

Peabody Historical Commission

Minutes of January 17, 2019 Commission Meeting

The regular meeting of the Peabody Historical Commission (PHC) was held at the George Peabody House on January 17, 2019. Present were Commissioners: Cheryl Millard, Caroline Busta, Deborah Eskenazi, Francis Hardy, Gerald Bellew, Vincent Raponi and Michael Bonfanti. Absent were Andrew Metropolis and David Cronin.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Chairman Bonfanti.

Motion made by Gerald Bellew to grant Chairman Bonfanti a two-month leave of absence from the Commission and was seconded by Vincent Raponi. A roll call vote was taken.

All in favor: Yes. Opposed: No The motion was unanimously approved with one abstaining.

Motion made by Gerald Bellew to approve the regular Committee minutes of November 5, 2018 as presented and was seconded by Deborah Eskenazi. A roll call vote was taken.

All in favor: Yes. Opposed: No The motion was unanimously approved.

Election of Officers for 2019

Motion made by Gerald Bellew and seconded by Deb Eskenazi to elect Michael Bonfanti, Chairman of the PHC for 2019.

A roll call vote was taken and Mr. Bonfanti was elected. Mr. Bonfanti abstained from voting.

Motion made by Gerald Bellew and seconded by Deb Eskenazi to elect Cheryl Millard, Vice Chairman of the PHC for 2019.

A roll call vote was taken and Ms. Millard was elected. Ms. Millard abstained from voting.

Committee Reports

Educational Exchange Program

Frank Hardy reported that no formal action has taken place since a meeting with the Superintendent of Schools in Oct of 2018. The reason for this lack of activity was attributed to ill health. Frank is formulating plans to develop an operating manual that can be used as a guide in developing and implementing the program. Deb Eskenazi requested that she be included in any meetings the Committee may have going forward.

Children's Museum

No new updates on the Children's Museum. Deb Eskenazi and Cheryl Millard have been appointed to the Children's Museum Committee but have not yet been invited to attend any meetings or provided any updates. Cheryl will contact the Children's Committee Chairperson about being included in future meetings.

Discussion ensued regarding the use of the George Peabody House and adjacent Leather Workers' Museum as temporary quarters for the Children's Museum. Reportedly, starting in March, both of these museums will be emptied, with all artifacts and displays, being inventoried and stored elsewhere. The Children's Museum will then temporarily take over the space and put up their own artifacts, exhibits and displays. These will remain in place until the end of June when, they will be taken down and the prior museums exhibits reestablished.

As a result of the disruption, Chairman Bonfanti recommends that we hold our meetings elsewhere in the City besides the George Peabody House. He has secured permission from the Peabody Historical Commission to use the Carriage House located in the Smith Barn as a possible meeting site. The PHC agreed that we should meet elsewhere than the George Peabody House for meetings from March to June but thought use of the Trustees' Room at the Peabody Institute Library would be a better choice as a location to meet. Cheryl Millard was tasked with contacting the Library Director and requesting the use of that facility as a temporary place to hold our meetings.

Old Business

Update – Bowditch property. A meeting was held on 12/20/2018 with the Mayor, Curt Bellavance, and representatives from the CPC, PHS and PHC (Bonfanti and Metropolis) to discuss the Bowditch property and whether or not we should advocate acquiring the property or not or take some other course of action. It was decided that the mayor would meet with the owners of the property to discuss the course of action to follow. The mayor and Curt Bellavance met with the owners on 1-17-19 to discuss a course of action to follow. The owners appear willing to negotiate the sale of the property. Further discussions and negotiations are pending. Commissioner Bonfanti will be meeting with Mr. Bellavance the week of 1/21/2019 to discuss the course of action to follow. Commissioner Metropolis will represent the Commission on this issue going forward.

Historic House Markers

Commissioner Andy Metropolis took measurements of the existing Historic House Marker made a template and Dianne Marchese brought the template to a local printer and requested a price to have the markers made. The estimated price per marker (plastic) is \$28.00. A copy of the Historic House Marker and dimensions were provided each Committee member and are attached to the formal copy of these minutes.

It was noted that many of the markers currently being displayed were deteriorating or in disrepair. In some cases it was noted that the marker was missing. Discussion was held as to whether the PHC or the Historic Home owner should pay for replacement markers. Chairman Bonfanti has been researching the Marker policies of other Communities, which vary from the community providing the marker at no cost, or for a fee, or for the home owner obtaining his own using a standard template. Suggestion was made that the PHC inquire if the CPC would be willing to fund the cost of the Historic House Markers.

Commissioner Bellew made a motion which was seconded by Commissioner Busta to purchase a prototype of the marker for the Gideon Foster house (after it is renovated) and use it as an example.

The motion was unanimously approved.

(It should be noted that at the September Commission meeting, Commissioner Andrew Metropolis brought up the issue of Historic House Markers. Apparently a Central Street property owner wanted a replacement for his House marker which has deteriorated, requested a replacement from the PHC and still has not received one. Andy checked

to see if there were in storage and could not find any. Question is should we have some made and if so who should pay for them.

A general discussion was held and the consensus was that we should get one and use it as a template. We should charge the actual cost to make plus a surcharge to cover our time and service. Suggestion was made that perhaps the "woodworkers" at the Senior Center could make them for us. Andy will continue his efforts to obtain a marker to be used as a template.)

Proposed Historic House Marker Program

Chairman Bonfanti suggested that we contact the Mayor, Curt Bellavance and the Historical Society and advocate a program to put up historic markers in the Peabody Square area to commemorate the many historic properties located there (examples, the Bell Tavern, Strand Theater and the General Dodge House). He suggested that we do this in conjunction with the International Festival and in support of Dan Doucette of the PHS who runs a booth at the Festival dedicated to the city's history.

Proctor House

Chairman Bonfanti along with Dick St. Pierre and Kelly Danielli met on 1-2-2019 with the new owners of the Proctor House. They were extremely friendly and wanted to work with the PHC, PHS and City to preserve and protect the Proctor House. They also wanted to, in conjunction with the PHS periodically open the property to the public. Attached is an "e" mail Chairperson Bonfanti sent to the Commissioners describing the 1-2-2019 meeting.

Demolition Delay - 25 Franklin Street (Willis Barnard House)

Chairman Bonfanti drove by the property on 1/16/2019 which disclosed that there was no outside work in process. Curt Bellavance was not aware of any permit building permit being filed to do construction at the property.

167 Washington Street (Waterworks Building) – Proposed Beverly Bank branch

At our last Commission meeting we authorized several Commission members (Bonfanti, Bellew, Hardy and Metropolis to meet with the owner/developer of the property and, acting on behalf of the full Board, approve or disapprove a request to go ahead with construction including construction of a drive-up window and safe deposit drop box. The above Commissioners authorized the construction. (Based on the condition of the building, the numerous changes made to it over the years and the minor impact the drive-up window and drop box would have on the exterior of the building.)

A vote by the full Board was requested to formalize the authorization. A motion was made by Commissioner Bellew and seconded by Commissioner Eskenazi. A roll call vote was taken and the vote was unanimous.

Salem Country Club (SCC)

The question of what city department has jurisdiction over the removal of historic stone walls and the cutting down of trees on SCC property which abuts a Scenic roadway was raised by the Planning Board. It was determined that the Planning Board has jurisdiction over this matter. A letter to that effect was sent to the Planning Board. The letter also contained some suggestion as to what actions the SCC was expected to follow to also conform to PHC policy. A copy of the letter is attached for reference.

Thank you letter from PHS

A thank you letter was sent from the PHS to the PHC, thanking the PHC for its support of the request for funding for repairs/renovation of the Gideon Foster House.

New Business

General discussion was held regarding the limited control the PHC has over Historic properties in the city. Just because a property was listed in the National or State Register did not necessarily mean that the property owners could not tear-down, rebuild or modify their properties. The same was true with historic houses and properties located in a city's Historic District. A city's ordinances and local by-laws dictated what could or could not be done. Public opinion, past practice and persuasion are often the only tools a Historical Commission has.

It was suggested that we conduct a formal review of Peabody's existing Ordinances and By-Laws as they pertain to Historical Commission, Historical Districts and Cemeteries with an eye on revising/strengthening them to help us perform the PHC's stated mission. Review of applicable laws and policies promulgated by the Massachusetts Historical Commission's and of the National Park Services also need to be reviewed to ensure understanding and compliance. For example, just because a property is listed in the Federal Register does not mean that the property owner cannot make changes or modify the property.

It was also suggested that the PHC explore ways to help owners of Historic Properties maintain their properties by working with Community Development to establish programs, such as to help them obtain funding to paint their properties instead of "vinyl siding" them and to pay for "historic house markers" instead of the homeowner having to pay.

An example was provided where the CPC provided funding to a historic property on Wallis Street (old Wallis School), which was used to restore original lighting and windows.

Remarks by Commission Members

Commissioner Hardy talked about the implementation of a new "civics" program at PVMHS. He met with Principal Buckley to discuss the program and is helping them to locate guides and other educational materials that are reportedly stored at PVMHS.

Vice Chairperson Millard will pick up PHC's mail, which is located in the City's mail room in the Community Development Department at City Hall.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date is scheduled for February 21, 2019 at 6:00pm at the George Peabody House Museum.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:10pm