

Montague Historical Commission
Executive Summary of MHC meeting April 25, 2022

Meeting held in-person at Montague Town Hall and on-line. 11AM-1:00 PM

Commissioners present:

David Brule
Chris Clawson
Ed Gregory
Suzanne LoMonto
Chris Sawyer-Lauçanno

Members of the public:

Jon Dobosz
Ariel Elan
Jeff Singleton
Lilith Wolinsky

Proceedings:

1. Minutes for March 28 and March 31 voted and accepted unanimously.
2. Jon Dobosz of Parks and Recreation presents plan for upgrading the Montague Center ball park and nearby lands.
 - a. Proposing that the 1900s building that housed a blacksmith shop site be removed to make place for badly-needed parking.
 - b. CSL notes that building is not in good shape, but is part of the State-registered MC Historic district. However it does not have colonial or 18th century features like the other structures in the HD. Can the building be re-used, restored?
 - c. JD responds his department does not anticipate restoration, cannot afford refurbishing or restoration.
 - d. Commissioners note that the shop is likely 25' x 40', that it is in bad shape and not historically significant.
 - e. JS inquires what process do we use to evaluate historical buildings?
 - f. LW what features met criteria to be paced on HD?
 - g. CSL states that is was placed because of its age and location in the middle of the HD.
 - h. "Shop" was built near the decline of need for blacksmithing. Used primarily by ferriers.
 - i. DB observes we don't have a process for review and decision-making for deciding demolition or refurbishing.
 - j. CSL : a starting point would be to get an evaluation and cost assessment to do a minimal rehab.

- k. EG states that after visiting the shop, there is nothing that could be identified as having historical value.
 - l. JD states that the project for the park is a year in the future.
 - m. JS suggests finding someone to do an evaluation; MHC will conduct a site visit. (Now determined to be May 24th at 10:30.)
3. Discussion of marquee replacement project for the SheaTheater.
- a. Project to replace current marquee with a modern design and illuminated, digital.
 - b. MHC expects the new design will coordinate with the historical site.
 - c. SLM notes that the project must go before the zoning board; the new marquee project is not yet on the Shea Theater Board agenda.
 - d. AE notes that something similar can be see at the Academy of Music in Northampton.
 - e. JS: there is no downtown Historical District.
 - f. CSL notes that the zoning hearing will contain time for public comment.
4. Montague Center library
- a. JS notes that the exterior mortar work should be pointed up.
 - b. Pointing-up would not affect building code. Other improvements suggested by former head librarian Linda Hickman should be supported.
 - c. AE suggests the MHC vote to support the town meeting article calling for stated improvements to the library.
 - d. Vote: DB, CSL, JN, SLM aye, EG abstains. CC not available for the vote.
5. Farren updates:
- a. Letter from Trinity indicates intention to demolish the Farren buildings.
 - b. CSL notes that the MHC should visit site and determine what should be salvaged from interior.
 - c. Demo delay bylaw will be voted on at upcoming Town Meeting. A positive vote will not likely affect the fate of the Farren.
 - d. MHC will request a site visit.
6. Cabot Camp:
- a. EG rates the building as highly historic. First Light may sell the building.
 - b. JN: in principle the Town is the qualified organization to take responsibility.
 - c. Cabot C should be on the FL historical management plan.
 - d. Cabot is listed on the State database.
7. Other: SLM will present the demolition delay by-law at Town Meeting. CSL has developed a brief easy-to-read summary of the by-law proposal.

Adjourned at 1:00.

Submitted by D.Brule, Chairman.