

Lancaster Historical Commission (LHC)
Meeting Minutes
August 25, 2021

Members Present: Marcia Jakubowicz, Heather Lennon, Joy Peach, Mark Schryver, and Karen Silverthorn

Members Absent: Amy Brown, Joan Richards, and Jean Watson

Guests: Jay Moody and Gregg Brackett

Call to Order:

Chairperson Lennon called the meeting (*via ZOOM*) to order at 5:02 pm.

Meeting ID: 837 2908 2052 Passcode: 712078

Attendees introduced themselves and gave their Lancaster home addresses.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of June 30, 2021 were approved unanimously as edited on a motion made by Joy Peach and seconded Marcia Jakubowicz

Eastwood Cemetery (EW) National Register (NR) status/planning grant: Chairperson Lennon reported that according to a letter from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) dated 7-23-21, EW is now eligible to be considered for listing on the NR. The cemetery was designed by renowned landscape designer Horace Cleveland who was born in Lancaster.

The Town Administrator (TA) will write a planning grant request to MHC for matching funds to hire a professional consultant to study the cemetery and move the process forward. Hopefully, the four remaining historic cemeteries in Lancaster will be “bundled” and listed on the NR all at once.

Significant property developments in Lancaster:

Hawthorn Hill: William Van Pelt, IV, who is from Texas, is still planning to purchase the estate. He is waiting for the details to be finalized.

Hilltop Road: Numerous trees have been removed in the Carriage House area. Proper permits were not applied for. The Lancaster Conservation Committee is dealing with several violations and the situation is very negative.

Atlantic Union College (AUC) Core Campus and Music Conservatory:

Chairperson Lennon reached out to the Atlantic Union’s Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Dr. Elias Zabala. He did not respond in time to give a report for the meeting but Mark Schryver reported that someone connected with the Atlantic Union Conference stated that a group from Canada wants to turn the campus into a trade school. Hopefully more information will be forthcoming in September.

Department of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) Campus Tour:

SB liason Alix Turner took people on a tour of the campus in early August. Jay Moody went along and had positive feedback about the experience. He said the buildings he viewed appeared to be structurally sound. There will be another tour in September. Several LHC members indicated they would like to go on this second tour. Chairperson Lennon will pursue the details.

According to Jay Moody the town has, in effect, a "first right of refusal" on the property. This process of deciding the fate of this valuable land is ongoing.

Note: Two of the white buildings along Old Common Road are on the adjoining RFK Action Corps campus and are not included.

Memorial School Re-use Committee - update

Heather Lennon and Mark Schryver attended the introductory meeting of this committee over a month ago but Chairperson Frank Streeter has not yet called another meeting. Hopefully, meetings will resume in September.

Town Green - update

At the August 2, 2021 meeting of the Select Board (SB), Chairperson Lennon read a prepared statement during the "Public Comment" period. It reiterated that the LHC stands firmly behind their stated opinion originally submitted in 2018: The gazebo, presently on the Town Green, should be relocated to a more appropriate and advantageous location for community use. Chairperson Lennon was not allowed to pursue the issue when it came up later on the agenda. SB members had no reply when asked their reasons for wanting the structure to stay where it is. The Town Administrator (TA) will now pursue getting materials to make the structure more permanent.

Sign and Marker refurbishment plan through tax abatement program:

Amy Brown was not in attendance but Chairperson Lennon suggested that members should let her know if they see any signs or markers needing attention. Possibly a tax abatement person might be found to take on the task of repairing and painting the signs.

Accessions, correspondence, unanticipated items:**Donation:**

Jay Moody has donated some durable hard plastic pallets that are now installed in the LHC storage room in the 1908 Town Hall basement. This is helpful because the basement has been known to flood. Moody suggested getting a "Cold Temperature" dehumidifier to better preserve the irreplaceable items stored in that room. The request to purchase this item will be taken up with the TA.

Lafayette Anniversary Tour:

The Lancaster Historical Society (LHS) was contacted by a man named Peter Reilly regarding the upcoming 200th anniversary (in 2024) of Lafayette's visit to the United States. Lancaster, one of the places he visited, already has a small marker on the Town Green near First Church commemorating this event.

Ponakin Bridge:

Lancaster resident Patrick Byrne of Ponakin Road (who also runs a construction business) would like to, in some measure, rehabilitate the Ponakin Bridge for community use. The bridge is on the National Register and is highly significant for its type of construction. He asked Chairperson Lennon to find out if the LHC would support him on this. Those present approved moving forward with this.

Middle Cemetery:

Marcia Jackubowicz reported that the path previously cleared (in 2017) on the north perimeter is becoming overgrown and needs clearing. Chairperson Lennon has previously asked DPW Supt. Kevin Bartlett to bring in more wood chips to spread and a team of weed-whackers. Bartlett agreed but is short-staffed and will need a reminder.

Old Common and Middle Cemeteries:

When some hazardous and fallen trees were removed within the last year, some marble grave markers were knocked over and need repair. Chairperson Lennon asked Supt. Bartlett if perpetual care funds can be used. Bartlett said that the funds can only be used for those whose families had "bought into" the plan. Jay Moody reminded members that when Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds become available, some may possibly be used for this purpose. A proposal can be submitted for funds above the pre-arranged 10% per year to the CPA committee for consideration. This will be pursued when the funds become available.

Future Meeting Date:

The next meeting date has yet to be announced.

Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was made by Mark Schryver, seconded by Karen Silverthorn, and carried unanimously. The meeting ended at 5:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Silverthorn, Recorder for the Meeting.