

**Dracut Historical Commission Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2023**

Present: Patrick Cox, Chairman *Patrick Cox*
David Paquin *David D. Paquin*
Louise Tremblay *Louise Tremblay*
Linda Kawa- Absent
Henri Marchand *Henri Marchand*
Rebecca Duda-Absent
Mark Gosselin- Absent

Chairman Cox called the meeting to order at 6:10pm, at the Historical Society, 1660 Lakeview Ave, Dracut, MA.

Minutes:

Louise Tremblay made a motion to approve the January 18th, 2023, meeting minutes. David Paquin seconded the motion, the motion passed.

Community Input:

State Rep. Colleen Garry spoke at the meeting tonight to inform the Commission the State has created a commission for the Anniversary of the 250th American Revolution.

They are reaching out to communities to see if they want to be involved. Senator Edward Kennedy is the Senate Chair of the project.

Ms. Garry explained, Dracut had the largest percentage of their residents, their personnel, who fought for our freedom, around 37%. Mr. Paquin stated its probably even more than that. It was our claim to fame on that. All the farmers would just take off to fight.

Ms. Garry explained they expect for it to start in 2024, so this gives us time to plan.

I would like to make sure it is recognized in our community. Maybe some kind of a moving or standing museum like the Brookside School has. Maybe have some of the high school students get involved.

Ms. Garry stated she would love to be involved with anybody who would like to join in. Let's make it a great celebration for the town. If there is anything here at the Historical Society from anyone who served in the war she would love to see it.

Chairman Cox and the committee stated they will help anyway they can. Mr. Marchand asked if we are going to be more like a clearing house for the project. Ms. Garry stated yes.

Mr. Cox also stated the Society would also big help. Ms. Garry stated she will try to get to one of those meetings also.

Community Input:

(Cont'd)

Bruce Cote, Chairman of the CPC, came to speak on a warrant article which will be submitted by the Town and the Historical Society. The the article is to do some assessment of costs to repair this building, the Colburn House.

Mr. Cote explained, as he was having a discussion with the Open Space committee at their meeting, he explained to Mr. Cox, when you are asking to use CPC funds, especially Historical Preservations funds, a building or site needs to be deemed of significant historically or cultural value to the community. If it's not on a Historical Roster or on a National Register, or anything like that.

Mr. Cote explained when Mr. Cox was present at the Open Space meeting, he indicated there is nothing in town to determine this. Nothing written. Mr. Cote explained he will keep researching the CPA Act on this. The committee might want to look into what has to happen to get this set up, is there a process they can go through for future requests.

Mr. Paquin explained this committee did Historic Asset Surveys and Harmony Hall is on both. Mr. Cote stated, yes but it's just data that is there. Nothing else was followed through to get it on a National Register.

Mr. Paquin explained Harmony Hall was declared a Historical Structure by the Commission at a Town Meeting. Mr. Cote asked is there is data on that and how did that happen. Mr. Paquin explained the Town Clerks office should have that record of the Town Meeting vote. Mr. Cote stated, if was deemed a Historical Structure once that would be great. It would be great to get that information. And the process of how that occurred.

Chairman Cox stated, he will check with the Town Clerk to see if there are technicalities on that.

Mr. Cote stated, we will work together on this.

Mr. Cox stated my understanding of this, after reading through all the literature. It does not have to be through the state, it's a simple vote through this committee. Your local commission will hold more jurisdiction over Mass and or Federal Historical Commissions.

If you read into the National Historic Register they stress, they don't want anything to do with this, but they put the responsibility on the town to hold the higher jurisdiction on restrictions and historical properties. If need be, we can have a vote on this to settle this.

Mr. Marchand asked how many of our inventory of assets are on a Historic National or State Districts. Mr. Cox stated, the only one on the State is the Beaver Brook Farm.

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The Commission reviewed the Historical Value of the Coburn House then decided to vote on the Historical Value of the Coburn House.

Louise Tremblay made a motion that The Colburn House is of Historical Value to the Town of Dracut and that we agree to move forward. Henri Marchand seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Community Input: **(Cont'd)**

Mr. Roy Corbeil explained, he has been working the last couple of months cleaning out the basement here at the Historical Society, getting the cobwebs out the sand and the dirt, etc. But what he has noticed is we are running out of space.

There is a significant number of donated artifacts and other things that are here to get preserved by the society. Some items are 100 years old, and some are falling into considerably disrepair, old cans from dairies that are rusting away, old horse drawn carriage leather belts from horse harnesses that coming apart. Mr. Corbeil explained, his personal feeling is we need smore space, where that space comes from, I'm not sure. He did inquire about the Grange Hall, which would be a nice open space for the public to come and see things on display.

Chairman Cox explained, the Grange Hall is privately owned, it's not owned by the town. Right now, there is someone interested in purchasing it. There is also not a lot of parking there at all.

Mr. Cox thanked Mr. Corbeil for his hard work and for letting us know about the space. Mr. Cox stated, he will see what happens at the next grange Hall meeting and keep the commission updated.

Discussion – Historic Building and Murals:

Chairman Cox explained he has still not heard back from Mr. DiCarlo. Mr. Paquin explained he does see Mr. DiCarlo sometimes in town and will try to get him in touch with Mr. Cox on this issue.

Demolitions:

None

Beaver Brook Farm Ad-Hoc Committee Update:

Chairman Cox explained the ice rink hasn't been able to hold any water yet with the nice temperatures. It still hasn't been cold enough.

Chairman Cox and Louise Tremblay stated it's a shame because David Martin has put so much time and effort into the rink and everything that had to be done to put it there.

Chairman Cox explained on Monday, the 20th of February there is another site visit scheduled to look into other parking options.

They are also looking into putting picnic benches there if possible.

There was also possible talk about saving the workshop. This committee voted to demolish it, but Mr. Cox wanted to get the boards thoughts if this is something they still want to do. The committee still wants to go forward with the demo. Ms. Tremblay stated, if the Open Space Committee or the BBFC has any questions, they can ask us to reconsider the vote.

Bills:

Louise Tremblay submitted the bills that were paid by the accounting office on behalf of the Historical Commission which are included in the filed minutes. Henri Marchand made a motion to ratify the bills that were paid. David Paquin seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report:

Louise Tremblay submitted the Treasures report.

Communications:

Chairman Cox explained as we all are aware from the last meeting, we received a letter from the Open Space Committee about getting the Beaver Brook Farm onto the National Historic Register.

Mr. Cox explained after he received the letter, he attended the Open Space Committee meeting, took up their invite, just as himself not speaking for the Historical Commission. We have some of the Open Space members here tonight at our meeting so that will give us a chance for some back and forth, not just his opinion.

Mr. Sheppard stated, the Open Space Committee voted to have him represent them to discuss this letter. He explained, mainly the intention of this letter was to set up a collaboration going forward, to look at the open space land we have at BBF. We want to understand what's going on with the property currently. We are very passionate about this property as a group as we are about all open space land.

Mr. Sheppard explained, because it has historic value as well, we are hoping to have representatives, maybe a member from the Historic Commission come and visit us as well as a agenda item going forward so one of our representatives can come and sit in on your meetings.

To have someone constantly available to you to discuss so we can be in constant communication going forward.

We could get someone from the National Parks Services come in and do a presentation on what we can do for this property.

There is a historic landscape as well, this was something Mr. Sheppard was not aware of until he did a lot of research on what the National Parks Services offers.

Mr. Sheppard explained he wrote the letter, about inquiring to see what needs to be done to get BBF on a National Register and not only that, but as a District as well.

Mr. Sheppard noticed on the Historic Commission website, there was a plan in place, that mentioned a couple of properties that weren't, also listed on BBF Mass Historic letter on the map. There's a map that the Commission has showing the different plots. Mr. Sheppard passed out the map.

Mr. Sheppard explained, he understands, you can't make every decision in a couple of hours or even in one night.

That's when the collaboration comes in to play. The Ad-Hoc Committee is perfect for deciding on what happens for construction and what goes forward on the property and the preservation. All the multiple boards can collaborate.

With that district we would like to reach out as well to some of the homeowners that are there. In his own research the benefits from the federal side, it's not as restrictive as opposed to a local district. There's a lot more that gets entailed. On a national level, a homeowner who has privately owned property can decide not to have their home registered.

Mr. Sheppard explained, this is something he is just finding out. He is a novice when it comes to what the National Registry can offer, and hopefully, this will start the conversation. This is just the beginning of more conversations going forward between both our boards.

Chairman Cox explained at our last meeting when we discussed Historic Districts, it was well excepted if we are going to go forward with one property this town is well deserving of multiple. As far as farming community.

This was our general thought at our meeting. if we are going to do this for one property we might as well, do it for a bunch of them.

Mr. Cox stated he printed out Chapter 40C, section 3 concerning establishment of Historic Districts. He passed them out to the board to look over and the Open Space Committee members there.

It goes over what it takes to get an Historic District. Basically, it comes down to a 2/3rds vote at a Town Meeting. Then it would go to the State as a draft. Then the federal level. It's basically a 3-part process.

Chairman Cox stated, we can work back and forth, but we should be able to get it done. Mr. Sheppard thanked the committee for their time.

Mr. Marchand stated, he can reach out to the National Park Service who he has worked with before to see if they could come and talk to both committees at one of our meetings.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

None

Henri Marchand made a motion to adjourn at 7:35pm. Louise Tremblay seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Next Meeting

March 15th, 2023