

*Aug 08 2023 2:08 pm***Fitchburg Historical Commission**

Meeting Minutes for the Fitchburg Historical Commission Hybrid Meeting on June 29, 2023, at 3:00 P.M.

Members Present: Keith Chenot, Don Ostrowski, Ellen DiGeronimo, Charles Sternaimolo, and Andrew Lipasti

Members Absent: none

Meeting Guests: none

Chair Keith Chenot called the meeting to order at 3:10pm and noted a quorum was present.

1. Public comment period: None

2. Review and approve minutes of the May 25, 2023, meeting:

Ellen made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Don. The motion was approved unanimously by members present.

3. Discussion of the visual impact of solar “farms” in rural and scenic landscapes:

Keith noted a comment from Sam Blair regarding solar farms and an issue of visual quality of the solar farm on the surrounding landscape. Zoning laws may be getting reviewed regarding the solar farms.

4. Update of Monument Park repairs:

We discussed the restoration repairs and updates for Monument Park. Keith mentioned that our Commission will help coordinate and review the repairs. We got a recommendation from the Art Museum to use an exterior monument specialist for renovations on the statues.

5. Update on historic building demolition delay:

Don noted in our meeting with the Historical Society that they suggested to point out cities in Massachusetts that have a demolition delay ordinance. Keith mentioned that he joined with Don and Ellen and they met with Liz Murphy and Kim LeBlanc from the Community Development Office to discuss the idea for a historic building demolition delay in Fitchburg. It was noted in this meeting that the process of a demolition delay could be a long learning process by city officials.

In other comments Don noted that the Massachusetts Historical Commission is in favor of demolition delay. He also said that tourism is a good revenue generator and Fitchburg has historic places to promote. Ellen added that we need conversations with historic building owners.

Keith talked about Fitchburg being a “Gateway City,” and that we need to find out more about this topic and how other cities use demolition delay. It would be good to have support from the Mayor, the Community Development Office, and the Building Commissioner. Keith will look at inviting Mark Barbadoro, Building Commissioner, to one of our meetings to have a discussion on demolition delay.

6. Update on appreciation and preservation of historic stone walls and structures:

Don mentioned that Keith made an excellent argument for stone wall preservation during the meeting they had with the Community Development Office. Keith said that this is an awareness and appreciation issue. He suggested that Don’s document on stone wall preservation should be

updated to include public awareness, to add some stone wall photos, and to get the file on the Historical Commission website. We need to promote the pride we have in our stone structures, and think about how we can present this item to the city council.

7. Update on Historic Districts information brochure/map information guide, signage, web posting and FSU faculty-led student project coordination ongoing for fall/spring 2021/2022 and 2022/2023:

Keith noted this information guide is getting final updates and edits, and the addition of QR codes for the online access to more information. He has sent out a draft version of the brochure for review, and noted we may need help with printing them.

8. Wallace Building entry stones reuse – “temporarily” stored in FRA space:

There are no specific updates at this time.

9. Historic Marker update:

We have a new historic marker request from the owner of the Drury Building at the corner of Main and Blossom Streets. There are still some outstanding requests from the previous marker maker that need refunding. The owners would have to reapply for a new marker.

The historic marker brochures have been printed by the Community Development office. Andy will be getting the brochures from that office and will distribute them to the Historical Society, City Hall, the Library, and the Chamber of Commerce on South St. Andy noted there will be a small write-up regarding the markers in the next Historical Society newsletter.

10. Project to document and share Main Street building histories, historic districts, tax credit, and other restoration/reuse incentives:

There are no specific updates at this time.

11. Commission membership vacancies update:

We are looking for nominations for the two Commission vacancies. This is an ongoing item.

12. New business:

Andy noted there is a new historical plaque on the fence at the corner of Blossom and Crescent Streets. The plaque text notes that corner as being a spot that housed one of the early town hall buildings in Fitchburg.

13. Next meeting:

Historical Commission Meeting: July 27, 2023, 3:00 PM, City Hall Room 101A and Zoom hybrid.

14. Adjournment:

Charles made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Andy. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 4:45pm.

Submitted by Andrew Lipasti, Secretary, Fitchburg Historical Commission