

HARVARD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

13 AYER ROAD • HARVARD, MASSACHUSETTS 01451



The Harvard Historical Commission is chartered "...to preserve and protect the historic assets of Harvard, its buildings, structures, places, sites, and surrounding settings of historical or architectural significance."

Those wishing to record any or all of the meeting must alert the chair prior to the start of the meeting and the chair will make an announcement, in accordance with The Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Following are the **minutes** of a regular meeting of the Harvard Historical Commission, held via Zoom, on **Wednesday, February 3, 2021 at 7 pm.**

Submitted by George Triantaris, Secretary.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Pam Marston (Chair)
Steve Nigzus (Vice Chair)
George Triantaris (Secretary)
Emanuel Lindo
Richard Cabelus
Brandon Loughery

MEMBERS IN ABSENTIA:

Matthew McRae

AUDIENCE:

Alice Thayer, Lucas Thayer, Don Dumont, Nick Boynton, Mary Ann Boynton, Traci Dunn, David Rosner, and Staci Donahue (liaison to planning board).

TOPICS:

CALL TO ORDER:

7:03 pm

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:

The minutes of the January 6, 2021 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

ONGOING APPLICATION: None

PUBLIC HEARING: None

NEW APPLICATIONS:

1. 5 Old Littleton Road – Nick Boynton – Windows

Nick Boynton presented his application to replace many of the windows in his house to give them a more unified look and to improve efficiency. He also seeks to change the size of several of the windows to accommodate interior renovations. There was a discussion about the reluctance of the HHC to approve the replacement of historic windows. In this case the original windows have not survived and the windows in place now are a combination of Victorian replacement windows, colonial style windows from the 50's or 60's and vinyl windows. The commissioners asked Nick to obtain a sample window before the next meeting which he agreed to do. A motion to treat this as a substantial change requiring a public hearing was approved by unanimous vote.

2. 92 South Shaker Road – Alice Thayer – Fence

George reported that town counsel Mark Lanza confirmed that the Right to Farm bylaw does not exempt farms from the Historic District bylaw. Pam summarized the history of the Thayer's application. They applied for a certificate of appropriateness for the existing fence on their property. This application was denied and the Thayer filed an amendment to that application which they withdrew before it was considered. They have recently filed a new application which was presented by Lucas Thayer. Lucas described his design for a fence which is shown in the application. The fence would consist of wooden elements with braces and netting to keep deer out of the garden. The fence would be attached with brackets to metal

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stakes and would follow the lines of the existing fence. While the task of this meeting was to decide if the application was significant requiring a public hearing, there was a conversation about the design and whether the wooden “kickers” were appropriate. The applicants sought guidance for the design of the fence. They were referred to the design guidelines, which are not conclusive, and also encouraged to look at fences in the area and consult online resources regarding shaker fencing. They were encouraged to consider the style and scale of the fence with regard to the surrounding structures. Pam will work with the Thayers as their advocate to come up with a design that will both accomplish their goal of protecting their garden and meet the HHC guidelines. Alice Thayer asked if they could revise the design before the public hearing and was informed that she could as long as there was enough time for it to be reviewed by the commission and public. A motion to treat this as a substantial change requiring a public hearing was approved by unanimous vote.

NEW APPLICATIONS APPROVED: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Potential expansion of historic districts (GT)

George proposed that the Commission consider whether to allow owners of historic homes to add their homes to the district on an individual basis in order to protect them from demolition or significant alteration. Currently homeowners concerned about the future of their historic homes can place restrictive easements on them through a program such as the one offered by Historic New England but this is costly. Homeowners could also place restrictions on the deed but again this can be complicated and costly. Some towns have added individual houses to their historic district even though they are located outside the regular boundaries of the district. There was general support for this approach but a number of questions. The path to adding a house would need to include a review by the HHC to determine if the house was significant followed by a vote at town meeting. It was felt that if the homeowner initiated the process there was unlikely to be opposition at town meeting. There were also questions about the impact of such a designation on the value of the house – Steve reported that this could either increase the value (if future owners found this to be an asset) or decrease it (if owners found it to be a burden). A motion was passed by unanimous vote to explore this option further, develop some criteria, and learn how other towns handle this option

. Richard agreed to report back with some preliminary findings.

ON-GOING BUSINESS:

3. Bromfield stonewall project – update (EL)

Although there are several minor adjustments to be made, the stonewall project can now be considered complete.

4. Bromfield House discussion (MM & PM)

A number of options for the disposition of Bromfield House came out of the first survey. A second survey has been prepared that will attempt to narrow the results and come up with a recommendation.

5. HHC welcome packet for new homeowners – update (BL) Brochure (PM) and introduction letter to district residents (GT)

Brandon has finalized a letter that will be sent to all residents in both districts introducing (or reminding homeowners) to the purpose and work of the HHC. Brandon and Pam will work out how to mail the letter.

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6. Historic Harvard Website (PM & BL)

Brandon reports that this project is now complete and he has obtained electronic copies of the historic pictures which will be added to the HHC website and shared with the HHS.

7. Herb House (ML)

Manny asked for questions concerning the report on the herb house. Everyone thought it was a very comprehensive report with a good plan for making sure the herb house is maintained for the future. The students who helped to prepare the report were commended. George asked whether it made sense to explore selling the structure to a private owner who would presumably restore it and occupy it. There was concern that without a specific use for the structure the town may not maintain it going forward. The structure is in the shaker historic district and would be protected from demolition or significant alteration. This led to a discussion as to whether the structure could be used as a house again since it has not been occupied for a number of years and there would be septic challenges. Manny suggested that the HHC pursue a grant to undertake necessary maintenance now and consider an ultimate use for the structure later. He will apply for a grant for \$50,000 from the commonwealth and will ask the CPC to guarantee an equal amount if he is successful. A motion to accept the report and apply for a grant was passed by a unanimous vote.

8. Photo record of historic districts (GT) – next steps

George will begin to take photographs of structures in the district once it gets warmer. Photos will be saved in folders organized by street.

9. Project currently on hold:

Demolition Delay (GT)

Town Center lighting and power lines (GT)

Harvard Narrative History – historical surveys 1993 and 1994 (GT)

Certificates of Appropriateness – upload historical records on website (GT)

CORRESPONDENCE: Email from town counsel Lanza (see above)

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND LIAISONS:

Monument Committee (RC) – No updates

CPC (PM) – HHC's allocation will be applied to the preservation of town records and the town hall restoration.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY:

Lucas Thayer noted that he would like more guidance on his fence project. He also thought that there should be no town oversight over farming practices especially during a pandemic. It was difficult to hear exactly what he was saying due to a bad connection.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

SET DATE FOR NEXT MEETING: March 3, 2021

MEETING ADJOURNED:

7:30 pm

DOCUMENTS:

Letter from town counsel regarding right to farm question
Applications