

Minutes of the Sterling Historical Commission

January 21, 2016

Meeting held in Room 201 Butterick Municipal Building

Meeting called to order at 7:00 by Vern Gaw. Members present Vern Gaw, Cathy Harragian, Jim French, Phil Nash, Bob Jones and guest David Gibbs. Carol Lavigne was not present.

Vern mentioned that we have the \$1,000 in our budget with many things needing our attention. Vern also said he would make sure an item was put in the next Warrant for the budget next year.

Vern also suggested the Commission meet monthly on the 3rd Thursday of every month. The next meeting to be held on Thursday, February 18, 2016.

Members discussed the priorities for the Commission in the coming year.

1. Historical Signage:

There are a number of historical markers that we have printed that need to be installed around town. Before installing, the metal signs need to be reinforced with wooden backing and weather sealed. Vern committed to handling this before ground thaws in spring at which time we will seek out volunteers to install.

There was discussion of new cast aluminum or brass Historical District signs to replace the small green signs now present at the border of the Historical District. A budget item would need to be created for this. Tabled for the moment.

2. Farmstead Report:

Reiterated desire to digitize the Farmstead report and create a printed copy for the Sterling Historical Society, Library and farm owners. Bob Jones has the printed reports and digital images, he promised to scan the printed reports within the next 90 days and compile a single document for publication and posting on the web.

3. Scenic Roads and Scenic Roads By-law

Sterling has a Scenic Roads By-law which applies to all non-numbered roads in the Town of Sterling. The Historical Commission should work towards some marking or identification of the scenic roads.

4. Historic Districts

Currently the downtown area is the only Historical District on file with the Department of the Interior and Massachusetts Historical Commission. It was discussed that historic districts should be established for West Sterling and the Campground, both of which have historical significance. It was mentioned that it takes a long time to push that through the Massachusetts Historical Commission and may take a couple of years.

5. West Sterling One-Room School House

The Commission obtained a bid to de-lead and paint the school house on Princeton Road from Robichaud Painting, the company that cleaned and de-leaded the 1835 Town Hall. Labor of \$8,640 and

materials of \$1,750. The Commission will continue to discuss this. Members discussed the need to improve utilization of the School House including holding Commission meetings and other events. The lack of sanitary facilities hinders the utility of the building. Jim mentioned that Petersham just received funding to restore 2 one-room school houses. Jim French will research and report back.

The members are in favor of maintaining the School House for its charm and historical significance.

6. Cemeteries

The cemeteries are getting worse. Legg Cemetery was mentioned as possibly the worse with many stones down. Bob Jones volunteered to photographically document the destruction. The members discussed possible volunteer efforts to restore the stones and discussed the role the DPW has in the care and maintenance of the cemeteries. A joint meeting with the DPW Board was proposed.

There was money placed into a perpetual care fund at some point in the past. Members were unclear on the amounts and the timing.

7. The Gun Shop.

The building on the south west corner of School Street and Maple Street was a Gun Shop somewhat famous for the manufacture of pistols sometime around the turn of the century. Cathy offered some information regarding the building that has fallen into disrepair and ownership is being transferred to a finance company, a process that may take some months. Cathy mentioned that at some point in the future, the owner would be willing to donate that property to the Town or the Historic Society. Cathy offered to follow up and report back. The members will discuss the opportunities for preservation.

Vern mentioned that the volunteer applications from Cathy and Carole have been delivered to the Board of Selectmen and that we do not know if they will be requested for interview.

Vern asked if the members would support the application for a trail grant for the property connecting the historic Hall parcel and orchard off of Sweat Hill Road. Discussion surrounded the historical significance of the area and it was pointed out that it was the source of the Town Beach and connected some possibly historic native lands. Phil motioned that we should and provide a written recommendation as such and Jim seconded, voted unanimously.

David Gibbs attended the meeting to discuss the procedure and level of involvement the Sterling Historical Commission wished to have in the repairs, restoration and adjustment to the structure and exterior of the 1835 Town Hall. Specifically Dave mentioned that there was a desire to have some overhead protection over the fire exit doors and they never existed and therefor there was no historical reference. Also the roof material to be used on the 1835 Town Hall was discussed. It was generally agreed that the use of metal had no historical merit, but the use of composite or architectural asphalt was in lieu of wooden shakes or slate would be acceptable. Bob asked if scissor trusses would be an option. Members felt that because they would require the removal of the roof in its entirety, they would not be in line with the historical restoration required by Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Jim made a motion that the Sterling Historical Commission would support the actions of the 1835 Town Hall Committee pertaining to the restoration, repair and improvements to the 1835 Town Hall provided that those actions were supported and sanctioned by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Phil seconded. All members voted in favor and the motion passed.

Phil motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jim. Meeting was adjourned at 8:18pm

Respectfully submitted

Bob Jones