

Braintree Historical Commission
Minutes

October 19, 2009
Thayer Public Library

Present: Elizabeth Mees (Chair) Kate Nedelman Herbst
Paul Carr Ron Frazier (V-Chair)

Absent: Al Varraso

Also present: Mayor Joseph Sullivan and Christine Stickney, Director of Planning & Community Development.

Meeting convened at 7:00 PM

Mayor Sullivan joined the Commission for a brief discussion on the upcoming presentation for October 21st on the Old Thayer Library. He thanked the members of the Commission for their efforts on the committee and holding this upcoming forum. The Mayor noted the former Thayer Library is a unique building and needs to be restored to its original character. The Mayor discussed with Tom Wayland, DPW Superintendent about the removal of the second floor which was not part of the original building. He acknowledges there will be issues with handicap accessibility and restrooms. Mayor Sullivan said that he envisions the building being used as community space, meeting room or community activities. The building if utilized in that manner would provide additional meeting space other than the Cahill auditorium, Fletcher Hall or the Library and could be more cost effective to have opened in the evening. He noted his space planning discussion that are on-going with centralizing government back to Town Hall and possibly reusing 90 Pond Street in more efficient manner.

A major concern expressed by the Mayor will be securing funding to do the restoration work. He noted that Congressman's Lynch's office has been asked to seek federal funding. Possible grants and use of CPA monies will be explored. He did note he has no intention of using the space as offices of the Mayor has been a topic of discussion around Town. Mayor Sullivan also briefly touched on the Mall project and that there remains a phase III that will be part of the over refurbishing – no decisions as to traffic circulation have been made to date – more review and discussion is needed.

Ms. Mees noted that members had been inside and reviewed the building – there are some issues. She mentioned the demolition of the second floor will be of concern because of the original bearing wall and the mechanical/heating that has been retrofitted to the building. Mr. Carr concurred with Ms. Mees stating the building may have to be mothballed for a period of time if the heating system is to be removed. Ms. Mees noted that projects like this frequently experience “project creep” where hidden costs become apparent as things are taken down. Members discussed the need for an elevator and it was agreed that this could dominate the evening with different alternatives. All agreed it will need to meet to the building code and accessibility. Mr. Carr mentioned that members

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may want to call it the “Braintree Lyceum” defined as a meeting space. Mayor Sullivan expressed his overall desire is that it should be a place Braintree residents will be proud of however it will require funding to do it in a proper manner that preserves it’s unique character. Mayor Sullivan thanked members and agreed he will make some opening remarks on October 21st and left the meeting.

Ms. Nedelman Herbst **MOTION** to accept the minutes of 9/30/09, seconded by Mr. Carr – unanimously voted.

Ms. Nedelman Herbst noted that we need to announce that no decisions will be made on October 21st to the audience. Members reviewed the pictures taken by Ms. Mees and arranged them for posting on boards to be displayed around the room. Ms. Nedelman Herbst prepared a draft agenda for members only outlining the program of the meeting. Staff will type and have available for members at the meeting.

In viewing the pictures, Mr. Frazier recalled a railing that went around the stacks and Ms. Mees noted we may be able to find out more as things become exposed. Ms. Mees noted she confirmed the building is on the National Register and Ms. Stickney displayed portions of the Mall plans that had been designed some years before for the members to view. Mr. Carr suggested that we not get down bogged in the minutia of costs and design but rather promote the unique characteristics of the building. Mr. Frazier agreed that funding is not the role of the Historical Commission. Mr. Carr noted one question that may come up is the capacity of the building. Staff will confer with the Building department to possibly acquire a number.

Members were concerned with the Mayor’s desire to have the building open for viewing the night of the meeting. Concerns expressed were around issues of liability, the darkness at the outside of the building, concerns with the mezzanine area and steep stairs and there should be no access to the basement.

Mr. Carr **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Nedleman Herbst – unanimously voted.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15PM

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Stickney, Director
Planning and Community Development