

Provincetown Historical Commission
May 4, 2007
Minutes

Meeting called to order 9:00 AM

Members Present: Polly Burnell, Eric Dray, Steven Milkewicz, Taylor Polites, Char Priolo

Also present: Austin Knight

1. Approval of Agenda

Steven Milkewicz moved to approve the agenda with the inclusion of an opportunity for Public Statements in the agenda. Polites seconded.

Vote: 5-0-0

2. Public Statements

Austin Knight appeared before the Commission. Given his recent election as a Selectman for the town, his tenure on the Commission was ended. Eric Dray expressed his great appreciation for all the work Knight had done to promote the cause of preservation and his happiness that someone with an intimate understanding of the needs of historic preservation in Provincetown would now be on the Board of Selectmen. Knight thanked the Commission and stated he looked forward to continuing to work with the Commission. In particular, he noted the Community Preservation Act budget for historic preservation and the Town Hall restoration project as two important things for the Commission to be aware of. Knight informed the Commission that a report on the state of the Town Hall was being given to the new Town Manager and reiterated the need to have the Commission invite her to a meeting as an introduction.

- Dray will provide the Town Manager with a copy of the Historic Preservation Plan for Provincetown and invite her to the Commission meeting schedule for May 25th.
- Dray will also draft a letter welcoming the new Board of Selectmen and detailing the current priorities of the Commission to better bring awareness of preservation issues before the town administration.
- Dray will also discuss status of Town Hall and what level of rehabilitation is needed to correct current issues so the Commission has a better understanding of the situation.

3. Approval of Minutes

Char Priolo moved to approve the minutes from the April 20, 2007 meeting of the Commission. Milkewicz seconded.

Vote: 4-0-0

4. Oral History Project

Priolo opened discussion of her report regarding the status of oral histories in Provincetown. Dray suggested CPC funds be allocated to provide stipend to those interviewed. Polly Burnell also suggested attending the Council on Aging storytelling meetings where members often relate stories of their lives in Provincetown. Polites suggested the COA could be a resource for identifying candidates for interviewing. Maxine Notaro was suggested as another resource for identifying candidates. Joan Souza was also suggested as someone who knows a lot about town history and townspeople.

Burnell also suggested engaging the High School in an oral history project, perhaps next fall, where students would record oral histories from family members. Nancy Flascher was suggested as a contact for beginning that process.

Bill Schneider, Doug Johnstone and Joyce Johnson were discussed as individuals with some experience and interest in collecting oral histories who might also be able to provide direction and methodologies for starting an oral history project.

- Priolo will begin collected detailed information on the existing oral histories to create an inventory of them.

Burnell moved that the Commission schedule a meeting on May 11th devoted to the discussion of the oral history project and invite Bill Schneider, Doug Johnstone and Joyce Johnson to the meeting. Priolo seconded.

Vote: 5-0-0

5. Landmark Status for the Murchison House

Dray updated the Commission on the status of the application process for the Murchison House. A former graduate student of his had begun work on the application and recently stated she would be happy to continue to complete the form, which typically, Dray stated, could cost several thousand dollars. Dray also stated that the approval of the owners of the property was typically required to move forward on a landmarking proposal.

- After discussion, it was concluded that Dray would speak to Rev. Allison Hyder of the Unitarian-Universalist Church, who is also a member of the Nautilus Club with Mrs. Murchison, to see if Hyder could mediate a contact between the Commission and Mrs. Murchison.

6. Open Alternate Seat of the Historical Commission

The Commission had an open discussion of the qualifications of the candidates who had applied for the open alternate seat.

Polites moved that Stephen Desroches be appointed to the alternate seat on the Historical Commission. Priolo seconded.

Vote: 5-0-0

7. Appointment to Open Seat on the CPC

A discussion ensued regarding the need to have a member of the Historical Commission appointed to the seat vacated by Austin Knight on the Community Preservation Committee.

Burnell moved that Polites be appointed to the open seat on the CPC. Dray seconded.

Vote: 5-0-0

8. Survey of Town Buildings

Polites updated the Commission regarding options for making the Survey of Town Buildings database available for research as well as editable. The long term goal of the Historic Preservation Project led by Doug Johnstone is to integrate the database into the website that will also house the town archive. Given that the database will hopefully be functional by the end of 2007, the issue facing the Commission is interim access to the database. Beau Jackett of MIS stated that the level of complexity to temporarily install the database on the town website would be prohibitive as well as out of the scope of the MIS Group. Polites stated that Debra DeJonker-Berry of the Public Library had expressed interest and support regarding enabling access to the Survey and he suggested he revisit the subject with her. Potentially, the survey could be loaded onto a library computer terminal and made accessible to both builders and Historic District Commission members in that way and simultaneously be updated by the Commission members.

Dray also updated the Commission regarding the additional files possibly held at the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Dray said that only a portion of the surveys from prior years was at the Public Library and that several hundred additional surveys were in the full collection at the MHC.

- Polites will discuss installation of Survey on Library computers with DeJonker-Berry.
- Polites and Burnell will inventory surveys currently on file at Library to isolate those that are held at the MHC and not at the Public Library.

Given that there was no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: Friday, May 11, 2007 9:00 AM

Action Items

- Dray to arrange for joint meeting with the Library trustees after the election
- Polites will discuss installation of Survey on Library computers with DeJonker-Berry.
- Polites and Burnell will inventory surveys currently on file at Library to isolate those that are held at the MHC and not at the Public Library. Dray will provide list of buildings currently on file at MHC.
- Dray will speak to Rev. Allison Hyder of the Unitarian-Universalist Church, who is also a member of the Nautilus Club with Mrs. Murchison, to see if Hyder could mediate a contact between the Commission and Mrs. Murchison.
- Priolo will begin collecting detailed information on the existing oral histories to create an inventory of them. Polites will contact the Monument. Burnell will visit Library.
- Dray will provide the Town Manager with a copy of the Historic Preservation Plan for Provincetown and invite her to the Commission meeting schedule for May 25th.
- Dray will also draft a letter welcoming the new Board of Selectmen and detailing the current priorities of the Commission to better bring awareness of preservation issues before the town administration.
- Dray will also discuss status of Town Hall with David Guertin and what level of rehabilitation is needed to correct current issues so the Commission has a better understanding of the situation.