

Ashfield Historical Commission
Meeting
Thursday, February 25, 2010

Present: Steve Gougeon, Mollie Babize, Tristan Romer, Nancy Garvin.
public: Lester Garvin, Jennifer Williams

Meeting commenced at 7:38 pm

Minutes

Minutes of 28 January 2010 were approved, with corrections as noted by Nancy.

Spruce Corner School house:

Tristan and Gerard McGovern met with Sonam Lama, who has agreed to help out rebuilding the stone foundation of the schoolhouse in summer 2010. Barry Nye rebuilt the chimney in January, paid for out of the neighborhood fund for the schoolhouse. One slate in the roof was replaced, but more needs to be done: sills, door sills, some posts at the rear that are floating, and grading to redirect runoff that pools along the foundation. Tristan mentioned the wooden flooring, currently covered by a sheet of linoleum, could be nicely restored at some point. In addition, off-road parking should probably be provided, but the tiny lot and state highway present challenges in this regard.

In previous years, craft fairs have been held there as a fund-raiser for maintaining the schoolhouse. The Commission discussed a possible tour of all the neighborhood schoolhouses (most of which have been converted to residential use, and would be an exterior tour only), with information about the neighborhood school districts, ending up with an ice cream social at the Spruce Corner schoolhouse. This could be a fun and effective way to raise funds for the repairs. Perhaps a series (monthly, during good weather?) of two-hour tours, sponsored jointly by the Historical Commission and Historic Society, could (re)introduce residents to a number of historic features, such as the stone bridge and various cemeteries, with a talk about its significance to the community.

Commission members will bring suggestions of possible sites to the next meeting.

Barn Tour

Mollie received a message from Jack Sobon saying he is very interested in leading another tour of Ashfield's historic barns this year. Preceding the tour, he would like to visit barns he didn't have a chance to study in 2007. Following some discussion of possible barns to include (those owned by Phyllis Kirkpatrick, the Kelly farm, Gloria Pacosa, Willie Gray, Steve & Victoria Wirth [formerly Doyles' barn], Bryants'), the Commission agreed to bring suggestions to the next meeting. Mollie will look for the binders containing photographs of barns she and Gerard and John Baldwin took and bring them along as well. Gerard may have a set as well.

WMECO pole replacement

Nancy brought the binder (sent to the Conservation Commission) which shows the location of two poles in Ashfield being replaced. Both have wetland issues, but no apparent impact on historic resources. The window for public comment has passed, in any case.

Community Preservation Act

Wendy Sweetser of the Highland Communities Initiative spoke at the Select Board meeting on February 17th and handed out informational sheets listing what other communities have done with CPA funds, and also the tax implications for homes in Ashfield. There are many historic properties that would benefit from this fund, if passed by Ashfield voters (such as repairs to the Spruce Corner schoolhouse, Town Hall energy retrofit and accessibility, the Community Hall/Grange, and privately owned properties such as making the Inn at Norton Hill accessible). However, there needs to be a good deal of public education about its merits before bringing it to a vote.

The Commission decided to invite members of the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Agricultural Commission, Parks Commission and Select Board to our next meeting March 25th to discuss a strategy for getting this passed. Steve will invite them; Mollie will obtain more informational sheets from Wendy.

Inn at Norton Hill

No additional action, as Nan has not spoken again with any member of the Commission.

Historic Inventories

Nancy is very interested in updating the inventories on file, and also identifying those homes that now qualify (are more than 50 years old). Chris Skelly of the Massachusetts Historical Commission sent an inventory data base, which is on the MHC website and can be updated by us at any time.

Email Policy

A new town policy concerning the use of emails among public employees, volunteers and appointed officials was handed out to each member. We are to read these and observe them! In brief, emails related to Commission business are considered public records and as such are subject to Open Meeting Law requirements, meaning they must be filed with the town.

Next meeting:

The Commission will meet again Thursday, March 25, 2010, 7:30 pm

Meeting adjourned at 8:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Mollie Babize.