

Sandisfield Historical Commission Meeting

July 28, 2021 7pm Firestation #1 Community Room

Attending: Ron Bernard, Mike Loglisci, Roseanne Hoekstra, Jean Atwater-Williams, Liana Toscanini, Connie Canty

MINUTES

Minutes of last meeting of October 9, 2019 were lost but there were no items voted on at that time (Tom Ragusa presented his trail project)

New members: Liana Toscanini, Mike Loglisci

Ron nominated Liana Toscanini as Secretary, 2nd Roseanne, passed unanimously

File: Copy of letter about Old Route 8 & brochure

Review of purpose of Commission

- Ron passed out a brochure explaining the difference between local and national historic districts. Our purpose is to promote the preservation of the historical physical assets of the town – cemetery, buildings,
- We can also help the process of getting buildings on the National Register

New Boston Historic District: finally moving forward

Betsey Friedman notified us that MHC will meet in December to review our application for the New Boston district to be designated a National Historic District. It brings prestige and possibly over time improves property values. There are no rules or restrictions binding owners. Map of district passed around. Ron has been working on this for three years. COVID delayed feedback from Boston. The next step is a public information meeting in Sept/October and we'll need a communications strategy to make sure people understand what a National Historic District is – MHC will mail out letters to the homeowners in the district. Ron and Jean will create the list of homeowners within the boundaries of the district. To create excitement about this achievement, we'll consider having some sort of celebration with bronze plaque, drummers & pipers, reenactment guys in costumes, etc.

Bridge on Old Rt 8: saved

The 1927 steel truss bridge is a registered historic asset with the MA Historic Commission (MHC). The Bridge will stay as is for the foreseeable future. The effort to remove it (because it's expensive to maintain) has been terminated (Letter from US Army Corps of Engineers in charge of the Colebrook Reservoir). It will be maintained as a recreational asset. Ron will inform the Select Board and prepare an article for the September Sandisfield Times.

Indian Ceremonial Stone Landscapes: an intriguing hot potato

Ron would like to formalize this topic (archeological sites/heritage assets). American Indian artifacts (Mike is interested in pre-Colonial history). Robert Hoogs of Monterey gives talks on this. Ron read the description from the State Register of Historic Places manual. Ron feels

these sites are relatively unique, but no one wants to deal with them even though they are protected by more than one act of Congress and MA law. A couple of residents have called Ron to look at potential ceremonial stone landscapes. Mike has found one significant burial mound, the Sachem mounds are different and he's found at least one. We'll take a visit to it. It may need some special protection based on its significance. Ron will research. The problem is we need to know about them but we don't want to publicize the specific location because people could steal or damage artifacts. There are apparently many CLS in Sandisfield which are pre-contact (Mohican). The Stockbridge Munsee archeologist came to see Mike's discoveries and said he's never seen anything like it. The Tribal Council seems more interested in recouping land – not so interested in the walls. Ultimately, we'll have a much better idea of local native activity. There are some regional Indian groups that have been doing this research for decades. There are some complex connections besides the minefield of political issues. Mike has native elders and mentors throughout the country. There are lots of historical inconsistencies. We should come up with a mission statement. Right now, indifference and unawareness has preserved these ceremonial sites. What would our role be?

Knox Trail Submission

Has been accepted as a nomination by MHC. Both Otis and Sandisfield recommended it with Otis in the lead. Next steps are putting it in an inventory of heritage assets, in-depth research, acceptance by both towns (ideal), etc. The process could take a few more years.

Liana asked about budget. The Town has allocated \$500 for the Commission for this budget year. People are not allowed to donate to a municipality.

Tree felling and chipping

Road crews are not allowed to desecrate stone walls with chips or logs but they are unaware of state laws. Ron talked to Brad (Superintendent). Brad said he would remind the contracted crews.

Old Town Hall Rehabilitation

David Hubbard mentioned in a recent article about seeking government funds to improve or build new town facilities. Removing some buildings was suggested. Ron said that Old Town Hall although much modified due to time, floods and fire, is very historic and that the Commission should consider options to rehabilitate it to its former appearance.

House at 178 New Hartford Road (Dr. Amos Smith house, c. 1773)

Owner of pre Revolutionary War house has died, Ron received a call that the barn collapsed yesterday. The house has been deteriorating and is at risk. Significant historical asset for the town. Ron will evaluate the situation and report about it.

Jean has submitted her resignation. Liana moved to accept, Roseanne 2nd. Ron thanked her for serving.

Meetings will be held 2nd Wed of every month at Fire House #1. Ralph Morrison has agreed.
Next meeting August 11th

Meeting Adjourned 8:37pm Liana motioned, Connie 2nd

Read and approved by:

Ron Bernard, Chairman

Liana Toscanini, Secretary

Constance Canty

Roseanne Hoekstra

Mike Loglisci

Jean Atwater-Williams (Resigned 7/28)