



Historical Commission

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: April 13, 2021

The meeting minutes from January 2021 were unanimously approved 5-0 without changes by the members of the Historical Commission.

The Historical Commission spoke with Patricia Garbarino from Arizona regarding items passed on to her from her grandparents' home at 226 Springfield Street. She wants to digitize numerous artifacts from this residence that date back to the 1860s. The family name was Howard L. Brown (great-grandfather) and Howard B. Brown (grandpa). Prior to Wilbraham, the Brown family was from Sturbridge. Patricia has recordings of her grandma interviewing her great grandma about her childhood in Sturbridge: these recordings are on MP3 files.

Patricia's old photos are mostly from Wilbraham & Sturbridge. The documents she owns are things such as birth certificates, death certificates, military deployment orders, draft cards, a Navy Ship booklet – the Iowa – that her grandpa served on, handwritten letters dating from the 1800s.

We gave Patricia the name of Lucy Pelletier from the Athenaeum Society, since they are collecting veterans' materials, and also the name of Mary Bell at the library. Diane Testa said she would contact her niece who has a specialization in old document restoration.

We welcomed Mike Rozolsky as the newest member to the Historical Commission. We discussed other potential members, particularly Peter Ablondi. Dave Bourcier, the retired Wilbraham Fire Chief, was very interested as well, but he has since joined the Athenaeum Society.

The Commission members discussed applying to the CPC for funds to create a marker for Wigwam Hill on upper Tinkham Road, the old Bennett Turkey Farm. An Indian woman apparently had lived in a teepee near the minister's home in that area. The land consists of 82.55 acres for farming and forestry, and is still owned by Dr. Matthews, and is no longer for sale. The town has the right-of-first-refusal for the land, so the town can choose to buy the property over any potential buyer. Many Commission members feel that the town should exercise its right to buy the land from Mr. Matthews, to become a nature preserve adjacent to Rice's Nature Preserve. There are three ways to access this property: from Bolles Road, Tinkham Road, and Monson Road; Fern Valley is an access road.

John Broderick tapped in to remind us that the Community Preservation Coalition is still in need of an appointee from our Historical Commission and to discuss the options for the property at Wigwam Hill.

Our historical signs marking the entrances to the center of town have been completed for several months; however, the sign maker – Art-Tec Signs of Wilbraham (Terry Liberatori) – has become very ill and hospitalized for many months. Thus the signs are sitting in his shop, waiting to be placed in our three locations. Prior to installation of the signs, the town will have to again call Dig Safe, through the DPW, to get approval to place the signs where we want them to go. The approval is only valid for 30 days.

Charlie Bennett shared with us that Stoton Smead has an idea that the Historical Commission should make the case to designate Memorial School as an historic building, so that with approval from the Community

Preservation Coalition, our Historical Commission could apply for a grant through the CPC with the intent to preserve facets of the building. We could also look to get the building on a state or national registry of historical buildings. It was felt that the Selectmen would push back on this idea of designating the school as historic, because the Town would then have restrictions placed on it as to what could be done with the building (potentially sold) or how it could be used.

We spoke of the Town Meeting to take place on Monday May 10 at Minnechaug High School @ 7pm, and that the Town elections are Saturday, May 15. No specific plans for the next Historical Commission meeting were made.

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April 27, 2021