

MINUTES
LANCASTER HISTORICAL COMMISSION
January 30, 2017

A meeting of the Lancaster Historical Commission (LHC) was held on Monday, January 30, 2017 at 131 Main Street, South Lancaster, in the Historical Commission Office.

Members Present:

Heather Lennon, Joy Peach, Joan Richards, and Karen Silverthorn, Associate members:
Jay Moody and Marcia Jakubowicz

Members Absent: Jean Watson, Mark Schryver, and Michael Sczerzen

Guests: Ted Manning

Vice-Chair Heather Lennon called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Cemeteries:

Vice-Chair Heather Lennon began the meeting with a PowerPoint presentation on Lancaster's historic cemeteries. She suggested that because it will be at least several months until the Prescott Building can be occupied; the LHC has a window of opportunity to attempt measures to improve the condition of our badly deteriorated and neglected cemeteries.

The presentation included photographs of Lancaster's cemeteries from past and present times. A decline over the years was very evident. The cemeteries have suffered from an overgrowth of pine saplings, as well as fallen and broken trees and tree branches that have occurred as the result of hurricanes, storms and lightning strikes. Root systems from mature and dying trees have dislodged stones. Numerous stones have been pulled up and strewn about as the result of carelessness and vandalism. Many are no longer in their correct locations. In addition, insufficient manpower for maintaining the grounds has added to their neglect and degradation.

Joan Richards and Heather Lennon are currently working on getting our six historic cemeteries on the National Register. Once the paperwork is done, they will present their work to Lancaster's Board of Selectmen (BOS). After approval, forms and paperwork will be submitted to Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) attention of Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director.

Middle Cemetery: Heather met on site with a representative from National Grid about having some of the dangerous trees removed in lieu of having trees given to the town after the currently proposed tree removal is done on Center Bridge Road. National Grid's representative looked it over and told her he would have to discuss this with his arborist. Kevin Bartlett, Lancaster's Tree Warden was present at the second meeting with Heather and the NGrid arborist at the Old Common Cemetery and is aware of this proposal.

Joan wrote an email to Michael Steinitz of MHC about the possibility of getting grant money for tree removal. She was told there was no money available for that. Other options will be pursued.

Lancaster's DPW does not have money in their budget that is specifically devoted to tree removal in the cemeteries. Their budget funds are for removal of *any tree* in town that is a hazard needs to be removed.

Heather reported that BOS member Mark Grasso suggested that the LHC go to the Finance Committee to suggest that money be allocated exclusively for tree removal in Lancaster's historic cemeteries each year until the problem is under control.

Ted Manning, DPW, has suggested forming a cemetery commission. Further, Ted Manning has suggested the possibility of the town outsourcing the maintenance and cleanup of the town cemeteries.

Voting for Associate members:

Four members were present for a quorum to vote on issues at this meeting. Further, Joan Richards made a motion that Marcia Jakubowicz and Jay Moody (both associate members) are allowed to vote since Michael Sczerzen, Mark Schryver, and Jean Watson were absent. Karen Silverthorn seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

National Register Status for Cemeteries:

Joan Richards made a motion that the LHC move forward to get all forms ready for the National Register. Joy Peach seconded this, and it was approved unanimously. The LHC will need to get letters of support from the BOS state officials and area churches, etc.

Prescott Building Update:

A groundbreaking ceremony for the Prescott Building was held on Monday, January 23 at 2:00 p.m. A newspaper article in the Clinton Item appeared the following Friday. Heather Lennon represented the LHC and was pictured with a hardhat and shovel along with other town officials. Work on the building has finally begun.

Center Bridge Road Tree Hearing:

Lancaster's Tree Warden Kevin Bartlett, will meet with representatives from National Grid regarding the removal of trees on Center Bridge Road. A hearing is scheduled with the Planning Board on February 13, 2017 at the Community Center.

Rowlandson Rock:

The Conservation Commission met with Mr. Bruce Warila, who deeded a parcel of land to the town, which was accepted, so that handicapped visitors to the “Rock” will have a clear right-of-way. The LHC will meet with the Conservation Commission at a future date to discuss and determine the terms of a “site management plan” to keep the area maintained properly. On April 23, 2017 the Lancaster Historical Society (LHS) has a program scheduled to recognize the Kilbourn family’s donation of the land to the town.

Town Clock:

BOS member Mark Grasso told Heather Lennon that he thinks the town clock should be given to First Church. Town officials are currently investing insurance costs. Also, replacement parts for the clock need to be hand-tooled because parts are no longer available. The LHC gave a copy of the recently produced Clock DVD to the First Church of Christ who subsequently linked it to Youtube from their website.

SHRAB (State Historical Records Advisory Board):

The LHC still awaits a follow-up report from Roving Archivist Rachel Onuf.

FINANCE REPORT/BUDGET FOR FY18:

1. The Finance Committee has requested level funding for the new fiscal year.
2. Hometown Bank building/plaza has been sold. The LHC has gotten a bill (monthly rent) from the new owners and turned it over to the town. Our current rental costs are \$600 per month for 131 Main Street location. Joan Richards brought the bill to the Finance Office, Heidi Lamb, and a copy to the BOS Executive Assistant, Kathi Rocci.

CORRESPONDENCE, ACCESSIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS

No reports.

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. Associate LHC member Jay Moody is on the committee to look into the reuse of the Memorial School building. A meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 31. He will also represent the LHC at that meeting.
2. Plans appear to continue for repairs and renovations to the historic Pollard House Old Common Road. It was formerly part of the Lancaster Industrial School for Girls and is currently under state management.

3. LHC members have reviewed the LHC's submission for the town's upcoming annual report. Suggested edits were made, and Heather Lennon will submit the report to the town by February 1, 2017.
4. Joan Richards made a motion that Michael Sczerzen and Heather Lennon serve as LHC Chair and Vice Chair. Marcia Jakubowicz seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

MEETING MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 19, 2016:

Karen Silverthorn moved to accept the minutes as corrected and Heather Lennon seconded it. Members approved unanimously.

The next regular meeting will be Monday, February 27, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m. on a motion made by Joan Richards and seconded by Joy Peach.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Silverthorn, Recorder for the Meeting