

Lancaster Historical Commission (LHC)
Meeting Minutes
April 26, 2023 via ZOOM

Present:

Amy Brown, Judy Elwell, Sandy Foster, Heather Lennon, Marcia Jakubowicz, Karen Silverthorn

Absent: Marl Schryver, Jean Watson

Guests: None

Call to Order:

Chairperson Heather Lennon called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. Participants identified themselves with their names and addresses.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

Meeting Minutes from 3-29-23 were approved unanimously on a motion made by Judy Elwell and seconded by Amy Brown.

Conflict of Interest Training:

Chairperson Lennon asked if members had received a link from the Town Clerk for this *required* training. Everyone had received the link and no one present indicated any problems completing the training.

National Register of Historical Places (NRHP) Survey and Planning Grant for Cemeteries:

Chairperson Lennon, the town's "Grant Coordinator" for this project, reported that the team from Public Archaeology Laboratories (PAL) in RI came to Lancaster for fieldwork on April 14, 2023. They have now have visited all four cemeteries under consideration to gather information. If all goes well, the third and last phase should be finished in August of 2023. After approval in Massachusetts, the National Park Service in Washington, D.C must also be approached for approval. The process will most likely take another year.

Hazardous Cemetery Tree Removal:

The southeast corner of the Middle Cemetery (MC) has six to twelve trees remaining to be cut and cleared. Ike Kilbourn has been contacted and has agreed to visit the cemetery to do an estimate for removal of the remaining hazardous trees. He will also provide a separate estimate for stump grinding as there are numerous root-ridden and unsightly stumps needing removal.

Significant Property Developments in Lancaster:

- A. Chairperson Lennon reported that on April 5, 2023 she met with the couple who own the Hawthorn Hill mansion and surrounding acres. She shared a lot of information about the mansion and showed them the original blueprints. At this point, if they want it to be considered for National Register status, they must hire a consultant to prepare documents for submission to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). It is not known if they have, indeed, started the process.

- B. The John Eliot Thayer (JET) estate on George Hill Road has recently been sold somewhat below the original asking price. Lisa Chiulli Lay, the seller, was confident that the new owners will be good caretakers of the mansion and the grounds. She has donated two antique bowling pins to the Lancaster Historical Society.
- C. The owner of the property at 13 Neck Road, in Lancaster Center, who had an antique house on the site demolished a couple years ago, has recently put forth a plan to erect eleven condominiums on the now vacant lot. Feedback at the Housing Trust meeting where he and his associates recently proposed this plan was that the project is too large to fit the space causing safety and congestion concerns in this historic old section of town.

Community Preservation Act (CPA) Project:

Chairperson Lennon reported that the application for a total assessment of the Middle Cemetery previously submitted to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has been accepted. Next it needs to be approved by voters at the upcoming Town Meeting on May 3, 2023. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

Historic Panels Project:

Town Administrator (TA) Kate Hodges recently asked for an update. Heather Lennon again reached out to John Farnsworth who has not yet gotten a response from his contact at Worcester Polytechnical Institute (WPI).

Lafayette's Farewell Tour Anniversary September 3, 2024:

No new developments reported.

Meeting Changes:

TA Hodges is favorable to allowing future meetings of the LHC to be held in the Prescott Building at 7 pm on the last Wednesday of each month at 7 pm with a "hybrid" feature included. Chairperson Lennon will arrange this through Executive Assistant Kathi Rocco.

Donations and Announcement:

A, Susan Munyon has recently arranged and transported a donated four drawer filing cabinet.

B. The LHS will present its fourth program of the season on Sunday, May 7, 2023 at 2 pm at the Dexter Room at TML. It will be on "The Old Common and Lancaster's Native Son Horace W.S. Cleveland".

Unanticipated Item:

The First Church is planning an "Anniversary Celebration" of Lancaster's Founding on May 18th. Win Clark sent an e-mail inviting the LHC to participate. LHC members discussed the matter and while the idea was thought to be a good one, the planning time was thought to be too short. The next day, Chairperson Lennon reached out to former First Church Pastor Reverend Tom Wintle (who was also the first President of the Lancaster Historical Society) and he agreed to represent us and speak at the event.

Adjournment and Future Meeting Date:

Adjournment at 7:29 pm was approved unanimously on a motion made by Sandy Foster and seconded by Judy Elwell.

The next meeting of the LHC is scheduled for Wednesday, May 31, 2023 at 7:00 pm in person in the LHC office in the Prescott Building with a hybrid feature for those who wish to attend remotely via ZOOM.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Lennon, Chairperson