

Braintree Historical Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, November 13, 2012
Town Hall – Johnson Chambers

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

Also Present: Marybeth McGrath & Russ Forsberg from Inspectional Services

Meeting convened at 7:00 PM

New Business:

Request from Inspectional Services to present CPA application for vote on Historical significance:

The Commission met with M McGrath & R Forsberg regarding a request from Inspectional Services for a vote of historical significance on a project they are proposing on behalf of Inspectional Services for CPA historic revenue funds. Elizabeth Mees indicated before Historical Commission began to hear the proposal that Commission would be hearing application tonight but not taking a vote. –R Forsberg: explained that their proposal is a project to take hard copy docs & transfer to electronic format. As background, the building department also acts as keeper of records relative to documents, many of which are historical in nature because of year in which they were established. These records go from 1930s through present day. Inspectional Services is seeking to preserve applications & forms and plans for various properties within town. The building that the applications, forms & plans are currently stored in is not water tight, they have suffered losses over the years. Part of the reason they are currently moving forward on this proposal is because of the fear that Braintree will lose more documents through circumstances beyond our control. R Forsberg indicated that Inspectional Services believes it is vital to preserve these documents for community to benefit to show how things were put together, art of how things were used, etc.

R Forsberg explained that Inspectional Services has some plans termed as blueprints; architectural history in these documents that should not be lost through storage that is not ideal. In response to the Commission's questioning on details, R Forsberg indicated that Braintree has already lost 30-40% of documents because they used to sit in cardboard boxes on floor. R Forsberg stated his department - believes a lot more of Braintree's buildings could be preserved if there was backup documentation to provide people knowledge of the building's history; often older structures are superior to what we build today & we need to preserve that information. Inspectional Services hopes that the Commission will vote this project to be historically significant because the Town needs an electronic format to preserve these documents.

R Forsberg showed the Commission that in the interest of moving this project along, Inspectional Services has solicited bids from companies as follows. A Varraso asked if Inspectional Services will keep blueprints etc. if you put them in e-format. R Forsberg: responded that Yes, legally have to, also they don't want to destroy them, just want to make sure they are preserved & to make it more readily accessible to the public

R Frazier said that he has done research and found nothing on public buildings, what exactly does Inspectional Services have? R Forsberg answered that Inspectional Services has original plans for town

Page 2

BHC Minutes – 11/13/12

hall building, all school building (in care & custody of school dept.); library building & highway dept. at highway dept. offices; within building dept., have plans on many residences, industrial & commercial buildings; however their archives are constantly dwindling. He believes that if Inspectional Services can conform to e-storage, they can then put all other physical documents in more suitable storage (can't do that now because they need to be close at hand)

P Carr asked if R Forsberg had said they had records back to 1930s? If so, where have some of them gone? Do you have Gallivan House plans? R Forsberg responded that their archives go back to late 1930s, but no organization to what has been lost because it depends where they were stored (things stored closer to ground are gone); 1931 is probably a little too early for Inspectional Services to have the documents.

M McGrath added that there have been: lots of floods over the years; most recently 2005, every dept. that had documents in basement lost documents; now at Pond Street the Inspectional Services department is also subject to leaking roofs on 2nd floor and as a result susceptible to even more damage to the documents. P Carr asked if the department plans to have duplicates stored off sight?

R Forsberg said that they would be providing typical access for those looking at documents through e-format, but originals will be maintained in an archival location, but the archival location would no longer be on sight if everything is stored electronically.

M McGrath added that the Mayor's goal personnel wise is to move everyone back to town hall, but at the moment, there is not enough room for records storage at Town Hall. The Town will have to have some area designated for storage for many departments once all personnel are centralized at Town Hall. R Forsberg added that the Marge Crispin Center is being considered for storage area; that building is appropriate for storage because of modifications that were made by prior owners/lessors. Inspectional Services plans to establish a system where small fee may be assessed so they can continue to e-format documents as they come in; their department does not foresee any need to ask for additional funds in future.

E Mees asked how long has Inspectional Services been requiring e-copies? R Forsberg responded that they have been requiring them since 2008 but primarily on industrial projects, not for individual homeowners. He also added that Inspectional Services will be working with BELD for suitable storage areas so that plans can be searched online by anyone (i.e. by address).

R Forsberg then reviewed the quotes provided, the first quote by Staples, second by Docucon, third by New England Archives.

Discussion on proposal:

R Frazier believes it would be nice to have that kind of electronic access to historical documents. K Nedelman Herbst said she needs time to think this over because this kind of vote, deeming this project to be historically significant, could begin a trend of every department in town asking for money to e-format documents. All members of the Historic Commission agreed to discuss & vote as to the project's historical significance at next meeting.

Page 3

BHC Minutes – 11/13/12

Historical Significance Policy acceptance:

E Mees: raised the issue of reviewing the proposed historical significance policy; she made adjustments to draft policy as discussed at last meeting and would like to have the Commission's official policy in place before we take a vote on any new proposal. A Varraso suggested that the Commission should vote on the policy as written. A Varraso **MOTION** for a vote on policy as is. R Frazier seconded - Unanimously approved.

E Mees then noted that all members of the Commission should consider Inspectional Services' application in light of newly adopted policy. A Varraso asked if CPC can still give money to a project if the Historic Commission doesn't deem the project to be historically significant. Yes. R Frazier suggested that the Commission should tell mayor & council this electronic documenting should be part of their regular budget.

E Mees indicated that the Commission should use the newly adopted policy as our guide, that it should be shared on website, and that when people come before us, they should have a copy of our policy; things become more significant with age & the late 1930s is not going all that far back.

Online historical survey news release –KNH says will have by next meeting

Other:

E Mees indicated she is still wondering where demo delay bylaw is

R Frazier brought up the topic of demolition with the South Shore Chrysler buildings and house - both are proposed to be torn down to make way for new CVS ; he is making arrangements to take photographs before building and house are torn down. P Carr added that there still has to be traffic study done on that area; thinks the town's decision to allow CVS to build in that area is not final yet.

Minutes Review:

9/10/12—changes as in bold (amended on draft), accepted

R Frazier made a motion to accept, A Varraso seconded, accepted

10/12 minutes—one change P Carr moved to accept, R Frazier seconded, all in favor.

R Frazier discussed how the Elm St Cemetery again has trash in it & more damage, kids are congregating, and etc. maybe should have motion sensitive lights as a deterrent. K Nedelman Herbst suggested drafting letter to new police chief asking for more attention to that cemetery area.

E Mees added that in regards to the Old Thayer Library, the town has put out a new bid to do doors & windows. P Carr wanted to confirm that they are going to look exactly like they do now.

R Frazier made a motion to adjourn, A Varraso seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:52 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Nedelman Herbst