

Amherst Historical Commission

Meeting Minutes

April 21, 2021, meeting via Zoom, 6:30 pm

Members Present: Jane Wald (Chair), Janet Marquardt, Patricia Auth, Robin Fordham, Hetty Startup
(attendance taken by roll call)

Members Absent: Jane Sheffler

Staff Present: Ben Breger, Planner

1. **Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m.

2. **Announcements**

Breger informed the commissioners that materials for future meetings would be available in the document center on the Amherstma.gov website, as well as being forward to members by email. Fordham reported on a video presentation of MACRIS Maps, produced by Preservation Mass, and forwarded the link to the video of the presentation to commissioners.

3. **Approval of minutes**

Minutes to approve

- March 25, 2021
- June 24, 2020
- July 22, 2020
- August 26, 2020
- October 19, 2020
- December 9, 2020
- January 27, 2021
- February 10, 2021

Due to some inconsistencies in the minutes, members felt the need to review and approve at next meeting. Tabled to next meeting.

4. **West Cemetery Signage and Restoration Project - Project Overview**

Breger provided a review of the background of project. Project included in 1999 Preservation Plan, goal to transform cemetery into a nice public space. The mural that was destroyed with the

demolition of the Carriage shops was relocated to the new building. Improvements to the cemetery continue.

Currently 100k in CPA funds for restoration of headstones; previous work done in early 2000s, 2018. Breger provided a map with map with condition of every headstone identifying condition, which will guide the project to be addressed this summer. Some stone need just resetting, some need full repair. Need to assess to see estimate cost of remaining repairs. Breger will be putting together Request for Proposal (RFP) for qualified contractor, need to determine whether an inventory of the cemetery should be completed for the RFP. Aim is to finish work in 1870 section, stretch funds to include African American section, but not likely there is an inventory of the latter. RFP to possibly split contractor's time between two sections. Will aim for draft of RFP for next meeting. Considering Interpretive signage, addressing landscaping. Breger to clarify needs, RFP, procurement restrictions. Marquardt noted she was happy with previous contractor, if procurement issues are not a problem would be good to use them again. Startup asked if RFP can include educational component on history of NE gravestones; have an event, article or something to highlight the project to the public. Opportunity for equal treatment for African American portion of cemetery. Auth asked if CPA funds can be requested for a history of the cemetery. Breger will clarify with accounting best way to structure RFP. Commission will review Cemetery Preservation Plan to advise going forward. Extended site visit to be planned.

Regarding signage, Breger noted that there is very little currently, plan for signage at One East Pleasant has not progressed, although previous work had been done to develop signs. Juneteenth event will be a walking tour of Amherst sites, one stop will be West Cemetery. Timeline for restoration is end of summer. Eager to get something for Juneteenth event. (Nice granite signage is goal but not in time for Juneteenth event, long term vision). Immediate plan has funds in West Cemetery restricted account to get temporary signs for Juneteenth. Design prototype reviewed. Concurrently, Town has been working on wayfinding system, writer's walk signs in same design, desire to have cemetery in same family of design. Marquardt suggested adding specific content on African American portion of cemetery to existing sign. Breger shared presentation of proposed wayfinder sign system to give an idea of design standard. Wald asked if the commission had a recommendation for the temporary welcome signs for the cemetery, as well as design for permanent sign? Breger noted that permanent sign would need to go before DRB, Planning board, will check with Rob Morrow if temporary sign can forgo approvals. Wald asked if the town owns the design? Suggestion: use current design as is for temporary signage, then adjust for permanent. HC recommends that draft signage add information on Af Am portion cemetery of temporary design of welcome sign. Auth motion, Hetty second. Roll call, 5-0 motion approved.

6. East Pleasant St.

Archipelago Investments is proposing a new mixed-use building next to One East Pleasant. Demolition has been approved. When site plan review is approved, it will be forwarded to all the depts and commissions to collect feedback and comments on plan, in order to provide comments

and feedback to Planning Board. Breger noted that preliminary discussion can begin now, fuller review at next meeting (focusing on West Cemetery), with applicant and Alan Snow (trees feedback) present. Looking for more clarification to impact of West Cemetery. No set scope for comments, just general concerns and feedback, including trees. "Use is allowed by right, mixed use up to 5 stories." Planning board can not make a lot of conditions. Wald noted that it is correct that the HC should comment on impacts on West Cemetery. Auth asked if there was a mechanism to replace trees damaged or lost to project. Breger said the HC could request any impacts to the Cemetery be remedied. Wald noted that the HC could comment on lighting plans. HC Next steps - site visit on 6th, rain date 13th, discuss and develop recommendations for the Town to consider.

7. Emily Dickinson Museum Restoration Project - Presentation by Jane Wald, Executive Director

Process: EDM proposing the project, is currently going through round of permitting and approvals. Process requires presentation to local historic district commission for their review of what happens on site/public way. Only historic preservation element in public view is reinstatement of 19th century front door. Had hearing with Local Access Advisory board due to scale of project (33%) and Massachusetts Architectural Advisory Board (related to accessibility issues). LAAB approved, with recommendations to improve accessible interpretative tools. Still need to take to MHC because MHC holds Preservation Deed Restriction on homestead, evergreens, and both landscapes. Not yet at building permit stage (which could but may not trigger demolition review, facade work is a restoration and not a demolition). Site Plan Review documentation has been submitted. Documentation for review/approval by the MAAB involves documentation with consultation with LAAB, and HC. MAAB is request for regulatory variances - one is on requirement to have elevator. Restoration plan notes there is no space within the building for an elevator, and it is contrary to plan to add exterior elevator column. Second variance request is for door openings - feel that doorways and routes are sufficient to first floor, requesting variance.

Review of proposed scope of work. North and South Parlors, Hallways on first and second floors, northwest chamber at top of stairs; relocation of stairs to third floor; HVAC system for main part of house and preparation for east and north additions. Front door, wallpaper,

Discussion of remote, online presence

Elevator/accessibility. It is incumbent upon EDM to provide alternate means to access what is available on second floors. Aim is for printed/ipad/guides that interpret on first level about second level. LAAB provided a number of great suggestions to enhance accessibility for people various disabilities. Grant [has been awarded?] to create a new more accessible tour on website.

Reinstating path between Homestead and Evergreens, "path just wide enough for two who love." Paired to add architectural lighting to both Homestead and Evergreens. Wald request of the HC,

two sentence endorsement of project for Mass Architectural Advisory Board. Marquardt will send to MAAB.

8. Civil War Tablets

Invitation to HC to view Civil War Tablets.

9. Demolition application

Site visit pending, review at next meeting. 452 Main St.

10. Public Comment

No public comment.

11. Unanticipated Items

New members: the Commission has openings for two members. No one has submitted application for Historical Commission or LHD. Some general discussion about possible candidates.

12. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held May 19th, at 6:30 p.m.

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at [TIME?]

Submitted by Robin Fordham