

TOWN OF ASHLAND  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

MEETING DATE: August 10, 2021

MEETING NOTES:

Members in attendance:  
(Voting Members only)

Tom DeAlmeida  
Elizabeth Childress  
Joanna Sorensen  
James Neilsen  
Kelly Flannery  
Karen Coleman  
Jennifer Paratore

Meeting called to order at 7:12pm

Meeting held IN PERSON at Ashland Town Hall in Meeting Room B/C

Chairman DeAlmeida called the meeting to order and discussed his desire for the Commission to operate smoother and more in-sync at future meetings, citing the July meeting has an example of us appearing disconnected as a group. DeAlmeida and Neilsen had some disagreements on how the meeting last month was conducted with Neilsen pointing out that the entire Commission isn't be copied on demolition permit requests and it gives the whole group very little time to prepare if they are only finding out when the final agenda is posted. DeAlmeida asked Paratore if she was aware of the demo permits, as she is the one who writes the agendas. Paratore said she is only made aware when DeAlmeida lets her know about them. She is not copied on anything from the Town. Paratore said that, after last month's meeting, she sent a request to the Building Department for any future demolition requests be sent to the entire commission and not just the Chairman to avoid this in the future. More back and forth with DeAlmeida and Neilsen about last month's meeting before K. Coleman requested that we stick to Robert's Rule of Order and save any further discussion on the topic for "Additional Items" as it is written on the agenda. Coleman pulled focus back to the agenda items and, first on the list was voting on the meeting minutes from July 20, 2021. Paratore said that she needed to add that, at the July meeting, the Fountain St property was confirmed to on the Town's Survey of Historical Homes. Paratore forgot to add that in to the draft minutes that went out. No other member had any proposed changes to the draft. The group unanimously voted to accept the minutes with the change from Paratore.

Next item on the agenda was the upcoming Farmer's Market and the Historical Commission's table. Neilsen passed around a sample questionnaire that he felt should be distributed at the Market on Saturday. It would be a way for us to engage with the community and get feedback from them. The group agreed that this looked like a great idea. L. Childress and K. Flannery spent the last few weeks collecting photos of historic places around Ashland. Childress assembled the pictures and information on the places on a beautiful poster board presentation,

to be displayed at the Farmer's Market with a large banner. Childress also printed out the Commission's Mission Statement and a note crediting the Ashland Historic Society for all the information and descriptions that she included on the presentation. J.Sorensen brought some old postcards with Historic pictures of Ashland that were to be displayed at the Farmer's Market as well. DeAlmeida, Flannery, Neilsen and Sorensen all confirmed that they would be at the Farmer's Market to represent the Commission.

The meeting was then virtually joined by Robert St. Germain. St. Germain is a 6 year member of the Ashland Town Forest Committee and wanted to discuss saving the Stone Bungalow in the Town Forest. St. Germain gave a wonderful presentation on the history of the building, including its original owner Margaret Pitman who wanted to use the building and land to explore modern farming methods, reports of Boston Mayor Curley frequenting the bungalow for social calls and card games, the building's history as a watering hole during Prohibition and, eventually, the sale of the building and its subsequent use as a place for Henry Warren to conduct experiments. The Fenwall company also used the building to test their first Fire Suppression Systems. Eventually, the bungalow was abandoned and a fire broke out that destroyed the roof. St. Germain discussed the collective efforts of the years to clean up the property. The Town Forest Committee, local boy scout troop, Keefe Tech students and a volunteer mason have all worked to repair and maintain various aspects of the structure over the years. The Historic Society also agreed to donate a plaque for the bungalow to highlight its rich history. The ATFC received a grant from the CPC for \$5,000 to have the chimney masonry repaired and repointed with modern stone. They had a local masonry company agree to do it pre-Covid but that company has since been unable to fulfill the request due to lack of availability. They bid the job out to a few other companies and only one company came back with an \$85,000 quote. Several members of the Commission expressed their shock about that quote and questioned how the company came up with that astronomical number. St. Germain confirmed that they were not looking to demolish and rebuild anything, simply repair and repoint the existing chimney. The ATFC is now exploring the option of using the \$5,000 grant for materials if the local laborer's training school in Hopkinton would be willing to donate the labor. St. Germain wanted to know if the Commission agreed with their preservation efforts for the bungalow and would lend their support. Members of the Commission voiced their support for the ATFC efforts, agreed that the bungalow was worth saving and would lend their support and endorsement for future grant applications and preservation efforts. They also reiterated that the \$85k was unreasonable. St. Germain also pointed out that there is the potential for an ADA compliant trail to the bungalow which would be beneficial to the town. The Commission thanked him for his wonderful presentation and asked that he keep them updated on progress. St. Germain said that he would forward pictures of the bungalow and the preservation efforts over the years. Childress said she would print the photos and have them available for display at the Farmer's Market.

The next agenda item is revamping the Mission Statement. Childress read the current mission statement aloud and expressed her dissatisfaction with it, which was seconded by multiple Commission members. Coleman echoed the dissatisfaction and said she thought the statement

should be shorter and provide a more accurate, succinct description of our Commission. She asked that it be added as an agenda item for next month's meeting.

Next agenda item was better access to Pout Rock, who owns the property and how we can get it done. Childress said that it can't be maintained sufficiently by the DPW and that the access to it is dangerous. Flannery confirmed that when they went to go take pictures for the Farmer's Market presentation, it was very hard to access and there was a large tree blocking the way. She said that it would be great to have an official trail leading to it that would connect to other trails here in town. DeAlmeida gave a brief history of the Rock and said that he believes it should be cleared/cleaned but it's best accessed by boat. Flannery said that the rock has been inscribed by the Historic Society years ago but it was hard to read and thinks there should be better signage. Coleman gave an example of how a friend of hers in Brookline was able to leverage some money for local initiatives from the Boston Marathon this year because it is being run on Indigenous People's Day. Although Pout Rock isn't on the actual route, it is route adjacent and has historical significance for Ashland's indigenous people. It might be a long shot and too late to pursue but, perhaps that could be some source of funding for better access to the rock.

Next agenda item was the ongoing discussion of the Mill Buildings. DeAlmeida says that, supposedly, they are not looking to tear down the historic mills any longer, just the brick buildings next door but that hasn't officially been confirmed yet. Neilsen used the discussion on the Mill Buildings to voice his support for the formation of a Local Historic District to better protect buildings like these in the future. Neilsen spoke to Mike at the Historic Commission in Hopkinton, who recently established a local historic district there along with Jen Dwyer of the Massachusetts Historical Commission (local initiative department) for advice on how Ashland can form their own District. Many people in Ashland think that one already exists because someone put up those signs around downtown. Both Mike and Jen suggested that we present the formation of a Historic District to the public as a way of making it legal and official. Neilsen said that the historic district needs to be contiguous and that downtown was probably the best place for us to start. The Select Board needs to form a study committee that then needs to meet with the State. The process also includes hearings, funding and a vote at Town Meeting. After everything gets approved, a map of the historic district is drawn and is filed at the Registry of Deeds before it becomes legal. The discussion with the group turned to where the district should be and what it should include. The group named off Ocean House, the Falls, Mill Buildings, the homes on Ray Marchetti, the Library, Town Hall, Stones, etc. In order to be contiguous, the group decided that downtown would be the best place to start because it also less residential impact. Once one historic district is formed in town, it would be easier to add additional districts throughout town. Coleman motioned for the Commission to vote on the HC officially beginning the process to establish a district. Seconded by Flannery. Commission Voted Unanimously. Coleman motioned that the area that should be initially pursued would be the downtown. Seconded by DeAlmeida. Commission voted unanimously. Sorensen discussed the possibility that there would be pushback from property owners because of certain restrictions this might place on their property. Coleman agreed that there would be some

pushback. Paratore said that she would send notice to the Select Board or our intentions to start forming a Local Historic District and ask to be included on the agenda to start the process.

With no other matters to discuss, Chairman DeAlmeida made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Paratore. Vote 7-0.

**Next meeting September 14, 2021 AT 7PM.** Adjournment 8:45pm