

**Webster Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes, April 27, 2021**

A meeting of the Webster Historical Commission was held on Tuesday, April 27, 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 Member Curtis Cleaves.

Absent: Members Kelly Baldarelli and Olivia Mason

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

1. Chairman Avlas called the meeting to order at 12:02 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; Mr. Avlas – Present.

2. Action Items

a. **Draft Meeting Minutes – February 23, 2021, March 23, 2021.** Tabled to next meeting.

3. Old Business

a. **Tercentenary Marker – Relocation Plans:** Mr. Avlas noted that he had submitted an article about the marker to the Yankee Express and the Webster Times. He has received some good feedback and comments from several people. Dick Cassault had sent him a note saying he had completed a lot of research for the Webster Lake Association that may be of interest to the Commission. Susan Gould had submitted comments via the website noting that she could provide more information and maps of the area where the marker is currently located. Mr. Avlas reached out to both Mr. Cassault and Ms. Gould via email, asking for more information and inviting them to the next meeting. He did not receive any response.

Ms. Davies thanked Mr. Curtis for his continued coordination with the State. There's good reason to believe that the location was chosen based on reasons not related to the content of the marker. The 2007 history of the Lake indicates that the Nipmuc settlement was in areas adjacent to the north side of the Lake in the Minebrook area. The Nipmucs didn't believe in building around the Lake. She felt that the Beach was a good location.

Mr. Cleaves stated that the Beach was a good location as it had more meaning. He raised the issue of the appropriate time to move the marker - before or after the restoration. Ms. Davies stated that is should be moved sooner rather than later and that the Commission should engage the Nipmucs in the process. Mr. Avlas stated that the Commission should take a vote to recommend moving the marker and inform the Board of Selectmen as such. A ceremony could be planned which could include a presentation and potentially a blessing from the Nipmucs. Ms. Davies suggested the possibility of an Eagle Scout project for the relocation site including landscaping. Mr. Cleaves noted that relocation and restoration efforts would meet the goals of preservation, repurposing, and enjoyment of future generations.

Motion to move the Tercentenary Marker from its current location at the corner of Thompson and Birch Island Roads to Memorial Beach for the purposes of preservation, public enjoyment and that

said location was more significant to the content of the marker made by Mr. Cleaves, seconded by Ms. Davies. Motion passed 3-0 by roll call vote (Davies - YES; Cleaves - YES; Avlas - YES).

- b. **Budget:** Mr. Avlas noted that the FY22 budget included a line item for the Historical Commission with \$5,000 allocated. This could be used for the restoration / relocation efforts of the Tercentenary Marker or be used as seed money other Commission projects. Originally the Commission had requested \$30,000 to proceed with an updated historic property inventory. This was not included due to a lot of fiscal uncertainty at this time. Funds to update the inventory would be a one-time allocation and the Commission could ask again. Ms. Davies noted that the Commission needs to work to get the word out so that they could build support for such a request.
- c. **Membership Update:** Mr. Avlas noted that there were no new applicants for the two vacancies. The Commission will continue to pursue potential applicants.

4. New Business

- a. **Schedule Workshop:** Ms. Davies stated that the Commission needs to schedule a workshop to outline goals, objectives and action items. She referred to the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Plan which provides a good outline of potential goals and objectives that could be customized to meet Webster's needs. Reaching out to stakeholders including the business community and property owners would be very important in achieving identified goals. Educating and public outreach is also very important. Bringing key people into the process is necessary. Mr. Cleaves discussed the need for developing a strategic plan and having input from key people in that process. A strategic plan should be simple and achievable. The goals should include advocacy, education, public engagement and identify tools to support those goals. Ms. Davies noted that some of the tools could include addressing disaster preparedness, demolition delay, and Commission by-laws.

The Commission agreed that a workshop separate from a regular meeting be held to flesh out ideas and start to formulate a plan. Ms. Morgan agreed to facilitate. Mr. Avlas noted that the workshop could be held in a number of venues including the Community Room at the Police Station, the Selectmen's Room in Town Hall and the Local History Room in the Library. Mr. Avlas stated that all members should be present to discuss date / time / location for a workshop and asked that this item be tabled to the next meeting.

- b. **Historic Marker Sign Program:** Ms. Morgan noted that information would be available at the next meeting. This item was tabled.
- c. **World War II Volunteer Air Observation Station – Memorial Athletic Field:** Mr. Avlas noted that the Station is the small shed located on the corner of Ray Street and Memorial Park Drive, across the street from the Samuel Slater Experience. This was the World War Two Air Observation Station. The building is in rough shape, barely standing. He was aware of a group of veterans who were working on restoring the building. Mr. Cleaves stated that he thought John Morazack was working on that project. The Commission agreed that this is a good project and would like to offer assistance to the group leading the effort. Some things for consideration is an interpretive sign explaining the history and significance of the building. Mr. Cleaves noted that the proximity to the Samuel Slater Experience would provide good visibility for refurbished Station. The issue of money was discussed and how to find funds to support that effort. Could the building be eligible for National Register status and would that designation lead towards funding opportunities. Ms. Morgan agreed to take some photos of the building and surrounding site. Mr. Avlas stated that he would contact the group working on the project and invite them to the next meeting.

5. Staff Update

- a. **Roles of Historical Commission vs. Historical Society.** Tabled to the next meeting.
- b. **Massachusetts History Conference:** Ms. Morgan noted that there was money in the budget if members of the Commission wanted to attend this conference which will be in June via remote participation. Mr. Cleaves stated that he had attended this conference in the past and that it was very educational in that they offer a wide range of workshops and gave you a chance to network with other people working to preserve history throughout the State. Both he and Ms. Morgan plan to attend.

6. Next Meeting Date: May 25, 2021 at noon via remote participation.

7. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Davies, seconded by Mr. Cleaves. Motion passed unanimously, 3-0 by roll call vote: Cleaves - Yes; Davies - Yes; Avlas - Yes. The meeting was adjourned at 12:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

 5/24/21

Ann Morgan, Recording Secretary

EXHIBITS

- **Online Form Submittal:** Ask the Webster Historical Commission; submitted by Susan Gould, 127 Muggett Hill Road, Charlton; dated April 9, 2021; 1 page.

