



## Town of Wilbraham Historical Commission

### Meeting Minutes

**Date:** Tuesday, January 12, 2021

**Time:** 7 pm

**Location:** virtual meeting via GoToMeeting

**Attendees:** Roberta Albano, Charlie Bennett, Ted Malysz, Diane Testa, Don Williams

**Guests:** Nick Breault, John Broderick, Bob Tourville

### **Summary of Meeting:**

1. Meeting minutes from 2/18/20 were approved 5-0 with minor wording changes to the section on the Ware, MA demolition delay by-law. The meeting minutes from 11/17/20 were unanimously approved 5-0 as is.
2. **Membership on Historical Commission & Town Website** – the Commission welcomed Don Williams as the newest member of the committee; his membership was approved by the Board of Selectmen in December 2020.

We discussed again potential members who would be interested in joining our Commission. Ted Malysz suggested Dave Bourcier, the retired fire chief, who has an interest in historical matters, and Ted will contact Dave about joining our Commission. Greg Roberts was also mentioned as a possible candidate, and Bob Tourville will reach out to ask Greg of his interest.

On the Town's website, the information on the Historical Commission members is very out-of-date. Diane Testa asked if one of the members would take on the task of contacting the Town's IT department, and Nick Breault said he will take on this task. Nate Delong in the IT Department would have the ability to update this information; the IT Dept. is located in the old police station.

Also on the town website is an inventory of historic buildings. Carol Albano, the former chair of the Historical Commission, had kept this inventory regularly updated. Bobbie Albano will call Carol about a possible cost of maintaining and updating the inventory of these historic buildings. John Broderick mentioned that the link to see the historic homes inventory on the town website is not easily located, and should be moved up on the page so that people could find the link. The IT Dept. for the town can be contacted via e-mail at: [website@wilbraham-ma.gov](mailto:website@wilbraham-ma.gov).

3. **Budget for FY 2022** – Diane Testa sent in the unchanged budget request of \$300 for FY 2022, with an additional, non-recurring capital request of \$1000 to cover the framing & preservation of historical photographs from the town's archives. Nancy Johnson suggested we apply for funds through the CPC to cover the expenses of the photographs' framing & preservation. The FY 2021 budget was \$300.
4. **Framing & Preservation of Town Photographs** – Diane Testa mentioned that there are digital copies of old town photographs on the town website, with the links being found under the Historical Commission section. One of the web pages was last updated in 2001 by Dick Bolt. The other web page is Joe Robert's

personal collection of old town photos. Carol Albano had been very involved in the photographic history of the town when she served on the Historical Commission.

Bobbie Albano recalls that there are boxes of stored photographs in a Town Hall closet that need to be located and then sorted through, to identify the ones of most interest. Bobbie and Diane Testa planned to meet in mid-January to undertake this aspect of the project. Nick Breault mentioned there is a binder in the public library that contains old photographs and old records on a shelf in the corner of the building where the historical documents are. Nick mentioned that the CPC is considering to extend the deadline for submission of project proposals.

Given that the current deadline for submission of proposals to the CPC is Jan. 22, 2021, the Commission members were involved in verbally completing the sections of the CPC's Project Proposal Form. As a project for our Historical Commission, we want to create a panoramic composite of historical photographs that highlight buildings and areas of historical significance to the town; Ted Malysz and Charlie Bennett emphasized that the project aims to keep the history alive for future generations and reminds people of the heritage of their town. We would like to seek funding for preserving and framing a set of photographs that have a common theme, and then hang them in notable places in Town Hall, such as in the meeting rooms or in the lobby. It would be helpful if the hung photograph had a 1-paragraph description to accompany it, to explain to viewers the significance of the photograph. We expect that the \$1000 funds request would likely pay for the framing & preservation of 4 – 5 photographs. This project could be ongoing, in that year-to-year a handful of historical photos would continue to be framed and preserved, and could be hung in other town buildings such as the library or high school.

A suggestion was made to create a scrapbook of photographs for the town library, containing actual photographs, not reproductions of photos in a book, since the former approach could be funded by the CPC.

John Broderick had sent an e-mail suggestion to the Historical Commission that the Frame and Picture Shop on Boston Rd. could be a skilled, local business to perform the preservation and framing project for us.

5. **Historical Signs by Art-Tec Signs** – Diane Testa updated the Commission that Art-Tec Signs has not made further progress in making the posts for the signs, since their supplier is delayed due to the virus.

Diane spoke to Bill Sperrazza at the DPW about safe digging locations for the sign placement. Bill suggested we contact someone in the Engineering Department. Diane has tried to contact the Planning Department, but has not been able to make contact with someone there; she will continue to reach out to the appropriate department for affirmation of these safe digging sites.

Of the three proposed sites for sign placement, the one on the south end of town, across from Merrick Farm, would be placed in an area not near a residence or plot that is well-maintained. Rather, this site is overgrown and unkempt. A discussion was had on how to keep this area around the sign maintained, and it was suggested that ground fabric and gravel can be put down around the base of the sign to keep away the overgrowth; Tonya Basch of DPW could be involved in this discussion on how to maintain the area around the signs. The other two locations are Hoover Park, at the intersection of Faculty Street and Springfield Street, and across the street from Flo-Design on Main Street. Both of these locations are regularly maintained by the town. Nick Breault said he would follow up in asking the correct town employee about proper maintenance of the area around the signs.

When the signs are to be installed, Charlie Bennett said he would contact Dave Miles to take a photograph of the installation of the signs.

6. **Appointee from Historical Commission to CPC** – John Broderick, chair of the CPC, joined the meeting as a guest to once again emphasize the important need for the Historical Commission to have representation on the CPC; he highlighted that it is part of Massachusetts general law and the Wilbraham town by-laws that an appointee be had to serve on both commissions. Approximately \$44,000 was

appropriated last year from the CPC to historical projects, and hence an appointee serving on both commissions is essential. Diane Testa spoke of the challenging aspect of the laws, to request that a volunteer give a significant amount of time to serve on two commissions. Bobbie Albano offered a suggestion to have an appointee to the CPC plus one alternate appointee who could substitute in the absence of the main appointee; this option would reduce the burden of commitment and allow more thorough participation of the Historical Commission at CPC meetings. John Broderick did not favor this idea. None of the Historical Commission members yet have the time to volunteer in this role as appointee to the CPC.

7. **Historical Housing Purchase on Weston Street** – John Broderick had sent an e-mail informing the Commission of the purchase of property by Brian St. Pierre of Moose Creek Realty at 21-36 Weston Street. Mr. St. Pierre believes the property had been surveyed for historical significance and was inquiring if the property would qualify for funding from the CPC to cover renovations to the structures. The buildings had been built by the Ludlow Manufacturing Association to serve as housing for millworkers. The CPC has not provided funding to private properties in the past, except to structures at Fountain Park whose buildings were to be used by the public.
8. **Phelps' Farmhouse at Fountain Park** – Bobbie Albano asked about the state of the project to renovate the Phelps' farmhouse. Charlie Bennett explained that the Wilbraham Nature and Cultural Center, which manages the park, decided to abandon the project because of extensive costs to renovate – on the order of \$500K – without the expected return on investment, mainly due to costs for remediation of lead & asbestos. The farmhouse will likely be torn down in the future, much to our disappointment.
9. **Memorial School as an Historic Building** – Bobbie Albano asked about the current interest in designating Memorial School as historic. There is a cost involved in putting a building on an official registry of historic buildings. Charlie Bennett mentioned that if the school were to be officially registered, the Town might have a problem selling the building & land in the future if they wanted to sell.
10. **Annual Summary** – Diane Testa mentioned that she will be preparing the annual summary of the Historical Commissions' activities for the town's annual report, to be submitted in a few weeks.

**Prepared by:** Diane Testa  
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