

Montague Historical Commission  
Summary/Minutes of meeting of February 26, 2024

Montague Town Hall  
1 Avenue A  
Turners Falls, MA.

Meeting held on-line 11AM-12PM

**Commissioners present:**

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

Also:

Jon Dobosz  
Maureen Pollock  
Britt Ruhe

**Proceedings:**

1. Minutes from January 29, 2024 voted unanimously
2. Blacksmith Shop:
  - a. JD notes the meeting at the blacksmith shop last week.
  - b. CSL: meeting was with Tris Metcalfe. Discussions involved possible re-use of the building. Questions concerning proposal for an architectural analysis. Concerns involve ADA requirements, condition of the exterior of the building, other code requirements. An evaluation would like cost \$3500 then likely \$5000 investment.  
EG: How would the building be re-purposed?  
JD: with the walls removed, it could be used as a parking shelter/carport with open siding, or a picnic shelter. The site would need improved floor surface, not necessarily paved.  
CC: 2 issues: what is the historical value of the building? Does the building need preservation? It is of low historic interest to the Historical Commission.  
CS-L: recommend forwarding the proposal to town meeting; JN questions who approves the \$3500; response is that it would be special town meeting to amend original allocation.  
DB suggests the Commission write a formal position on the question.

3. Shea mural discussion:
  - a. Maureen Pollock and Suzanne LoManto of Planning Dept and Riverculture are overseeing the project, Brett Ruhe is artistic coordinator.
  - b. RFPs have been issued for proposals from muralists.
  - c. EG: who is on the screening/steering committee? MP: Lisa Davol, Josh Goldman, Richie Richardson, Leo Hwang, Pete Chilton.
  - d. MP: theme/subject will be determined largely by what the public wants; opinions + wishes will be expressed through a public forum. No date for the forum has been set. BR will look at applications and past work of muralists.  
CC: in this mural we will be describing ourselves, it's important to present a positive impression of the town.
4. Updates on comprehensive plan:

MR: it is a WIP. Need to update the Plan from 1993. Currently, the committee is looking at economic development and historical resources, recreation. MP will update the Commission at the March meeting.
5. Strathmore/Canal district:
  - a. The example of building #11 illustrates the need for the Commission to be more pro-active in documenting historic buildings in need of attention.
  - b. CC reminds Commission of the Cutlery foundation, built by Farren. Solid yet needs attention.
  - c. JN notes that when private property is involved, oversight is more problematic. JN raises question about Local Historic District designation vs. Registry of Historic Places.
  - d. CS-L: There is currently no regulation for oversight of historic buildings in Montague. Although preservation districts do exist here but as an example, there are no signage restrictions, among other lacking enforcement options.
  - e. MP: Commission could develop recommendations through Comprehensive Plan/ preservation plan. Grants exist for doing an inventory of historic structures.
  - f. JN: due-date for completing the Comprehensive Plan? MP: by mid-summer.
6. Discussion around Commission by-laws vs Charter. Number of Commissioners?  
Topic tabled until future meeting.

Submitted by D. Brule, vice-chair.