

Lancaster Historical Commission (LHC)
Meeting Minutes
February 23, 2022

Members Present: Amy Brown, Marcia Jakubowicz, Heather Lennon, Joan Richards, Mark Schryver, and Karen Silverthorn

Members Absent: Joy Peach, and Jean Watson

Guest: Martha Moore

Call to Order:

Chairperson Lennon called the meeting (*via ZOOM*) (**ID: 852 8905 6153**
Passcode: 486193) to order at 5:05 pm.

Meeting Minutes:

The meeting minutes of January 26, 2022 were reviewed, corrected and approved unanimously on a motion made by Karen Silverthorn and seconded by Amy Brown.

Historic Cemeteries Survey/Planning Grant :

Chairperson Lennon reported that our completed application was hand-carried to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) in Boston on February 22, 2022. Approved applications will be announced on March 9, 2022. If we are approved, qualified consultants will be selected to do the surveys according to pre-arranged guidelines and on a specified timetable. Heather Lennon will be the town's grant coordinator for this to ensure that all goes according to plan and that all requirements are met.

LHC Budget Request for FY 2023:

Heather Lennon reported that she has submitted a proposed budget the town's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Cheryl Gariepy. Funds were requested to cover: postage, membership dues, office supplies and technical support for Past Perfect. The total requested amounts to less than \$2,000.00. The budget submittal was approved unanimously on a motion made by Joan Richards budget and seconded by Mark Schryver.

Hazardous tree removal from historic cemeteries:

Chairperson Lennon reported that previous plans made with the former Town Administrator (TA) to set aside money for tree removal were changed. After the changes were questioned, the CFO asked Heather to get “maintenance level” quotes from tree cutter Brian Favreau for the Middle Cemetery (MC) and the Old Settlers’ Burial Ground (OSBG). Heather will meet with Favreau on February 28, 2022. The thinking is that it would be *far more cost effective* to do the job *all at once* rather than bring heavy equipment in several times over the years.

Significant Property Developments in Lancaster -updates:

1. The former Bayard Thayer estate AKA “Hawthorne Hill” is confirmed as sold. The estate caretaker Alan Colby and the new owner’s son, Max Mahabir, recently came into the LHC office to view the original architectural plans in the LHS collection. Max indicated that definite plans for the mansion may be a couple years away.
2. The former Nathaniel Thayer estate AKA the “Homestead” and more recently the Thayer Conservatory of Music has been sold to Carolynnda Applebury who is presently having upgrades done to the building.
3. Pastor Carl Behrmann, the new owner of the former Eugene VR Thayer estate AKA “Fairlawn” and more recently known as the former Atlantic Union College’s “White House”, had a surprise visit this month from the town’s Building Inspector and a Fire Department Captain. After touring the building and grounds, they essentially shut down the extensive re-modeling work already in progress citing zoning requirements and proper compliance issues. LHC Member Mark Schryver said he is familiar with these requirements and informed the LHC on the specifics for historic properties in residentially zoned areas. He volunteered to speak with the owner, if he wishes, to help advise him regarding the issues. Chairperson Lennon, who also has an appointment to visit the property on February 24, 2022, will report back at the next LHC meeting.

Former Lancaster Industrial School for Girls (LISG) Campus – update:

No report given.

Memorial School Re-use Committee (MSRC):

Heather Lennon reported that Melissa Cryan of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation Services (DCS) is now expected to speak at the March meeting of the MSRC. Of great concern is a grant made to the town’s Recreation Committee

a few years ago. The map approved with the grant is believed to have mistakenly included the entire Town Green. LHC members were encouraged to attend the upcoming ZOOM meeting to hear what Ms Cryan has to say.

COVID 19 Pandemic Data Collection on Lancaster 2020 to the present:

Marcia Jakubowicz reported she has spoken to the American Antiquarian Society (AAS) in Worcester regarding information on the Spanish Flu of 1918. Though they had nothing they referred her to the Worcester Historical Museum for information. Marcia also mention a book entitled The Grip which is on the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918 in Worcester, MA. Chairperson Lennon said she will purchase the book for our collection. Meanwhile, both Marcia and John Farnsworth will continue their research and data collection.

Wall Hangings in the Prescott Building (PB):

John Farnsworth continues to be the liason with Worcester Polytechnical Institute (WPI) for this project which was initiated by Select Board (SB) member Jay Moody. Communications with the interim Town Administrator (TA) indicate that he does not completely understand the dynamics and requirements of this project. Mark Schryver answered Joan Richard's request to explain the difference between a structural engineer's determination versus that of an architect. Mark explained favoring the structural engineer's determination and also agreed that hanging the panels in question would be better than having them deteriorate while being shifted around in long term storage. LHC members encourage moving forward with this project with the help of WPI supervised engineering students. Educated input from them based on specific measurements and analysis of weight bearing loads on the walls would be welcomed! This matter will be pursued.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Community Preservation Act (CPA) and Community Preservation Committee (CPC):

Karen Silverthorn, our representative on the CPC, reported that the committee had met two times and is in the process of submitting their 2023 budget according to the guidelines. She is very impressed and excited as she learns more about the grant submission and acceptance process. Ten percent of the CPA money, earmarked in a separate town account, will be available for historic preservation each year. Chairperson Lennon solicited suggestions for historical projects. Some were as follows:

1. ***Cemetery Restoration*** - Once the anticipated tree cutting is accomplished, a CPC grant could be sought to have broken and damaged headstones and markers in the MC professionally repaired and cleaned. This has long been neglected and should be done not only out of respect for the dead but also as a civic responsibility.
2. ***1908 Town Hall upgrades*** -- LHC members agreed that the soundness of the foundation for this massive building needs to be professionally studied and evaluated before money is spent on interior upgrades such as the acoustics in the main auditorium. A study might well be done as a project for WPI students. This idea will be pursued.

Future Meeting Date and Adjournment

The next meeting of the LHC is scheduled for Wednesday, March 30, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. via ZOOM. A motion to adjourn was approved unanimously on a motion made by Joan Richards and seconded by Mark Schryver. The meeting ended at 5:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Richards, Recorder for the Meeting.