

Sandisfield Historical Commission

MINUTES

7 p.m. Thursday, October 14, 2021

Fire Station #1, New Boston

Attending: Ron, Liana, Connie, Roseanne

Guests: Bonnie Parsons/Preservation Consultant and Jean Atwater-Williams

Ron called the meeting to order at 7:01pm

Proposed staggered terms for our commission members:

- (Ron July 2021 – June 2024)
- (Liana August 2021 – July 2024)
- Connie and Roseanne (July 2021 – June 2023),
- Mike 1 year (July 2021 – June 2022)

Roseanne moved to approve, Connie 2nd, approved unanimously

Ron to send PDF of National Register Registration Form to committee members

Review and sign minutes of last prior meeting, September 15, 2021 (Liana to post on Town Web site)

Planning for New Boston Historic District

(with project Consultant, Bonnie Parsons)

Tasks include mapping the properties in the district (Need to match up properties to owners including vacant lots. Make a list with addresses which get turned into labels and mailed out to owners). The map numbers are on the data sheet (online). If they are vacant, find out who the owner is. Owners will get letter (goes out Nov 8) explaining a bit about the Register. Owners can send in a registered letter objecting to the district. Half or more have to object in order for it to be tabled. It would get put aside and be brought up at more opportune time. Our district has 48 properties not including vacant lots. It's a fast timeline. Ron will put a notice in the November Sandisfield Times about a public meeting. MHC will post a notice in the Berkshire Eagle as the paper of record. November 30 is the VIRTUAL meeting date. The Historical Commission sponsors the meeting but

Ben Haley. Preservation Planner of MHC will moderate. Estimated time of meeting, under one hour.

MEET MONDAY NIGHT AT RON AND JEAN'S TO DO MAPPING 7PM-8:30 PM (cancelled)

HISTORY/PROCESS

This started ten years ago when updating the historic properties inventory in 2011. Covid delayed planning and progress significantly.

Bonnie completed registration forms which includes a history narrative, and description of houses as they are today. Went to MA Historic Commission (MHC) as a draft for National Historic Designation. They wanted additional information which Bonnie supplied. The process took a long time. The MHC commissioners will read it and ask questions of Bonnie, Ron and Betsy Friedberg (MHC director of program) on November 30. Goes on the State register of historic places immediately. (Correction: The District must be recognized by the National Park Service before it is officially listed on the State Register). Then it goes to National Park Service for a 30-day review, publish in Congressional Record and then will get listed on the National Register. The national designation is strictly honorary and doesn't come with any obligations or restrictions for property owners. A local historic district with specific powers is created with a bylaw with a 2/3 town vote. There is no local historic district in Sandisfield.

Federal money for any construction projects will include an MHC review in order to protect any property in the district from deleterious effect, i.e. if they wanted to rebuild the New Boston Bridge and remove historic stone walls etc. MHC then negotiates with the project to mitigate.

A national historic district in Otis is under planning as well.

Municipally owned buildings such as our library within the district could qualify for state preservation funds.

There is no money for individual property owners. There are potential tax credits for rehab projects for historic income producing buildings like the New Boston Inn.

Community pride and elevation community profile are benefits. Encourages preservation of character. Students can do projects using the registration document.

This designation shows we are an active commission. Ron believes that another four districts potentially could qualify – Montville, West New Boston (which includes Old Town Hall), South Sandisfield and Sandisfield Center.

The process will be completed in 2022 depending on federal agency schedules. In the meantime, the Commission can consider appropriate messaging and awareness creation and signage, probably at least two at town gateways.

Determine next meeting venue – NOV 10 7PM Firehouse #1 and Dec 8, (Note November venue was cancelled)

Rosanne moved to adjourn, Connie seconded, 8pm

Respectfully submitted by Liana Toscanini/Secy

October 12, 2021