

TOWN OF ASHLAND
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MEETING DATE: March 9, 2021

MEETING NOTES:

Members in attendance: Elizabeth Childress
(Voting Members only) Tom DeAlmeida
Kelly Flannery
James Neilsen
Jennifer Paratore

Meeting called to order at 7:08pm

Meeting held remotely via ZOOM***: following the guidelines set forth by Gov. Baker back in May 2020 dealing with the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Chairman DeAlmeida called the meeting to order and the meeting minutes from the previous meeting, February 2, 2021, were unanimously accepted by the members in attendance

Once the pleasantries were completed, T. DeAlmeida said some kind words and shared some memories about Jim Hanna, our associate member who sadly passed away. The commission collectively held a moment of silence to honor Mr. Hanna.

To begin the agenda items, T. DeAlmeida discussed the upcoming project at 10-50 Main Street. DeAlmeida doesn't think the entire structure should be knocked down and that the proposed salvage of the granite didn't seem cost effective or feasible. J. Neilsen discussed his recent experience with a course via the Massachusetts Historical Commission that discusses property on the historical register. He can confirm that the Mill Buildings at 10-50 Main Street are definitely on the list and that this issue would inevitably be referred to our Commission. Steve Mitchell, Ashland Town Selectman, was in attendance of this meeting. He added that the Select Board thinks it is very important that historical buildings are preserved whenever possible. He stated the demolition for this building is not anytime soon but that he encourages the Historical Commission to keep it on the agenda as an on-going agenda item.

Next on the agenda were community concerns that were brought to the Historical Commission since our last meeting. First was a submission from the community about the Valentine Estate and a possible grant that may be available for the property. J. Neilsen doesn't believe that the Historical Commission is the appropriate channel for grants regarding the Valentine Estate, considering there is a pre-existing Valentine Committee. J. Paratore agrees to that point and thought the deadline for the grant application had already passed. S. Mitchell confirmed that the Valentine Estate project is on-going and the development of the property is not imminent. He believes that this should be a community conversation to ensure that we are maintaining the historical integrity of the property while finding a use that benefits the community. The next item was 438 Chestnut St. The family who owns the property contacted the board to state

that the property was in need of demolition. J. Paratore acknowledged that the property was not on the Historical Property list that was commissioned 10 years ago but that public record has the house listed as 1750. J. Neilsen said that Cliff Wilson from the Historical Society seems to think that 1750 date is not accurate. T. DeAlmeida discussed his personal opinions of the property and how he believes any structure can be saved. He believes it is the responsibility of the sellers, buyers and their attorneys to research the Town Bylaws to see what kind of delay they would encounter if a demolition permit was pulled in the future and that there is nothing the Historical Commission can confirm before then. The property owner's daughter, Carolyn Piers, and the owner's attorney Amanda Mulhall were in attendance. C. Piers wanted to state that the house is in terrible condition and needs to be torn down. She cites her own experience while living in the home and visiting it recently. T. DeAlmeida points out that it would be up to a building inspector to determine if it needed to be knocked down, not the homeowner, and that if a demolition permit were pulled he would vote to delay demolition and do a site walkthrough to see if the structure could be salvaged. A. Mulhall, attorney for the seller, stated that she was clear about the town bylaws and has advised her clients appropriately. Her question was why this item has made it to the Historical Commission agenda for today's meeting as it was delaying the potential sale of the property. J. Paratore explained that when concerns and questions from the public come in, they are added to the agenda so the entire Commission is aware of the item and can discuss in a public forum to comply with Open Meeting Law. She said that just because an item is on the agenda as a talking point doesn't mean it's being voted on. It is a way for the Commission to get an idea of things that may be coming their way and give the public an opportunity to present the issue. The next item was 89 Cordaville Rd. This was a similar question raised from a potential buyer about the demolition of 89 Cordaville but that it was now a moot point. The real estate agent for that buyer wrote to the Commission to confirm her buyer was no longer interested in the property because of the potential demolition delays the home might face. J. Paratore confirmed that home was listed on the Town's Historical Register. The final community concern was the old Train Station Building on Homer Ave. The property is currently for sale and a member of the community wanted to ensure that the building's historical integrity would be preserved. S. Mitchell said that the town has been offered right of first refusal to purchase the building but wasn't sure if the town was in a position to do so right now. The Commission remarked on how much they loved that building and hoped that someone would find a good use for it.

Next item on the agenda was the discussion of future agenda items. J. Neilsen discussed how it would be nice for Ashland to have a recognized Local Historic District. S. Mitchell seconded that idea and said that, while we have some signs up on either end of the downtown to signify the historic district, that it wasn't official. T. DeAlmeida referred to a list of approximately 10 properties in Ashland that were recommended to be added to the National Register. He said that he would like to work on getting some of these properties accepted, including the Valentine Estate. J. Neilsen said he would find out about how we could go about getting those properties accepted. He also stated in the importance of public opinion and wanted to come up with ideas on how to garner support from our community and engage the town.

Next on the agenda was setting the date for the next meeting. J. Neilsen acknowledged that we haven't had the entire commission together for a meeting yet. K. Flannery raised the point that it is really difficult for people to plan ahead for the meetings because the date gets set and then pushed back. She said that we would get better attendance if the meetings were more consistent. The rest of the Commission agreed that the meetings should be consistently held on the second Tuesday of every month, as listed on the Town Website.

With no other matters to discuss, Chairman DeAlmeida made a motion to adjourn, seconded by L. Childress. Vote 5-0.

Next meeting April 13, 2021 at 7pm. Adjournment 8:03pm