

TOWN OF ASHLAND

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

MEETING DATE: April 13, 2021

MEETING NOTES:

Members in attendance: Elizabeth Childress
(Voting Members only) Joanna Sorensen
James Neilsen
Karen Coleman
Jennifer Paratore

Meeting called to order at 7:19pm

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

Vice Chairman Childress called the meeting to order and the meeting minutes from the previous meeting, March 9, 2021, were unanimously accepted by the members in attendance

Childress reviewed the week's agenda. First item on the agenda was getting a recognized Historic District for the Town. J. Neilsen took a workshop with the Massachusetts Historical Society regarding this topic. He said it was a lengthy 8 step process that can take a while to accomplish and needs community support. The idea would need to go before a town meeting, receive a 2/3 vote, form a commission, get approved by the Mass Historic Commission and more. It can be done but it will need community engagement and will take some time.

Next on the agenda was how to get the community more engaged with the Historical Commission. Childress shared her thoughts and mentioned that in 3rd grade @ Mindess, the students study the history of Ashland where they tour the cemetery, the tomb of the soldier buried behind the school, Stone's Public House and more. She suggested that the Historical Commission engage with the students and assist the students with learning more about Ashland History. After COVID, she suggested possibly giving presentations at the school. She also mentioned getting a table at Ashland Day in the future. Ashland Day 2021 is probably not going to happen as of right now. J. Sorensen suggested that we pursue something with the Farmer's Market that meets in Ashland Center every Saturday starting in June. Childress said that she would reach out to the Farmer's Market organizers to see what they suggest. J. Paratore suggested that we also look into hosting something at the Corner Spot and would reach out to Beth Reynolds for suggestions and to see if the Corner Spot was going to be operating this summer. K. Coleman also mentioned the Dragonfly Festival as a possible venue, if it is being held this year.

Next item on the agenda was the discussion of future agenda items. Childress said that she and Chairman DeAlmeida will want to discuss the proposed project at the Mill Buildings downtown in the future. Coleman discussed how she has had experience in a different town re: having to build around a historic building by maintaining the exterior façade. Every town is going to have their own requirement for what needs to remain. Neilsen circled this discussion item back to the recognized Historic District and how having one in Ashland might be able to better protect historic buildings like the Mill Building. Sorensen pointed out that it could also potentially affect resale if abutters have the ability to challenge construction and renovations within the historic district. Coleman agreed that it could affect construction. Learning more about restrictions within recognized Historic Districts and how it would affect the town is needed. Returning to the Mill Building project, Sorensen expressed concerns about parking and traffic patterns as a result of this project and how Zoning will be affected. Paratore said that she reads a lot of comments from the community on the Town social media boards and most of the comments are in opposition to this project. She said the Historical Commission might be a good place for the community to engage and express their opinions in a recognized public forum, which will also help bolster our engagement with the community.

Next on the agenda was setting the date for the next meeting. All agreed to stay consistent with the second Tuesday of the month and the next meeting date was set for May 11, 2021 at 7pm. A few members had issues with Google Meets as a virtual forum so J.Paratore said she would submit the next agenda and request the town Zoom account for the next meeting.

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

Next meeting MAY 11, 2021 AT 7PM. Adjournment 7:50pm