

Heritage Commission
Draft Minutes
June 12, 2024

Call Meeting to Order: Francoise Elise, Chair, called meeting to order at 10:00 am in the Novak Room of the Exeter Town Office Building.

Members Present: Francoise Elise, Chair, Julie Gilman, Select Board Rep., John Grueter, Planning Board Rep., John Merkle, Alternate, Dave Sharples, Town Planner

Francoise stated that this is her first meeting as Chair.

New Business: Public Hearing: First is the review of the minutes from the April 17, 2024 meeting. After review, John Grueter made a motion to approve. Julie seconded. All were in favor and minutes were approved.

Next is discussion on the Demolition Committee. There have not been any demolitions in some time.

Francoise asked if there were any updates from the boards. Julie said, we need a representative from the commission to the air point park. Bill Campbell volunteered for that committee outright just as a regular member. I am reluctant to have him do both chores and I would like the commission's opinion on this. John Grueter has no issue with this.

Francoise asked Julie if the commission should wait for Bill to be present and she said yes. Francoise then asked Julie if this should be put on the agenda for the next meeting and Julie said yes. Francoise then asked if there was any news from the Planning Board. John Grueter said it has been quiet. Francoise then mentioned the solar project.

Dave said it is at the Cross Road Landfill. Dave said it is not done yet. They are just putting up all the raffings and they have about 20% of them up. If you see it and it looks all wavey, that is the design.

Francoise then asked if there was any news from the Historic District Commission. Julie said no, we just looked at that one place across the street. Conceptual design and everyone is upset about it. In our opinions, way too large and way too tall and it overshadowed the Town Hall. It made the Town Hall look small. Julie said it was interesting because I have never seen a perspective like that before. We will have some input on that when it comes before the HDC.

Francoise said this segates into the next agenda item 11 Front Street. I also feel that it is too big and the footprint is too big. I went to the Hajjar Management Company's website and I was so impressed with that company. Apparently, they have the resources to really do some nice buildings. In thinking that, if a company was going to infill into 11 Front Street spot, they would have the ability to do that. I did design a letter to send to the Historic District Commission our opinion if we choose to send an opinion on this development and there is a sample letter in the

packet. Also, it does site where Hajjar Management has already worked with the downtown at 154 to 156 Water Street and did a very nice job there. So if the Heritage Commission chooses to, we could send a letter to the Historic District Commission on our opinion, but would it be more appropriate to wait until they come.

John Grueter said he would wait. Julie said, I wouldn't. I would send it, have it on the record because it is another piece of the information for the HDC to consider when they do come back. Francoise said, we can keep it on the agenda.

Dave said, you can send the letter, but I am a little concerned when you say the building is too large, it infringes on the Congregational Church. What is too large to you, might be too small to me. I would avoid saying those kinds of things. They came in above the height and I think you can speak to that. When you talk about the building coverage or the foot print of it, it is allowed by the Zoning Board.

John Merkle said, the Historic District has the term scale in it and it is clear that particular proposal was out of scale to the Historic District.

Dave said, that was not what I was saying. If they come in with a proposal that meets our regulations, you are hard pressed to say, it's too big. I get that they are asking for more than the ordinance allows. That's when you can say, don't let them do that.

Francoise then said, we should table the letter until the proposal is brought to the HDC.

Francoise said, in order to get up to speed with the Heritage Commission, I did review different plans that the town has. I asked Dave to give us an update on the Master Plan and the Heritage Commission's role in the Master Plan. In the packets, we have a chart on the items the Heritage Commission is involved in.

Dave said, as folks know, we have an action agenda in the Master Plan and it says what the action is. The Town Lead is to be determined because there wasn't any staff for the Heritage Commission at that time and the Town Support was the Heritage Commission. Under Steward there are six action items. Under Steward 4a, 4b and 4c.

Dave read 4a. Inventory and prioritized historic resources within an outside historic district that need improvements. I did an analysis of it in February and I said the item is being worked on. One of the things we have done is that the town identified the Winter Street Cemetery as an important resource and applied for and received a grant for rehabilitation work on the grave sites and markers. The town also funded tree removal in the cemetery and conducted a historical survey of the Park Street area through a Certified Local Government Grant. The town recently received a Certified Local Government Grant to conduct a survey of historic properties in the Pine Street area.

Julie said, in doing 4a, when we prioritize historic resources that need improvement, where do we begin?

Dave said, you picked the Winter Street Cemetery and identified that as a historic resource that needs improvements and we focused on that and got a grant. I think you spearheaded most of this with surveys and CLG Grants.

The 4b - estimated costs and developing ten year plan in historic resource improvement projects, identify potential funding sources and partners. This item is being worked on while a ten year plan has not been completed. This item was discussed in the Heritage Commission. Dave said, this kind of married with 4a.

Julie said the ten year plan can also include training opportunities.

Dave read the final one 4c. Update Waterfront Commercial Historic District national Survey. This item has been completed.

Julie said, before we go on, number 5 on the Steward Action of the Master Plan to work with local art organizations to promote art installations in public space. We have not done anything with this.

Dave said, When we designed the Pocket Park on Water Street, we had a space made for public art display but that never went anywhere or got funded.

Julie said, the Art Commission has talked about that we do not have enough public art. We do not have that much public space downtown.

Next is the Capital Improvement Program for 2017-2022.

Francoise asked if there were any items the Heritage Commission should be addressing.

Dave said, you mean the 2025-2030 upcoming CIP. The deadline for submittals is June 21st for the department heads. It doesn't go to the Planning Board until the end of July, beginning of August and we really don't know at this point what is going to be in it and what is not. I will keep my eye on it. If you think you are going to do it in the next six years, then you put it in for 2030 or 2029.

That is what the purpose of the plan is. Get it in there and get it on the radar screen and know that it is going to come up.

Sometimes it stays in there for years depending on the priorities at the time. I would suggest that if you think it is going to be done by 2030, you should put it in the plan.

Francoise said, in reviewing the Guidelines of the Heritage Commission, I did notice that once a year the Historic District Commission and the Heritage Commission have a joint meeting. I did not know if this takes place at a certain time of year.

Julie said, this has not happened in years. I don't have a problem with it and this would be something to discuss with the HDC.

Francoise asked if the commission would like her to contact the HDC about having a joint meeting in the future.

John Grueter said it sounds like a good plan.

Francoise said, the next item I bring up is a Main Street Program and I just wanted to know if there was any talk from any departments about this.

Julie said, to my knowledge there was years ago but not recently.

Dave said the Main Street concept is to revitalize, reenergize downtown stores. Generally speaking this is where you have vacant storefronts, not a vibrant economy and they are struggling.

Old Business: Status of the Pine Street Grant. Julie said that is ongoing. We got notice of the funding quite late in the cycle.

Dave said the contract has been signed.

Next is the status of the Heritage Commission Line Item in the Town Budget.

Julie said, in the past what we have done is wrap up any money that hasn't been spent and put it into the HC Fund. We only have \$5,000 which we could spend on matching grants but it is not a lot of money.

Francoise then asked who she could talk to about this. Dave said for her to contact Cory Stevens.

Francoise said the last item to talk about is HDC or HC representing the 23 Water Street Park Committee.

Julie said, we haven't talked about it at the HDC. Francoise said, and we are looking at Bill Campbell.

With no further business, John Grueter made a motion to adjourn. Julie seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 11:00am.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary