

**Braintree Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes - Virtual ZOOM
Monday, February 1, 2021
7:00 PM**

Approved 4/05/2021

Members Present:

Ronald F. Frazier
Santina Giannino
Robert S. Harris
Kate Nedelman-Herbst
Rayna Rubin

Staff Present:

Melissa M. SantucciRozzi, Interim Director

Remote Meeting Provisions

Due to the COVID19 Pandemic remote meetings have replaced physical meetings per the Governor's Order on March 3/12/20 as most recently amended. Said order suspended the provisions of the Open Meeting Law to promote public health and social distancing. This meeting was not conducted in an open, publically accessible space. Public access to the meeting and deliberations were achieved by adequate, alternative means that allowed the public to follow the proceeding in a third party communication technology known as ZOOM that is readily accessible to the public by the internet and the Telephone.

Call the Meeting to Order

7:00 PM the Meeting was Called to Order with a Quorum via the Zoom Platform.

SantucciRozzi, conducted a Roll Call vote for Attendance

Vice Chair Ron Frazier – Y

Member Rayna Rubin - Y

Member Santina Giannino - Y

Member Kate Nedelman-Herbst - Y

Member Robert Harris - Y

SantucciRozzi states we have all members present and a quorum at 7:00 PM.

Elm Street Cemetery – Topper Fence

Vice Chair Frazier – The first item on the Agenda is the Elm Street Cemetery Topper Fence. Vice Chair Frazier asks Interim Director SantucciRozzi if she has found anything more about that.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi - states not much more than she reported on last time. In cleaning the former Director's area, she has found a number of items related to the Historical Commission that she needs to go through. There were some notes which showed the former Director needed to follow-up on some items with Derek Manning, CPC Manager, and the Topper Fence was one of the items. This requires further research.

Vice Chair Frazier – recalls from Community Preservation that he thought there was still \$1,000-\$1,500 remaining.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – confirms that there is \$1,040 left for the Elm Street Cemetery Gravestone Security, and Elm Street Improvements an amount in excess of \$235,000 was carried over, but that is not related to the Topper Fence and it looks like it is pretty much gone.

Vice Chair Frazier – states the money is still tied up until the project is signed off on, and the project has not been signed off on yet.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – states if there were excess funds in an appropriation, the money wouldn't go back into the pot until such time as the project is completely closed out.

Vice Chair Frazier – the contractors are still waiting on some money, and we need to talk to them about getting that job finished.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – agrees and it is on her list but needs further research.

Historical Inventory

Vice Chair Frazier – asks if the Interim Director has heard anything back from the state no this.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – has not heard anything back and states that there were some materials relative to this matter found in the office, and it is on the list of things that she needs to research further and address. She discusses not reducing the scope.

Vice Chair Frazier – suggests checking with Mass Historical.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – states Chris Kelly, who sends out all different updates which were going to the former Director, has been updated with Mrs. SantucciRozzi as the new contact. She has also inquired about training and mentioned to him that she would be reaching out with regard to some items related to the Historical Commission. She will be in touch with him over the next week or so to get some insight.

Amendment to Historic District Boundaries (Addition of the Gallivan House)

Vice Chair Frazier – states we have the Historic District on the Agenda, and we will keep it there until something happens. He asks if there are any updates regarding this matter.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – states her next step was going to be to check with the Legal Department to see exactly where that is and what is holding that up. She is not sure if Attorney John Goldrosen was working on that with the former Director, but we have a new Town Solicitor, Crystal Huff. She will be re-engaging the Legal Department. There have been quite a few transitions in the Legal Department over the past five years or so. She knows this subject is old and lacking, and the majority of the Commission wants to move forward on this. She also had some initial discussions with Mayor Kokoros relative to this and memberships.

Liberty/Grove Unreserved CPC Purchase

Vice Chair Frazier – has a question on the Liberty and Grove oldest house in Braintree situation. Is that land subdivided so that the house is a separate parcel or is it all included as the second section that will take all of that extra land?

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – states she can report at the January Planning Board Meeting, the Planning Board endorsed an Approval Not Required Plan. What that Plan did was to create two parcels. The front development piece, and the back piece which will be subject to the Purchase and Sale, which is already signed, and will be deeded to the Town. Once the Town secures ownership of the piece and we come to some agreement on how to move forward with the house and the remaining land, then there will be a further subdivision of the part the Town owns into two parcels – one that will go with the dwelling and one that will remain separate from the dwelling and either retained by the Town for Open Space and will be restricted pursuant to the requirements of the Community Preservation Act. One further advancement on that since our last meeting is that we have completed the Environmental Site Assessment, Phase 1; that report has been submitted by Weston and Sampson to the Town. It was a favorable report in that there are no concerns related to the part that the Town is purchasing and there is no need for a Phase 2 Assessment due to the location of the gas station. The gas station is far enough away from the land that the Town is purchasing, and the records that were reviewed by the Environmental Engineer are comforting enough that the Town can move forward with our purchase without any type of concern related to contamination of the ground associated with the part we will hold title to.

Vice Chair Frazier –The Jechonias Thayer House, which had been let go for 20 years, and it was in terrible shape. The Culkins bought that house for about \$300,000, and they just sold it for \$1.3Million. There are people who are very interested in restoring old houses. If the Town were to get into trying to fix that house up for any other purpose, it would cost us a fortune. Both Vice Chair Frazier and Member Giannino went through the house, and they have some extensive pictures on it. It is in touch shape. A lot of it is beautiful paneling and that sort of thing, but there is a lot of work that is needed.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – agrees. She thinks there needs to be some additional discussions. The opinion of the Historical Commission is heavily valued. We need to think a little broader about whether there is an opportunity to hit some other goals with this purchase, such as related to the affordable piece under Community Preservation. There definitely will be some costs, which need to be evaluated. This could be a chance to do some holistic and far-reaching planning. Cost will be one of the factors, but those decisions are a little beyond the Historical Commission, and it is important to hear from some of the other committees in Town. Is there a desire to retain this? Or, is there a desire to repair it and sell it as a “deed restricted” unit? If the Town sold it without repair, then the affordable piece may not be part of the plan. There is definitely opportunity, but it comes down to funding.

Member Santana Giannino – asks if it cannot be sold “as-is” with deed restrictions.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – states it could be sold “as-is” with the historical restriction on it, and any work going forward done by any private property owner would need to comply with those restrictions. That particular avenue wouldn’t provide for the owner to have the money to put into the house to rehab it.

If the goal was to do both, then the Town would need to do the work, put the restrictions in place both for the affordable housing and the historic preservation and then sell it that way.

Vice Chair Frazier – doesn't think the Town would need to do the work. They would have to do the work to develop the historic restrictions on it and what the people can do. He has seen it done in other communities.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – She agrees if it was going to be a market-rate unit. On an affordable unit, that gets a little bit dicey.

Demolition Delay

Vice Chair Frazier – asked that the Demolition Delay ordinance be put on the agenda because he sent out a picture of a house on his street, which all that is left of the original house is a single-car garage. There is another one on Tremont Street. He doesn't think that is the intention when they said they didn't want to restrict people from doing additions or minor alterations to properties. It wasn't to completely obliterate what was there. He is wondering if there is some way to get a change made in that law so that it's not like the Historical Commission is going to try to go out and save the properties. It is a case to go out and document them, as they were before these major changes. The one he sent out, he took off the Town's Patriot Properties site. He would have gotten a few more pictures before it was demolished. They built the house right over it.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – She is assuming the members got it. She looked at it in the office with the Zoning Planner. It is a whole new house.

Vice Chair Frazier – states the one on Tremont Street is the same way.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – wonders if it is a question of whether there is some kind of limits and thresholds that can be discussed with the Building Department as noticing or requirements that can be placed on the property owner and/or developer for some kind of notice. Then there is the question about the stuff removed out of the Ordinance about significant alterations. In this particular case, it was 95% gone, and then you start to question for what purpose are they keeping something in place. She understands how you can see those types of things and want to have some input. She will talk to the Building Inspector to see if there is something that he can do. Our Department gets notice of all of the Building Permit Applications via an on-line viewer. She is not ready to commit to flagging every single permit. The Department gets special notice of the ones that are subject to the Demolition Delay.

Vice Chair Frazier – states a lot of the ones we see are just to put a deck on the back of the house. That is not something we are concerned about.

Member Kate Herbst – her recollection, having authored this and worked on it, is that we weren't getting it passed and adopted by the Town with additional restrictions. It is as tightly written as we could have in order to get it adopted. She remembers talking about we could always go back and make changes. She thinks, to make any changes, we would have to amend the bylaw. We would have to start the process to amend the bylaw. That said, we kind of knew this was going to happen. She remembers talking about the building that is across from Kristen's in Braintree Square. There is nothing left of that one; it is a shell. She remembers talking about that location; it is a reality that they knew was going to happen, but the bylaw wasn't getting adopted otherwise.

Vice Chair Frazier – maybe this is the time when we come back and try to get some changes made.

Member Rayna Rubin – if we can demonstrate the problem. She mentions that Vice Chair Frazier thought he would have a chat with the Mayor.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – doesn't see any harm in doing that, and she would be happy to talk along with Vice Chair Frazier. Sometimes people don't really understand the intent of language, and they think it is either more restrictive or too restrictive. There clearly are examples of things that are happening to demonstrate exactly what you try to get ahead of. Sometimes people need to see examples of things. There is an opportunity to discuss it further if that is what the Commission would like to do and have an opportunity to demonstrate what we are talking about.

Vice Chair Frazier – agrees and asks that we keep this on the Agenda so that we can see what we might be able to do about it or at least get talking about it. The other thing, which we have talked about it extensively in the past, but it is not specifically on the Agenda. It was the additional work that needs to be done at the Elm Street Cemetery. He sent it out to everybody. He asked the fellow that did all the work before and came in with the low bid to give us a quote on the pieces that are on the ground or have been broken. The fellow said a few of them had been banged into by the mowers and knocked the stones down. Vice Chair Frazier has a quote, but he is not sure how Commission Members would like to proceed. Community Preservation Committee is looking for anything that the Historical Commission wants done, and this could be that project to finish up doing what we need to do there.

Member Rayna Rubin – refers to the list provided by Mr. Frazier and asks about the two things that were illegible at \$950. She wonders if Mr. Frazier figured out what those were. He actually was referring to the stones being illegible.

Member Santina Giannino – states it sounds like a reasonable amount of money to complete this project.

Vice Chair Frazier – states his question to the Interim Director was that it used to be a \$5,000 limit, but he understands that it is \$10,000 now where it doesn't have to go out for bids.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – thinks we still need to procure three quotes. She can look through the file to see who put in last time. Frank Drollette used to come by the office all the time, and he worked extensively for the Town related to Elm Street Cemetery. What she could do is seek to make sure the price is fair.

Vice Chair Frazier – states Mr. Drollette went through and picked up all of these stones that need work. If we took the quotes that he put on and sent out a request for people to do the work.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – that is definitely something that we can do. We need to get prices and put together an application to the CPC. That isn't going to happen before their next meeting on Monday night. We can try to shoot for their March meeting. What we could do is try to put something together to talk about here for next month on March 1st, and potentially submit it to CPC for their March Meeting. Looking at the calendar, meetings and responsibilities, the Interim Director is pretty much tied up for the next two weeks getting ready for meetings and outstanding projects. Once she gets through those things, she can start to look at getting prices and the application with Mr. Frazier's help.

Administrative Business – Membership

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – states in regards to membership and getting all the seats filled on the Commission, she spoke to Mayor Kokoros and, at this time, we don't have any architects. We have a talent bank, and people have expressed interest in certain Boards. Recently, a couple new residents and other residents in Town have reached out, but nobody that is an architect. What the Interim Director is going to do is to suggest to the Mayor that we do a special Press Release or solicitation to get somebody that will be appropriate for this Board.

Vice Chair Frazier – states that might be good. We need an architect, as well as an additional person who would be interested in serving.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – knows that there is some guidance in the Commission's bylaw about how those members go about and recommendations from the Boston Society of Architects. She is not sure that has ever been followed or perfected. If it is okay with the Commission, she wouldn't mind reaching out to them. They keep registration of architects throughout all the communities in the Commonwealth. This is all public information, and they are all registered through the state's licensure board. Maybe we could send some letters to people. She thinks it good to tap into that population the best way we can.

Member Santina Giannino – states it sounds like a good plan actually.

Administrative Business – Approval of Meeting Minutes for January 4, 2021

Vice Chair Frazier – asks if everybody had a chance to go over the minutes from the last meeting. He had a couple of minor comments. He refers to a comment made by Santina that she had an issue with hooks.

Member Santina Giannino – clarifies that the issue they had was with hooks on the fence. It wasn't her issue.

Interim Director SantucciRozzi – states she can clarify that. It is on page 3 half way down.

Vice Chair Frazier – thinks there was a comment attributed to Bob Harris, and he said "he recalled that the amount of money that was allocated was spent". It should have said "was not all spent".

Member Robert Harris – states it was his understanding that it was all spent, as that is what he understood from the previous meeting. He remembers Christine Stickney saying they would need to find more money.

Vice Chair Frazier – there was a comment made about having an inventory done every 10 years. We could actually do an inventory every year if we had the money to do it. It was a spelling error under the Historical Inventory Section. The only other thing was a grammatical error on the next to last page where it says "the headmaster of Thayer Academy said he was very historically orientated". It should be "he was historically oriented".

Member Kate Herbst **Motion** for approval of the January 4, 2021 Minutes as amended; seconded by Member Santina Giannino.

All in favor By Roll Call Vote:

Frazier - Y

Rubin - Y

Harris – Y

Herbst - Y

Giannino – Y

Member Rayna Rubin **Motion** to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Member Kate Herbst.

All in favor By Roll Call Vote:

Harris - Y

Rubin - Y

Herbst – Y

Giannino – Y

Frazier - Y

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Louise Quinlan, Planning and Community Development