

Provincetown Historical Commission
February 2, 2007
Minutes

Meeting called to order 8:30 AM

Members Present: Polly Burnell, Eric Dray, Austin Knight, Stephen Milkewicz, Taylor Polites, Char Priolo

Also present: Jay Critchley, Doug Johnstone

1. Request for Alternative Structures to Be Recognized by National Register

Jay Critchley requested the guidance and support of the Historical Commission related to his efforts to have his cesspool (no longer in use) designated as an historic structure with the National Register of Historic Places. Critchley detailed the discovery and excavation of the structure and its current uses. Critchley stated he believes the cesspool to be about 75 years old and that his home was not currently in the Historic District. The cesspool was uncovered in 1997 and is a classic cinder block beehive structure with a packed sand base. Critchley has used the structure for art installations, theater in the “ground”, operatic performances and “drag” poetry readings. Critchley also is a proponent of creating an Historic Septic District to preserve the history and historic use of these structures in Provincetown and the United States as an artifact of a past way of life. The Historical Commission recommended that Critchley do additional research to build an argument for the historic value of cesspools and other mid-20th century structures as a preliminary to submitting an application to the Massachusetts Historical Society. Critchley will return to the Historical Commission with his findings at a later date.

2. Approval of Minutes

Polites moved to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2007 meeting. Dray seconded.

Vote: 3-0-0

3. Report on CPC Funding

Dray updated the Commission on the status of the Survey of Buildings in the Historic District. The Commission will ultimately prepare a CPC funding request to hire consultants to complete the survey, but the Commission is not ready at this time to submit a request. Priolo suggested also looking for additional resources to help complete the survey, such as SCORE, a website devoted to bringing together senior citizens with varied skills and organizations that could benefit from their expertise. Priolo suggested that this resource could provide skilled volunteers to assist in a project to collect oral histories related to Provincetown.

Dray requested that Priolo research oral history methods as well as resource opportunities through SCORE.

4. Update on the Historic Preservation Project

Doug Johnstone updated the Commission on the progress of the Project. Currently, five of the priority collections have been fully assessed. The Project has also begun converting the scanned documents into PDF files in preparation for the construction of a database to warehouse the documents and their metadata prior to the buildout of a website. Johnstone also reported that the Project had been given a \$5,000 grant from the Visitors Services Board for the buildout of the website to be funded after June 30, 2007. Johnstone detailed a CPC funding request he intended to submit to the CPA on Monday, February 8th. Johnstone was requesting a grant of approximately \$19,000 to fund the construction of a secured, climate-controlled space in the basement of the Provincetown Public Library to house the town archives as well as the library archives and serve as a research center and project headquarters for the continued scanning and uploading of documents related to the history of Provincetown. Additional funding requests will be made from other sources to fund the purchase of archival filing cabinets, etc.

5. Historic District Commission Assistance

Priolo stated that the Historic District Commission building guidelines were available on the town website and at the Building Commissioners office.

With no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: Friday, February 16, 2007 9:00 AM