

Minutes of Nantucket Historical Commission Meeting – September 17th, 2021

Commissioners Present: Hillary Rayport (Chair), Angus Macleod (Vice Chair), David Silver (Secretary) Mickey Rowland, Georgia Raysman, Clement Durkes, Tom Montgomery, and Barbara White.

Staff: Holly Backus

Guests: Dawn Holdgate, Mary Bergman, Kadeem McCarthy, Kim Rose, and Anne Dewez.

The meeting was called to order via zoom with a quorum present.

1.) Public Comment: N/A

2.) Approval of July Minutes

Motion to approve minutes of July minutes 2021, Meeting: Tom

Second: Angus

All in favor via roll call

3.) Announcements

Select Board Update set for October 20th:

This will be a chance for the Commission to ask for feedback and suggestions from the select board. Also, we will give us the chance to update the public in regard to what we have been working on and what we have accomplished this year.

Joint meeting with the HDC:

November 12th from 1-3 pm. At the direction of the NHC given in the August meeting, a letter that Angus and Hillary prepared to the HDC was circulated by Holly to HDC members (in packet). We hope to have a pre-meeting to discuss topics and agenda items.

4.) Staff Update

NPT had a second ‘Rescuing History’ conference. Holly represented the HDC and commented on solar guidelines. Mary Bergman was present as well and confirmed that the recorded conference is available online.

MHC Island Wide Survey Project: Stephen Welch and Hillary and Holly are reviewing the response to the RFQ. Public Archeology Lab is the consultant that responded to the RFQ – they

are a well-resourced and experienced firm and we expect to accept their application. Holly will ask the Select Board to accept the contract, and then the survey can get started.

Educational Opportunities for Commissioners:

Holly announced some educational activities Commissioners might be interested in. Introduction to Preservation Law and Easements on September 28th

State Conference for Preservation MASS September 23rd and 24th

Hillary directed the Commissioners to the letter in the packet, that was sent in support of the application for State Historic Tax Credits for 2 Mayflower Circle: The Park Service decided that this was a contributing structure. We decided that when we were asked that we would support the ruling, but also gave comments on some defining characteristics that we wanted to see restored.

The letter was challenging to write because it is important to convey that the NHC does not support moving structures except as a last resort of preservation. We had hoped to see more of the contributing features of the structure restored under the application, but the owner is choosing not to restore them.

As directed at the August meeting, Hillary, Georgia and Mickey prepared a CPA grant request for a restoration and rehabilitation plan for Main Street. The grant is in the hands of the CPC.

Motion to formally accept the grant application: Tom

Angus: Second

All in favor via roll call.

The Commissioners discussed various sidewalks repaired in the downtown area. We support accessible improvements, but we want to make sure that the repairs are done properly without sacrificing the historical integrity of our sidewalks and curbs. Holly explained to the Commission that this work would involve removing bricks that are not flush with the sidewalk and placing them back for purpose of accessibility. This is standard maintenance and is welcome.

Commissioners feel satisfied that Erika will keep Holly informed regarding any historical concerns. Mickey, representing the Commission on Disability, will let us know if there are any further concerns that he would like to share with the Commission.

David and Hillary have been working with Marion Conley and Anita Hill (trainer) to develop the course on 'Selling Historic Homes'. The prospective date is October 27. Anita Hill wants Hillary to help teach during the course so we are hoping to move the course to the 28th so that Hillary can participate. The course should cover everything we are concerned about as well as HTC's.

We are moving forward with the idea that the course will be offered via Zoom. Hopefully, we can have it recorded so that the public can benefit as well as the realtor community.

The Commissioners discussed possible actions at Annual Town Meeting.

1.) Demolition Delay for preferably preserved structures.

Mary Bergman wrote a bylaw proposing a demolition delay, but it was not called at the 2020 ATM. This is something that we should discuss as a Commission as one of our primary concerns is the demolition of historic structures. One of the things that we are doing to help preserve these structures stems from our survey work. Is there more that we can do?

Discussion: Can this be defined? “Partial demolition” vs. “total demolition”. The Town of New Bedford considers window removal to be a “demolition”. Nantucket has a demolition delay law for the purposes of housing affordability, re-use, and waste mitigation. Paul Murphy is the Town building inspector.

Mary Bergman said her concern is there is not currently a well defined process at the HDC for determining significance of structures and whether structures should be preferably preserved. Would it be helpful to the HDC to have, in our town code, a more robust definition of what demolition is?

Since Nantucket has demolition delay as part of the zoning code, can we attach the concept that ‘preferably preserved’ also must be determined? Would affordable housing advocates appreciate extending the period of demo delay for re-use to longer than 60 days? Per some housing experts, ~6 months is the appropriate term to relocate a house. The 30-day delay does not provide a large enough window to adequately relocate the structure. Can we standardize this process, and is this something that we can discuss with the HDC?

General consensus is that this is of interest and a next step is to discuss it with the HDC.

2.) Spas in the OHD/SOH

Anne Dewez joined the meeting to discuss the issue of pools and spas with the Commission. What role, if any, should our Commission play in supporting adjustments to the definition of a pool and the definition of a spa?

History: In 2011, voters banned pools in the Historic Districts. But in 2017, a definition of a spa was proposed at Special Town Meeting and developed by the Planning Board. Spa was not banned as a use, so now we are seeing spas going in frequently in the Historic Districts. The definition of Spa is anything less than 150 square feet of surface area. It’s a very large spa. Additionally, a swimming pool is defined as having 1000 gallons of water or more, but gallonage is missing from the definition of Spa.

Why was this change proposed? What did the Planning Board want to accomplish regarding this issue? There are no minutes posted in the archive for the planning board meetings discussing their Special Town Meeting warrants.

The consensus of the Commission was that the definition of “spas” is not aligned with pools and is too large. Furthermore, that Spas create problems in the Historic Districts, because of the difficulty screening them and how that impacts the landscape and the neighborhoods. All commissioners present were in agreement that the NHC should support a limit on Spas in the Historic District, similar to the way NHC supported the Planning Board’s ban on pools in R1 at 2021 ATM.

10.) Other Business

The preservation function needs more staff. Holly advised that there are vital roles in this Town that need to be filled prior to a discussion of a ‘preservation staffing shortage’ though we understand that there still may be a shortage, nonetheless. We are experiencing this all over the country in a lot of facets of local government and understand these are difficult times. Can we discuss this with the select board rather than offering a blanket comment on staffing?

Motion to adjourn: Angus

All in favor via roll call

~meeting adjourned~