

TOWN OF ASHLAND
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MEETING DATE: January 11, 2022

MEETING NOTES:

Members in attendance:
(Voting Members only)

Elizabeth Childress
Joanna Sorensen
James Neilsen
Kelly Flannery
Karen Coleman
Tom DeAlmeida
Jennifer Paratore

Meeting called to order at 7:06pm
Meeting held via Google Meets

Chairman DeAlmeida was having trouble logging into the meeting so Vice Chairwoman Childress called the meeting to order and asked the attending members to vote on the Meeting Minutes from 12/14/21, seconded by Neilsen. All members in attendance voted unanimously to accept the minutes.

First item on the agenda was an update on the two grant opportunities that Paratore submitted initial applications for. Paratore informed the group that she had no update on the Veteran's Heritage grant but had received word from the Massachusetts Historical Commission that Ashland's letter of intent was not accepted and we would not be invited to apply for the grant. Paratore said that there were 32 letters of intent submitted for over \$400,000 worth of funding and the State had selected other applications to fund. Paratore said that she would be researching other sources of grant money and advised the Commission to follow up with the Town Manager's office and the Select Board for funding from the Town's budget. Paratore remembered that Town Manager Michael Herbert had said at a previous Historical Commission meeting that there was funding available through the Community Preservation Commission and other line items in the Town budget that might be allocated for historical purposes.

L. Childress moved the discussion to the next agenda item which was to brainstorm talking points to present to the Select Board at a future date, with the goal being to discuss what we have accomplished as a Commission thus far and where the Commission want to go in the future. Paratore confirmed that she had reached out to Susan Robie after December's meeting to request that the Historical Commission was added to the Select Board agenda for the end of the month in January. Paratore had not heard back on which agenda the Commission was added to and was going to follow up with Robie after tonight's meeting to confirm. The group decided to include the Historic Commission's appearance at the Farmer's Market this past summer with the presentation created by Flannery and Childress and the questionnaire created by Neilsen. Other talking points include the two demo delays that the

Commission was asked to vote on this past year, starting the process of establishing a local historic district, our discussions about the Mindess School rebuild/Revolutionary War soldier's gravesite/the mill buildings on Main Street and the Commission's applications for grants. Paratore asked the group if there were any future goals that we wanted to present to the Board and suggested that we address sources of funding with the Board. Neilsen suggested that we discuss the establishment of the local historic district and the Commission's desire to complete the historic properties survey.

Chairman DeAlmeida joins the meeting and asked where we were on the agenda. Paratore read back a summary of the previous talking points and informed him that the group had now moved on to the Mill Building ongoing agenda item. Neilsen asked the group if they had heard anything new on the topic because he heard there was a possible downscale of the project to avoid the zoning variance request. DeAlmeida said that the last he heard was that some buildings were going to remain and others were going to be demolished. Flannery asked who the best person to ask about this would be and DeAlmeida suggested we reach out to the Town Planner, Peter Matchak, for the most updated plan.

Next item on the agenda is the ongoing discussion of the establishment of the historic district. Since last month's meeting, Neilsen had contacted Stacy Spies, a local historic preservation consultant, to get a rough estimate of what it would cost to complete the historic properties survey. Neilsen reported that she gave a rough estimate of \$7500. K. Coleman asked Neilsen if Spies would be able to provide a detailed outline of what that \$7500 would cover so that we could have a proper proposal. Neilsen said that Ms. Spies was very busy with other projects and gave the rough estimate so that the Commission would have a budget line item for the grant applications, but that he would ask her for a more detailed proposal. Neilsen checked with the State to see if there were any other historic consultants that they recommend and said that the State doesn't recommend one person over another. Neilsen said that Spies came recommended by people in Hopkinton who were involved with their recent historic district formation. J. Sorensen asked if there was a requirement for the Commission to put the survey project into a competitive bidding process. Neilsen said he thinks that might be required but is something we would need to ask the Select Board about.

Paratore asked the group if there were any new agenda items. DeAlmeida said that the owner of 56 Fountain Street, a property that is currently under a demolition delay from the Historic Commission, called him today and DeAlmeida believes the owner of the property is actually in attendance of tonight's meeting. DeAlmeida referenced a previous conversation he had with Town Planner Peter Matchak about the process after the demolition delay expires. DeAlmeida maintains that he was told the homeowner can simply wait out the entire 9 month delay and then he would be within his rights to demo the house. DeAlmeida said that the property owner has met the requirements for a 1 home subdivision with a long driveway and standalone barn. DeAlmeida said the homeowner is proposing to build a traditional farmhouse and a standalone barn, both to look somewhat period to the age of the existing farmhouse that he is proposing to demo. DeAlmeida said that the homeowner is proposing he will build a home with a similar style to the one being demolished to honor the historic property so the Commission could consider lifting the 9 month demo delay to allow the project to start immediately. DeAlmeida said that he believes the existing house will be demolished one way or the other but he thinks this may be an opportunity for us to work with the homeowner to

maintain a similar aesthetic. DeAlmeida asked the Commission for their thoughts. Flannery said that she thinks the neighbors who initially expressed concern about the project might be happy with a one home subdivision rather than a multi-home subdivision but not sure about lifting the demo delay. Neilsen asked when the demolition delay was set to expire and DeAlmeida said he believed it was in April. Sorenson asked DeAlmeida if the homeowner has any artist renditions of what they are proposing to build. DeAlmeida said that he thinks the homeowner emailed him pictures but he hasn't looked at them and would forward them to the Commission if he received any. Paratore said that this needs to be added to February's Historical Commission Agenda, citing that the neighbors and other residents of Ashland need to be aware of the homeowner's request and have the opportunity to weigh in on the topic before the Commission considers any action on this. Neilsen seconded the addition to February's agenda and wants to research the bylaws about demolition delay further before next meeting. Coleman agreed it needs to be an agenda item and asked for any artist renditions to be forwarded before then. Neilsen noted that an alert popped up on Google Meet saying that we were going to run out of time soon and we needed to finish up any additional items and officially adjourn the meeting. Neilsen asked if anyone responded to the email sent to the Commission from the resident who wanted a piece of the tree that was cut down at Mindess. Paratore confirmed that she had responded to the request and suggested that the resident contact the Town for further information, that the Historical Commission was not responsible for storing the tree. DeAlmeida said that regularly goes down to the Mindess School construction site to check on the progress and he had someone with a drone look at the Revolutionary War soldier's gravesite. He said the headstone seemed to be adequately protected but that the 6ft construction setback fencing suggested by the Massachusetts Historical Commission was not in place around the gravesite and that he brought it to the Town's attention. DeAlmeida said he believes Peter Matchak met with the construction company today about the issue and told them to put up a fence. DeAlmeida was unsure exactly when that would be done but would follow up with the Town.

With no additional items to discuss, Neilsen motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Flannery.

Concluded at 7:54pm

Next meeting February 8, 2022 AT 7pm via either Zoom or Google Meets