. Morgan noted that she would ask to have Mr. Heroux's email address removed and Ms. Mason's email address added.

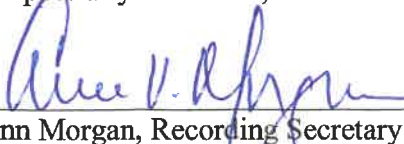
The Commission asked discussed the protocol for answering email. Mr. Avlas stated that the Chairman should be responsible for managing email either to respond directly or to forward to the appropriate person.

Ms. Balderelli noted that the on line application process to volunteer for Committees and Boards was confusing as the confirmation email she received did not provide a clear picture of what to expect. Ms. Morgan reviewed the process and stated that she would adjust the confirmation email to provide more information to guide people. Mr. Cleaves noted that sometimes website confirmation emails end up in spam or junk folders and that folks should know to check those boxes.

5. **Next Meeting Date:** March 23, 2021 at noon via remote participation.

6. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mr. Cleaves, seconded by Ms. Davies. Motion passed unanimously, 4-0 by roll call vote: Cleaves - Yes; Davies - Yes; Mason - Yes; Avlas - Yes. The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Ann Morgan, Recording Secretary

3/23/21