

# CITY OF PEABODY

## HISTORICAL COMMISSION

CITY HALL, 24 LOWELL STREET, PEABODY, MA 01960

A regular meeting of the Historical Commission was called to order on Thursday, October 11, 2018 at 6:00 P.M. by Chairman Michael J. Bonfanti. The meeting was held in the George Peabody House, 205 Washington Street., Peabody, MA.

### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Michael Bonfanti  
Mr. Gerry Bellew  
Mr. Andrew Metropolis

Mr. David Cronin  
Mr. Frank Hardy  
Ms. Cheryl Millard

### MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ms. Lola Busta  
Ms. Debby Eskenazi  
Mr. Vincent Raponi

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. William Power

**Presentations/Discussions:** Minutes from September 20, 2018 were reviewed. Motion to approve minutes from September 20, 2018: David Cronin/Andy Metropolis. Motion approved.

Mr. Bonfanti introduced new clerk Dianne Marchese who was welcomed by the other members.

The wake for Mrs. Raponi is Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, at 4:00 p.m. Mr. Metropolis suggested meeting at 3:45 and going together.

Mr. Bonfanti asked Dianne to send a thank you note to Lucia DelNegro for stepping in and helping out while there was no clerk. Her assistance is very much appreciated.

Mr. Power found original markers which can be reused with new decals. These were used in contests such as best house in a historic district. He also has cases of flags which he'll leave downstairs.

**Committee Reports:** Mr. Bonfanti stated that there can be outside members on sub-committees but a PHC member must be the chair person.

a) **Educational Exchange Program:** Mr. Power discussed meeting with Superintendent Cara Murtagh. Mr. Metropolis made a presentation which intrigued her. She needs to get the okay from the School Committee and the Mayor. The former superintendent was opposed to foreign travel. Mr. Hardy explained how students are chosen, the difference between Peabody students who go and British students (in Britain, the program is open to young adults who live in public housing. They can be as old as 23 and may not all know each other as Peabody students usually do). They've always had good experiences although the trips are a lot of work and responsibility for the adults who go. They are going to leave it to Cara to speak to the Mayor but will follow up with her in a month or so. Mr. Hardy said they start interviewing students in April in preparation for a November trip. They'll alternate years with the British program. The George Peabody Trust has merged with a larger trust which means there have been some personnel changes making the exchange program new to everyone. Mr. Bonfanti asked that they write down every step so future Historical Commission members know how it runs.

### **Old Business:**

a) **Review/discussion of proposed operational guidelines:** Mr. Bonfanti would like to review the guidelines for demolition delays. He read his proposed guidelines: officers are elected for a term of one year and shall not serve for more than five consecutive years; both permanent and alternate members may serve as Chairman and Vice Chairman; elections shall be held in January; the duties of the clerk were outlined. Motion to adopt guidelines as proposed: David Cronin/Gerry Bellew. Motion approved.

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- b) **Request by Zachary Stark – Service Project:** Mr. Cronin: Zach is an eagle scout doing a project off Goodale. He has landscapers and should be able to clean it up quickly. Ms. Millard said she would help. Mr. Power added that they can't rake or pieces from broken headstones may be raked up and thrown out.
- c) **Update – Bowditch Property:** Mr. Metropolis feels the Bowditch property would be better served if the Mayor spoke to the homeowners. They are foreign and will respect his position as they don't understand the importance of the house to Peabody's history. This has been going on for 18 months. The Historical Society is not behind this but Mr. Bonfanti feels the homeowners deserve an answer. Mr. Bonfanti and Mr. Metropolis are going to draft a letter that the Commission supports this project and would like the support of the Society. There was a brief discussion as to other options (removing the house, letting them add a second story).
- d) **Historic House Markers:** Mr. Power left a box of small signs and suggested using All Kinds of Signs to make new ones. Mr. Metropolis looked for signs similar to the one on 25 Franklin Street. Mr. Bonfanti thinks there is one on the house on a house owned by the Society that Larry can take off and bring to the sign store for an estimate. Homeowners will be charged a fee. He should also bring it to the Council on Aging and see if their wood shop is interested in making them.

### **New Business:**

- a) **Demolition Delay – 25 Franklin St. (Willis Barnard House):** Mr. Bonfanti received a message from Lucia regarding this property. It is on the Historic Register/District on Franklin Street. Mrs. Aronely Avila and her husband Kelvin: They purchased in the house in 2018 and have finished the interior. They are not planning on making structural changes but want to make the exterior as nice as the interior is by vinyl siding it. If they paint it, it will have to be repainted every few years and the wood will have to be replaced which will get expensive (\$18,000 to replace wood as needed, scrape everything and paint). The Commission is sympathetic to them but need to be able to keep properties historic in those districts. Mrs. Nelson (the original owner) spent a lot of time and money on upkeep. The Commission is concerned with the exterior not the interior. There was a discussion about exploring other options including Rhino-Shield, which is expensive but encapsulates the clapboards and lasts, contacting Community Development to find out if there is any money available to help offset the cost of painting. It was suggested that they call Stacey Bernson in Community Development. The Commission would prefer wood over vinyl and asked that they defer their decision until all options are explored. Ms. Millard added that they gave the couple good advice.
  - b) **Proctor House Status:** Mr. Bonfanti has been forwarding information. He would like to know from CPC members if they would help finance purchasing the property. There was a discussion about who would own the house if the CPC helped finance, what kinds of programs could be run there, what to do with the pool. There has been talk of having a meeting between the CPC, Historical Commission and the Historical Society so everyone could see it. Mr. Bonfanti has been contacting newspapers to get the word out about this important piece of history. The realtor said there are people interested who would like to turn it into a Bed & Breakfast or a tavern. There was also discussion about holding a collaborative witch tour with Salem and including this house. Mr. Bellew thinks the CPC would entertain giving some funds but there needs to be a plan after it is purchased for how to make money with it.
  - c) **Update on Children's Museum at George Peabody House:** Mr. Bonfanti: this really blew up. There are some Society members who are upset that the Leather Museum will be closed for four months. Mr. Bonfanti agrees but supports the Mayor's efforts. The Mayor would like to meet with the Society to give his position. They are moving heavy equipment out of the museum to open a pop-up children's museum. Ms. Millard suggested sending a letter expressing the Commission's concern. There was a discussion about the need to send a letter to the Mayor expressing disapproval of closing the Leather Museum and George Peabody House without notifying the Historical Commission. We are disappointed that we were never consulted and are
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concerned as to where the pieces will be moved to, want to ensure that they are returned to their proper place undamaged. The Historical Commission supports a children's museum: Cheryl Millard/Andy Metropolis.  
Motion approved.

d) **Request from Felton Family Association, Inc.:** Mr. Bonfanti handled their request regarding family cemeteries. We can only urge that they be careful.

**Remarks by Commission Members:** Mr. Bonfanti discussed the Waterworks building on Washington Street. Beverly Bank would like to open a branch there. He talked to Curt Bellavance and asked that he notify the Commission when something happens with a historic property. He agreed and said he will try to come up with a better notification system. Mr. Metropolis doesn't have a problem with them opening a drive through window but wants them to do it in an existing opening so they don't have to alter the building. There was a discussion about the submitted plans. Mr. Cronin suggested having the bank's attorney come to a meeting and explain the schematics. Motion to send a letter to Councilor Pete McGinn requesting that protocol is followed and the bank's attorney come to a Peabody Historical Commission meeting in November or January with better schematics and pictures: David Cronin/Andy Metropolis. Motion approved.

**Mr. Cronin:** having shoulder operated on November 9<sup>th</sup> and retiring on December 4, 2018. His job hasn't been advertised yet.

**Mr. Bellew:** read Allison Lyte's resignation letter stating that she is happy to help 'pass the torch' and gave the letter to Dianne Marchese for future reference. He also mentioned that the fence out front is in the process of being fixed with a CPA grant.

**Mr. Metropolis:** wished Mr. Cronin well with his surgery and good luck in retirement. He suggests they take Allison out to dinner to thank her for her service.

**Mr. Hardy:** see comments regarding the trip to England and his meeting with the Superintendent.

**Ms. Millard:** has nothing to add.

**Next Meeting Date:** The next meeting will be Thursday, **November 15, 2018**, 6:00 p.m., at the George Peabody House Civic Center & Museum, 205 Washington Street.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.: Andy Metropolis/David Cronin.

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