

Montague Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes
10-29-20

Present: David Brule, Suzanne LoManto, Chris Clawson, Ed Gregory

The meeting convened at 11:10

1. The committee unanimously approved the minutes of the September 24 meeting.
2. Content of first round of materials posted on the Turners Falls name portion of the MHC website.

Suzanne explains the upload process and some of her edits of the documents on the website. She tried to make the documents “much easier to understand” for the general public. Suzanne edited document introductions and made sure documents were attributed to an author, in this case Jeff. She also inserted links to other referenced documents.

Ed Gregory said the committee might need to “investigate the maps with proprietary owner.” After much discussion Chris Clawson recommended putting the maps on the website and if there was a protest by David Allen take them down

Next the committee revisited a key sentence in the introduction to the TR name change website which says the committee will not define the name Turners Falls only in terms of the massacre, Ed says the sentence is contradictory: “we say we’re not going to define it that way and then we do it.” Jeff disagrees and says he wrote the sentence as a “compromise sentence” saying we are not only going to define “Turners Falls” by the massacre but will also not ignore the battle and massacre. David Brule agreed with Jeff and said this is “crucial to the entire discussion.” He says the massacre was not just “an event,” as in Ed’s proposed rewording. E

Ed said the falls was not then called the Turners Falls and the massacre occurred in what is now Gill. He says that Turners Falls should not be in the same sentence as massacre but says he can live with “massacre” if it is linked to “the falls.”

After numerous wording proposals the committee appeared to approve the following unanimously

“We will not focus solely on the massacre at the falls in 1676 but the MHC website will offer educational materials that will enhance the readers knowledge of local people places and events.”

The committee also informally agreed to allow Suzanne to make “small edits” for clarity.

3. Reviewed wording and content of the guide to the battlefield reports produced by Jeff.

Suzanne she would like to put more links into the guide.

David pointed out that there was no “phase 3 as the guide state” but that Phase 3 would have been an extension of Phase 2. He also said there were a total of six “informational sessions.” He also said the Stockbridge Munsee Mohican tribe had opted out of the project and the Abenaki took their place.

The committee approved the guide to the battlefield reports with David's edits/

4. The future name change process and public input

David reads a statement saying MHC main task during the COVID emergency and the police policy review process will be to post documents on the website. Suzanne says should post documents "in the "best form we can" and then "just "leave them there" before we "actively engage the community." Ed agreed saying Suzanne's suggestion was a "no nonsense approach." David said he thought we should encourage people to contact us and perhaps leave time for public input at future meetings.

Jeff said has consistently advocated a process similar to the battlefield grant forums and that committee should consider a public input meeting in January or February. David said he would like to see a shorter description than the battlefield grant reports of what occurred in 1676. He also mentioned the debate over the cattle raid before the massacre and that there were different viewpoints on this.

David also said that as soon as we finish with the battle issues, we should begin posting materials about the more recent history of Turners Falls. Jeff mentioned a Facebook page on the history of Turners Falls. Suzanne expressed concern about inviting social media groups into the MHC process as a "can of worms". David said it was good to know about the website but "it could turn into a real food fight."

5. Walter Ramsey letter re potential projects impacting historical structures or archeological sites

The board then discussed a draft letter from Walter Ramsey about informing the MHC about projects impacting historical structures. Jeff said he had edited the letter to include projects within one mile of a known archaeological site and discussed the edits with Walter.

Suzanne supported the letter because Walter's proposal was consistent with "the existing town hall structure" for making decisions

David questioned limiting archaeological consultation to the one mile from an existing site. He said there were sites that Mass Historic Commission knows about but they have not informed the town. Jeff said he felt this was a fair concern but that the letter had gone through many discussion and negotiations over three months he would like to put the proposed criteria in place now and then tweak the wording in the future.

Suzanne expressed the fear that a broader mandate would be a "deterrent to redevelopment." David said the proposal provides that the MHC be informed. "This does not empower us to do anything," he said. "We're not seeking any enforcement power."

Suzanne says that she does not want to eliminate the one mile limit at this time but rather discuss the issue in the future.

The commission decided not to vote on the letter.

The board voted to close the meeting at 12:42.

Walter Ramsey need to know letter with Jeff S additions in bold on next page. I do not have a date for the original version but believe it was in early September since it was on the September agenda.

Hi Jeff,

Perhaps this makes it easier. Review and comment. I'll bring it to the Planning Board for buy-in from them.

To the Montague Historical Commission

In effort to best achieve community development goals and to properly engage with the recently reconstituted Montague Historical Commission (MHC), the Planning Department will commit to the following:

Ensure that the MHC chair, or individual members(if preferred) are notified via email of any scheduled Special Permit Hearings of the Planning Board. The Planning Board's internal routing will be modified to include MHC as a recipient for all Special Permit notices. Special effort will be made to engage the MHC chair early for special permits affecting exterior changes in any one of the three historic districts. Note: in most cases, this will typically be the ZBA, not the Planning Board.

Consult with MHC prior to submitting a Project Notification Form (PNF) to Mass Historic. Will continue to engage with the MHC on ongoing initiatives such as the Battlefield grant study, the Millers Falls Historic District and others.

Will engage the MHC when the town becomes aware that a private development project is seeking Historic Tax Credits

Will engage the MHC as early as possible for any project involving demolition of a building **or other structure** in one of Montague's three historic districts

Will inform engage the MHC on any project on an archaeologically sensitive area provisionally defined as within one mile of a confirmed existing site.

Will provide technical support to MHC in the drafting of a demolition delay bylaw, if desired by the MHC. This has been recommended in several community plans.