

Amherst Historical Commission

Meeting Minutes

September 15, 2022

Members: Jan Marquardt (Chair), Hetty Startup, Pat Auth, Madeleine Helmer, Robin Fordham, Becky Lockwood

Staff: Ben Breger

Guests: Suzannah Muspratt, Hilda Greenbaum, Kelly E. Rebecca Fricke, See kyung Pak, Gigi Barnhill

Meeting called to order at 6:33

PUBLIC MEETING

1. Discussion/Presentation of CPA proposals

a. Historic walking tour

Suzannah Muspratt presented an idea about a self-guided walking tour of stained glass in downtown Amherst. Muspratt is helping with the preservation of stained glass at Grace Church and has become interested in 19th + 20th century stained glass around Amherst. Muspratt shared numerous examples of stained glass around Amherst included at Mead Art Museum, Grace Church, including 20 windows by the ‘father of American Stained Glass,’ William Gibson, Unitarian Universalist Church, 38 N. Prospect St, St, Brigids Church, Amherst Town Hall.

Muspratt made clear that she was not willing to take on the project but would like to pitch the application and find a faculty sponsor to work with a graduate student to do the research.

Fordham suggested the Mass. Cultural Council might be a better avenue for funding since this may not be an eligible project for CPA funding.

Marquardt suggest neo-medieval architecture could also be a tour.

Historical Commission members agreed to write a letter of support to the Mass Cultural Council to support the application.

b. Wildwood Cemetery outbuilding preservation

Rebecca Fricke, General Manager, presented on behalf of the Wildwood Cemetery. Fricke discussed that there are 3 components to this project: brick work, roof work, and

historic inventory. The total request will be for \$204,000. The Cemetery is seeking to also inventory the historic resources and be added to the MACRIS database. The Historical Commission has existing CPA funds for historic resource inventories that could be used to carry out the inventory component of the project. Fricke got a quote for the project at \$25,000.

Fricke described how scaffolding would be required for the masonry and roofing work, so it made sense to combine those projects in the same year, and not feasible to split up the project.

c. Amherst Historical Society painting conservation

Gigi Barnhill shared that the Amherst Historical Society plans to apply for funds related to the preservation of 5 Mabel Loomis Todd paintings. The AHS is getting a quote from Michelson Gallery to conserve the 5 paintings. The paintings are in rough shape and will require extensive repair, repainting, and reframing. Barnhill anticipates each of the 5 paintings will cost around \$3-5,000.

d. North Amherst Church building preservation

See kyung Pak shared an update on the N. Amherst Church project. Pak described that one of the contractors noticed a leak in the roof and the roof slightly caving in on the Pine St side of the roof. Structural engineers confirmed that the roof is nearly failing and that further analysis will be required to get a better sense of the problem. Pak shared that the engineering report and estimate may come in after the Sep 30 CPA deadline and was asking what should be done.

Fordham suggested exploring MHC Emergency Stabilization funds. Fordham also suggested to submit the proposal with what is available at the time of application but then sharing that there is incomplete information and further clarification on the funding proposal coming soon.

e. Historical Commission outbuilding restoration fund

Fordham described her thoughts on developing a CPA fund for outbuilding restoration – e.g. barns. Given that many of these barns are no longer in agricultural use, it is often hard to maintain them, given their economically viable use is no longer in existence. While Fordham had thought about developing a fund for physical repairs to historic barns, this may require too much in administration and needing to protect the investment with a Restriction. A more feasible project would be to use CPA Administrative funds to fund feasibility studies/assessments to hire consultants to assess barns for restoration upon request.

2. Preservation Plan update and next steps for outreach

Breger proposed discussing this item at a future meeting once PVPC has the survey and questionnaire is more fleshed out.

3. Updating Historical Commission webpage

Lockwood shared some edits to the Town webpage, history section, wanting to better recognize the role of indigenous populations in the Town. Lockwood shared research from Lisa Brooks about the lives and cultural of Native American tribes.

Lockwood will propose some language to edit the webpage and Breger will work with Town staff to update the website.

4. Public Comment

None

5. Items not anticipated withing 48 hours of meeting

Update on West Cemetery project.

6. Announcements

None.

7. Next Meeting Date

October 12, 2022 – CPA (questions, prioritization), Library (keep very succinct), Preservation Plan

November 9, 2022

Meeting adjourned at 8:09