

Approved: November 20, 2023

Merrimack Heritage Commission – Meeting Minutes 12-June-2023

Attendance: Heritage Commission – Chip Pollard, John Frechette

Guests – John Lastowka (Historical Society), Chuck Mower (Historical Society),
Larry Shower (Historical Society), Rick Price (Historical Society)

We were unable to gain access to the conference room. The meeting was relocated to the Merrimack Historical Society.

1930 hrs: Meeting called to order by John Frechette

1930 hrs: Review and approval of prior minutes

- The minutes for the April meeting could not be approved because we did not have a quorum.

1930 hrs: Introductions

- John L. advised that Ralph Gerenz was on a cruise to Bermuda and was sidelined by an emergency medical procedure. He is currently at the hospital in Bermuda and is recovering well.

1935 hrs: Commission files

- In an ongoing project, members review the Heritage Commission files. The files will be separated into three categories; files to keep, files of potential interest, and paperwork for potential discard.
- John F. advised that 1/3 of the files he reviewed belonged to another organization, another 1/3 were reviewed and sorted, and the remaining 1/3 still needs review.
- John L. advised that he reviewed the Chamberlin Bridge file the Heritage Commission lent to him. The file had documentation that the granite for the bridge was supplied by the Lovejoy Granite Quarry in Milford. The file has helped with a current project the Historical Society is working on.

1945 hrs: Thomas More College

- Chip advised that he has heard from Tricia Fair. Her graveyard specialist had a heart attack in April and is recovering. He will be available in June. Chip advised that he will contact the college to arrange a time for a visit, but the college does have a summer program.
- Chuck inquired about what technology the graveyard specialist will be using. No one had that information.
- Chuck commented that the Heritage Commission should consider some kind of historical marker for Joseph Blanchard and his contributions to the town. It is unknown what the Fair family has planned for a marker or what may already be on campus.

1955 hrs: Signage and the Commission Budget

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- John F suggested that we address the Heritage Commission budget at the presentation to the Town Council. There will be expenses for the signs we plan to erect at the historic Schoolhouse and Firehouse sites, as well as the potential for future signs.
- Chuck advised that there are memorial and cultural sites in town that need recognition.
- The consensus of all present agreed that the granite signs in town stating "Incorporated 1750" should be corrected. The underlying meaning of the second incorporation in 1750 is confusing to residents. The second incorporation should be commemorated through other means. Inquiries are to be made to granite sign makers for a solution to the engraving issue.

2010 hrs: Reeds Ferry Landing

- John F. discussed a site walk at the Reeds Ferry Landing site that took place in April. The area is rich with historic sites on the town-owned property. The sites include; the railroad station site, the ferry landing site (which is strewn with historic bricks from the barges), an old railroad trestle abutment, a foundation from the Fessenden and Lowell cooperage, and views of the Passaconaway Islands in the Merrimack River.
- There is also a large tree on the property, which we should seek to have designated as a Passaconaway Tree. The Old Passaconaway Tree that existed at Thornton's Landing blew down in 1938. The oak tree is 152 inches in diameter. A rough formula multiplying the girth by 3.5 estimates the tree is 532 years old. The tree would have been an impressive 175 years old when Passaconaway lived on the land.
- John F. inquired about what would be required to have the town-owned land designated as a town park with the potential for a heritage walking trail to loop through the area. It would be a question to propose to the Town Council.
- Chuck advised that it would be unlikely without a rich benefactor making a donation. He expressed his displeasure with the development of the town and why business eyesores have not been addressed. There was a lengthy discussion about town politics and economic development. Chuck concluded that the aesthetics of the town could be improved one small step at a time.

2030 hrs: Historical Society Events

- John L. advised that the Historical Society meeting this month is the annual meeting. They will be electing the officers for the coming year. They will be reviewing and updating the bylaws, the mission statement, and the vision statement of the Historical Society.
- John L. advised that they are working on a new To & Froe presentation regarding Chamberlin's Bridge and the Milford Lovejoy Granite Quarry. The presentation will be a collaborative effort with other towns regarding stone arch bridges. The presentation will include interviews with renowned bridge photographer Arthur Rounds and the owner of Lovejoy Quarry, Keith Trexler.

2045 hrs: Meeting adjourned

Next Meeting: July 10, 2023