

Shutesbury Historical Commission

Minutes – 5/26/2021

(approved 12/6/21)

Virtual Meeting

Meeting start: 6:00 pm.

Commissioners Present: Henry Geddes (Chair), Greg Caulton, Janice Stone, Karen Czerwonka, Miriam DeFant (Joined at 6:20)

Commissioners Absent: Ezzell Floranina, Mary Lou Conca

Others: Leslie Bracebridge, Irene Gates (Roving archivist), Andrew Chabot (AMP Solar), Michael Larkin (AMP Solar)

Roving Archivist from MHC: Irene Gates informed the SHC about her function to support Towns organize their historical collections, so they are accessible and safeguarded from environmental threats. Bracebridge explained the history of our archive as she is most familiar with the contents. Caulton volunteered to do the work of archiving but needs guidance. Gates mentioned two approaches depending on the size of the collection: Volunteers could handle a smaller collection, but a grant might be better suited for a larger one. Bracebridge thinks it is the former. Gates noted that she could provide guidelines to begin the process and referred to small grants for supplies and free digitizing resources through the Commonwealth. Next steps: A two hour visit to assess the collection on June 14th with Bracebridge and Caulton. DeFant mentioned that the Town Clerk should be notified about accessing the Old Town Hall. Stone asked whether Gates would prioritize materials. Gates will respond to our priorities.

Solar project updates. DeFant mentioned that the SHC had been developing a protocol for handling sensitive archaeological data. The proposal is under review by the Planning Board, so the HC cannot vote on it yet. At issue is whether the PB has the authority to review and assess the data in Executive Session or is it the purview of the SHC. According to Donna MacNicol (Town Lawyer), the authority rests with the PB, however DeFant insists that the process needs to include the SHC because it has the statutory authority to evaluate sensitive archaeological materials. She proposed that the SHC host an Executive Session with the applicant and possibly the PB to review the case. Prompted by DeFant, Chabot expressed willingness to do whatever the Town deems necessary to ensure the security of sensitive materials. He noted that AMP intends to contact Tribal Historical Preservation Officers to initiate the process, followed by a survey of the property. Chabot confirmed that AMP will contact Wampanoag THPO Bettina Washington and that she should attend any closed sessions to review archaeological materials. DeFant noted that there will be more discussion regarding the role of the PB before a protocol can be formalized. The PB must also resolve whether to have their own consultant in the process. The SHC can advise them on this, and they may want to consider Eva Gibavic along with Bettina Washington. Caulton noted that whoever is hired would need to consider colonial as well as pre-colonial relics. DeFant explained that the PB may opt for hiring a 53G consultant to help them evaluate a special permit application at the expense of the applicant. Geddes agreed to contact the PB about reviewing the privacy policy regarding archaeological materials. Chabot agreed to send copies of communication with the THPOs, including detailed maps of the five proposed

solar project sites to the HC. DeFant asked if AMP would also invite them for a site visit and consult with the research team. Chabot noted that this is an initial contact, and that AMP would be open to such visits upon request. Caulton pressed him on the idea that contact with the THPOs should be proactive so that they are encouraged to participate, and Chabot agreed to do so. He shared a sample of a letter on screen. EPA Construction General Permit or Army Corp of Engineers Permit may be required to address the wetlands and stormwater issues. Chabot noted it's too early to tell but that AMP is working on it. Larkin noted that Pratt South, West and Montague will require an Army Corp permit. DeFant suggested AMP review an SHC document outlining process for the Army Corps Section 106 consultation process. Larkin mentioned contacting MHC regarding Section 106 and recommended AMP consult with Gibavic for relevant information because MHC may not be responsive. Chabot asked for input on letters. Geddes urged that they contact the appropriate individuals. DeFant reminded Chabot and Larkin about SHC conducting site visits as soon as it is appropriate.

CPC Update: DeFant moved to nominate Floranina to represent the SHC at the CPC after being appointed by the SB. Caulton seconded the motion and motion passed unanimously. DeFant to contact Floranina about update. Bracebridge insisted that according to the CPC bylaw HC has the authority to appoint CPC representative. Geddes shared the CPC bylaw confirm her assertion and will inform the SB.

Historic markers update. Caulton had nothing to report. He and Conca continue to work on it and have spoken with Mary Anne Antonellis who has access to the community through the library. DeFant suggested doing a survey of the Town and other commissioners agreed. Caulton agreed to send DeFant content to be posted on Town website. Bracebridge advised on past public response to past initiatives to create a Historic District with MHC. SHC would propose it and post it at Town meeting so no need to consult individual property owners. Another approach is to invite individuals to see if they want the property on the National Register. Historic District is a major undertaking according to Bracebridge. DeFant suggested starting with the center of Town and consult with individual owners.

South Brook Conservation Area (SBCA) update. DeFant noted that maps should be updated to account for potential Indigenous/colonial relics and arrange for their preservation. The concern is that it be done before a proposed mountain biking trail moves through the various Town committees. Bikes and all-terrain vehicles are known to damage the trails. She proposed a site visit by HC volunteers with support from experts like Eva Gibavic, being mindful that the Tribes would be final authority. Commissioners agreed to schedule a joint HC/ ConCom field trip to gather mapping data and deal with historic and wetlands issues (4 June). Bracebridge, who was witnessed the original purchase of the property, insisted that the Town bought the SBCA to protect it, not to turn it into a recreation site.

Geddes moved to adjourn. DeFant seconded. Approved by unanimous vote.
Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Documents Used:

- CPC Bylaw

- AMP letters to Tribal representative

Respectfully submitted by Henry Geddes, Chair, 12/05/21