

Montague Historical Commission
Minutes/Summary of meeting of January 29, 2024

Montague Town Hall
1 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA

Meeting held on-line 11:00 AM-11:47 AM

Commissioners present:

David Brule, Vice-chair
Chris Clawson
Ed Gregory
Janel Nockleby, Chair
Chris Sawyer-Lauçanno

Proceedings:

1. Minutes from December 4, 2024 voted and accepted, DB abstains due to absence for that meeting. Minutes from June 12 voted and accepted unanimously.
2. Resident Jaimye Ingraham requests historical information: why was former Crescent Street renamed Coolidge Avenue?
 - a. CC offers that more than likely the name change occurred in the 1930s to honor Calvin Coolidge.
 - b. EG adds that he has shared information taken from Montague Historical Society archives with Ms. Ingraham
 - c. Commissioners thank Ms. Ingraham for her inquiry.
3. Montague Comprehensive Planning update notes:
 - a. Planning to begin during this winter; FRCOG is sponsoring the process, and Montague HC will be asked to review the content.
 - b. The Montague Preservation Plan will be a part of the Comprehensive Plan, written in 1999.
4. Strathmore Building discussion and updates:
 - a. MHC toured the building in the late fall. CS-L and DB did not attend tour.
 - b. Photos were shared; consensus is that Building #11 is in bad shape
 - c. CS-L notes that this should be a lesson for the Town: the building degenerated very quickly, but with proper Town oversight, it could have been salvaged; Building Inspector David Jensen sounded the alarm but no steps were taken; EPA grant application to demolish is in progress.
 - d. CS-L:the Farren was lost, the Strathmore will be lost. We need to pay more attention to our historic buildings. JN concurs; JN also concerned about the remaining buildings still left.

5. The “Blacksmith Shop in Montague Center:
 - a. Debate continues: what is the historical value of this building? It is located within the Montague Center Historic District, but...
 - b. CS-L will meet Tris Metcalfe to inspect the building this Weds January 31.
 - c. RFPs were sent out, little if no response; it is unsure if the building is worth financing a report.

6. Topics not anticipated at the time of posting:
 - a. DB refers to December 4 minutes concerning the process of producing a mural on the wall of the Shea Theater.
 - b. Suggests that the MHC take a public position on placing the mural and participate in the selection process of its content.
 - c. CC maintains that we should not support disrupting the historic legacy of the town center. Keep the mural politically and socially neutral.
 - d. CS-L recommends the mural be conceived in keeping with the character and historicity of the village.
 - e. CS-L will draft a public statement to be vetted and published by the MHC about the mural.
 - f. DB reminds the MHC that there are plans to reproduce the Millers Falls Doug Smith baseball mural on the village library wall. Still in discussion stages.

Meeting adjourned at 11:47.

Submitted by D. Brule, Vice chair