

Dighton Historical Commission
Hybrid Meeting- Old Town Hall and Zoom
Minutes of May 9, 2023, 6:00 PM

Present: Pat Gailes, Rafa Delfin, Pat Olsen, Irene Allie, Dave Marvill, Peter Caron (Selectman Liaison)

1. Called Meeting to Order at 6:14 PM. Dave Marvill has not yet been sworn in as the new member so he won't be voting tonight

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Secretary's Report

- Minutes of April 7, 2023 and Minutes of April 11, 2023. Motion to waive the reading of both Minutes and accept them as submitted. Moved by Olsen. Seconded by Allie. All in favor. Dave confirmed the spelling of his last name as Marvill.

4. Budget

- FY 23 Budget balance/expenses. We will be encumbering approximately \$600 for the GIS mapping. Our expendable amount for FY23 is \$1387.91.

- FY 23 End of Fiscal Year Proceedings. Work with the Town Accountant Sirena and the GIS mapping company for an estimated invoice to submit.

- Signature Authority Designation Form update for FY24. Motion to approve Rafa Delfin as primary signature and Patricia Olsen and Patricia Gailes as alternates. Moved by Olsen. Seconded by Allie. All in favor.

5. Unfinished Business

- Discuss/Review James Briggs Garden sign. Invoice of \$0 received from Mr. Clifford of Bristol Plymouth Regional Technical School for the materials for the sign. The school did a good job making the sign and we will send them a certificate of acknowledgment to thank them. Delfin will make the certificate. We still have to pay for the pressure treatment of the wood posts and the estimate cost is between \$64 - \$70. Caron said that he has the wood posts at home that might go with the sign; he will talk to Building Commissioner Jim Aguiar the following day to ask for his approval.

- Update -Nat Crane House Memorial - no update

- Update - 2120 Water Street. No update. In Ron Smith's e-mail sent to Gailes and Delfin on April 13, 2023, he listed some preservation resources – Preservation Massachusetts, Les Fossil, Newcastle ME, Historic House Salvage.

- Review/Discuss/ Act Historical Commission 50th and Time Capsule. Delfin had proposed a time capsule to be opened 50 years from now. He asked what things should be put in the capsule and that these things have to reflect the current year. The proposed things include copies of the Taunton Daily Gazette featuring the historical marker program and both good and bad events that have happened in Dighton in 2023, festivals (Cow Chip, Strawberry, Firecracker), local restaurant menus, a Hannaford flyer showing prices of grocery items. Gailes suggested to include something from the library. The commission has to decide how big the capsule will be and where it will be buried. Gailes will write a letter to the Board

of Selectmen expressing our desire to have a time capsule and to ask BOS for advice on location (where to bury the capsule); it must be in town property. Olsen suggested to keep the capsule in the Town vault where it will be safe.

- Discuss/Review/ Act - Preserving Memories of Dighton. Gales stated that we have some past stuff from the Commission and that she will do a research on people who have ties with Dighton. Delfin found some old photos from previous annual reports. We also plan to conduct interviews with older living residents who can share their stories. Delfin said that Ron Smith had suggested that we interview Myrna Santos, the Town Historian, since she knows a lot about local history more than anyone else. Gales suggested that we provide a list of questions to ask the interviewees so they can prepare themselves. The questions have to be based on their personal stories and how they relate to Dighton history. Gales proposed that we video record the interviews. Delfin asked Marvill if Myrna still has her cable show; Marvill said yes but that he's still waiting for Myrna to give him the green light because the show is in hiatus.

6. Preservation Planning

- Discuss/Review/Act - Area Form on Lower Four Corners. Gales received a response from Ben Haley of Mass. Historical Commission (MHC). Gales will write a formal letter to him with the form requesting that these areas be evaluated and to inform us of the findings. Haley advised that if the owners are in these districts, that we make them aware of the possibility of listing early on in the process (because if the majority of the owners object, then it can't go forward). We need to go to BOS and ask to be on the agenda to talk about going ahead with this plan and so that the residents will know that we're moving ahead on getting a national registered district. Also, to discuss the difference between a national registered district and a local historic district. We need to push for creating local historic districts because this is the most effective way of preserving and protecting historical buildings. Gales was going through the files on the Coram Shipyard district and the Wharf District to see if there were any letters or samples that had been written to people before when those two areas became districts, and she shared a letter from 1992 advising residents about the creation of a national registered district and that this action would not restrict homeowners to make any changes in their homes, but requested residents to discuss changes with the historical commission. Gales proposed that we send a similar letter to the homeowners in the Lower Four Corners advising them that creating a national registered district is under consideration, the difference between national registered and local historic districts, and a fact sheet on the National Registry of Historic Places. Once we have received the evaluations from MHC, we can then invite the homeowners to a special meeting with us where they can address their concerns. Olsen commented that the word "restrictions" might scare off some homeowners (nobody wants to be told what to do); Gales responded that we need to be clear about what the national register (that there are no restrictions within the district) but we also have to be upfront and say that it does not preclude that at some point in time though town by-law we wouldn't pursue this to be a local historic district where there could be restrictions. Gales proposed this timeline: 1. After our June meeting, we will talk to BOS about our plans. 2. We will conduct a walking tour of the two districts. 3. We will send a letter to the home owners. 4. We will organize an informational meeting. It might take us a couple of months to achieve these steps.

- Discuss/Review Community-wide Survey Update – Phase 2. Gales reached out to Stacy Spies but Stacy hasn't gotten back to her for an update.

- Historical Markers – Delfin said that he found a new purveyor of signs, Honan Signs Company based in Winthrop. He had asked them to make a mock-up sign for the Standish House but they have not responded, so he will contact them again after a week. Delfin presented his research findings (with the help of Dan Higgins) on two properties in North Dighton who are interested in getting a marker: 150 Chase Street (owned by Joseph and Carol Furtado) and 158 Chase Street (owned by Robert and Joan Woods). According to the findings, it wasn't until 1921 that Chase Street and the surrounding streets were built.

- Discuss/Review/Act historical marker applications. Gales asked if the houses were by Mount Hope Finishing Company. Delfin said that the houses were built in 1921 by Mount Hope Finishing Company and sold to Dighton Realty Company. On the marker, it would say "Dighton Realty Company, 1921". Delfin entertained a motion to approve the historical marker application for 150 Chase Street. Moved by Gales. Seconded by Allie. All in favor. Delfin entertained a motion to approve the historical marker application for 158 Chase Street. Moved by Olsen. Seconded by Gales. All in favor.

Gales mentioned that Ron Smith had told her about an anonymous donor who wants to pay for the markers for these town properties: the Segreganset School House, the Smith Memorial Hall, the Old Town Hall, the Carnegie Library and the North Dighton Fire Barn.

- Review/Discuss/Act Segreganset Schoolhouse: The dilapidated sign is gone. The cost to repair it is \$211 which should come out of the building budget or Tom Ferry's budget. Jim Aguiar asked if we could put some money towards the repair to show good faith. Delfin asked if the repair has been done and Gales said yes. The sign has also been repainted. The Commission suggested donating \$100 for the repair. Motion to expend \$100 to the repair of the Segreganset Schoolhouse. Moved by Delfin. Seconded by Allie. All in favor,

7. New Business

- Discuss Demolition Delay Bylaw time extension. Gales passed out a map of communities with Demolition Delay Bylaws (they go from zero to greater than 12 months). Gales will send materials from Demolition Delay workshop for the Commission's review. Delfin shared an information from Jack LeManager of Winchester Historical Commission via the MHC ListServe. Winchester HC is considering of building a case against the town's current demolition bylaw by using sustainability and climate change as an argument. Delfin questioned if Dighton could do the same; if the main purpose of a history preservationist is to preserve history, then why not preserve, recycle, and repurpose original materials because it's cheaper than using new ones? When we create new materials, it affects the carbon footprint, they are more expensive and do not last long. Delfin proposed if Dighton could extend the existing demolition bylaw from 6 months to 18 to 24 months; one of the reasons for the extension is to discourage future developers. Another reason is to give more time for all parties involved to brainstorm/discuss possibilities in preserving an old structure. Delfin also shared information on Dr. Anne Lusk, a lecturer at Boston University Metropolitan College who had submitted a proposal to Northampton entitled, "Historic Property Owners as Carbon Stewards. New Northampton Historic Preservation Plan: An element of the Sustainable Northampton Comprehensive Plan." Per Lusk, "Communities have not been consistently attracting younger and diverse residents to historic preservation. Many residents believe that new construction is more sustainable, new windows are more energy efficient, and the land is better suited for affordable housing or a McMansion even though the 'greenest home is ... one that is already built.'" Delfin said that if we do not focus on the politics of climate change (since not everyone agrees that it exists, but focus instead on the economics and practicality of reusing old materials. Delfin mentioned the property at 2120 Water Street (John Hathaway House, built in 1700) which has been boarded up and is up for sale; instead of publishing photos of the house, the realtor posted a digital photo of an ultra-modern house that could be built to replace the existing historical house. Delfin said that the architecture and style of this digital house does not match the historical atmosphere of the district (Coram Shipyard Historic District) which is in the National Register of Historic Place. Selectman Peter Caron commented that 2120 Water Street is being sold as a waterfront property. Delfin argued that if the current owner of said property is going to demolish an old historical house, at least replace it with a new one that resembles the old one or at least whose design reflects the architecture of the old one. Extending the bylaw will allow the architect to alter the design to make it more historically appealing. Caron commented that the two posts from the Smith Memorial Hall were saved because it was more beneficial than replacing them. Delfin questioned what we could do, or what the owners could do, with salvageable materials from the John Hathaway House when it is demolished. Gales said that part of our job is building a database of historic salvage.

Gailes questioned about the towns that have 12 months or more of demolition delay bylaw: "How much success do they have? How many homes have they saved or reduced?" Gailes stated that when the demolition delay bylaw passed in Dighton, it almost didn't. Caron asked if extending the bylaw could be too much of a stretch. Olsen asked how many times we have invoked the bylaw. Olsen said that the bylaw had been discussed previously by the Commission and it was agreed that 6 months would be sufficient. She said, "I am for saving the houses; I am not for extending the demolition bylaw." Even with the sustainability argument, Olsen still said no to the extension. Delfin commented that perhaps it is up to us to convince the younger generation to get interested since they seem to be heavily involved in saving the environment than the older ones. Gailes said that we could take a look at our 6-month delay bylaw in light of the sustainability. Delfin is concerned about the increasing number of houses that have been demolished in the last 10 years. Gailes said that part of the problem is that Dighton does not have a local historic district bylaw that would significantly help to preserve old homes. She also stated that some towns are wealthier than others which allows them to save more old buildings. She suggested that we continue the discussion on reuse and sustainability next month, though she has serious concerns about going back to town meetings because we might lose the 6 months that we have unless we're really sure we have the backing for the extension.

- Discuss/Review/Act Helen Lane map donation from Louise Freeman who had inherited a framed watercolor map of Dighton map from Barbara O'Brien in 1993. Freeman had donated the map to Town Hall in April. Helen Lane had made 12-14 original hand-painted maps (in watercolors). The map in question looks like a reproduction of one of them. The Historical Society had photographed it at one point in time and has sold it as a fundraiser. Irene Allie said that she has a reproduction of the map. The material looks like it's fabric which has been laminated and sealed up and has the same frame around. Gailes said that the map should be reframed to protect it. Gailes sent an email to Building Commissioner Jim Aguiar and to the BOS (via TA Mike Mullen) about finding a place to hang the map either in the Old Town Hall or Town Hall. Caron commented that the Town Hall is being revamped so the map would be better put in the Old Town Hall. Marvill asked who would pay for the framing; Gailes said it would come out of our budget. Allie will ask Riverside Art in Somerset for an estimate for the cost of the framing and will consult with the framer on what type of framing to choose.

8. Library Building Committee Report – will host an Open House on May 13, 1-3 PM, to offer group tours of the inside of the building (Smith Memorial Hall). There will be different stations outside to answer all of the library needs and certain library questions (needs and services, finances, accessibility, history). Gailes will be at Station 4 to educate the public about the history of the building; she plans to make a little tri-fold and index cards so people can write down their memories of Smith Memorial Hall and how they tie to the history of Dighton. A group photo will be taken by Ron O'Connor at 12:45 PM in front of the Hall which will be on the cover of the 2022 Annual Town Report. Gailes said that she will post about the event if a quorum plans to be there.

9. CPC Report – Gailes will be attending her first meeting on May 18. The regular meeting at 5:30 and 6:00 PM is CPC Annual Public Meeting which will be held in PrimeTime. The public is encouraged to come so that they can learn more about the CPC guidelines on funding.

10. Correspondence – We received a letter of resignation from Ronald Smith. Motion to accept Smith's resignation with thanks and appreciation. Moved by Delfin. Seconded by Allie. All in favor.

- E-mail from Suzanne G. Cherau of PAL (Public Archeology Laboratory) to notify us about the intensive survey about the archeological field work for the Taunton River Trail at Sweet Knolls Park and scheduled from May 3rd through this Friday weather permitting. Gailes said that she would go the next day to see some of their field work.

- Received the 2022 State Register of Historic Places book from MHC. We get one every year and they are in our file cabinet. We have at least 5 of these books from the previous years. Instead of

keeping all of them, we will just take out the information that is relevant to Dighton, keep the current book, and discard the rest. In this way, we can have more space in our file cabinet.

11. Public Input - None

12. Other

- Mass History Conference (organized by Mass. History Alliance) will take place on June 5 in Devens, MA. Cost is \$110. Delfin asked how this conference will be beneficial to Dighton as he feels that it would be nothing more than a social gathering instead of a conference for serious preservationists. Gailes said some of the workshops are geared more for historical societies than commissions.

- First Baptist Church – Gailes contacted Peter Costa from the church and she gave him the possible resources that Ron Smith had put together: CPC funds, Grant program from Mechanics Bank.

- Two openings in the Commission

- Next meeting date is June 13, 2023 at 6 PM

13. Adjournment – Motion by Gailes to adjourn. Moved by Delfin. Seconded by Allie. All in favor. Adjourned at 7:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Rafa Delfin, 6/8/2023