

Minutes of Nantucket Historical Commission Meeting – March 19th, 2021

Establishment of Quorum

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

Guests: Anne Kuszpa (Housing Nantucket), Mary Bergman (Nantucket Preservation Trust), and Dawn Holdgate (Select Board Liaison)

Staff: Holly Backus

The meeting was called to order with a quorum present.

3.) Public Comment: N/A

Motion to approve minutes of February 19th, 2021 Meeting: Tom

Second: Angus

All in favor via roll call

4. Announcements

5. Preservation Sustainability and Livability

Discussion of Preservation Sustainability/Livability

At the February 19th 2021 meeting, the NHC decided to explore sustainability themes in preservation:

- Salvage of historic building parts
- Salvage of historic structures that have been approved for demolition by HDC
- Older homes approved for demolition by HDC; not “contributing” but are nice places to live
- Exercising good citizenship through keeping materials out of landfills

Key issues:

- Size of problem – how much demolition – interior, partial, and whole house?
- Size of opportunity
 - o Salvage and Reuse potential
 - o Waste stream savings to Town
- Obstacles to success
 - o Storage
 - o Staffing
 - o Funding
 - o Other logistics: time, incentives

Anne Kuszpa on building re-use:

Anne is the executive director of Housing Nantucket. Private non-profit founded in 1994.

Housing Nantucket's Mission: Preserve and provide equitable housing solutions for year-round residents.

Affordable Rental Program: ~38 rental properties scattered around the island many of which were created through their 'house recycling program'. A historic structure gets donated, Housing Nantucket receives grants/raises funds to relocate the structure, uses salvaged materials to piece together the structures. Then they rent at below-market costs to in-need island residents.

Common Materials: Tiles, toilets, water heaters, appliances, doors.

Discussion: What types of buildings are more/less desirable? Housing Nantucket is limited with storage space and cannot accept all of the things they used to (historic doors, out-houses, windows, etc.)

Proposal: Can we develop a business plan to take this project on? Dominic Golding (faculty contact for Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) students) was enthusiastic about assisting/facilitating this project. There is a lot of work/research to be done and the students would be invaluable.

Next steps: prepare a proposal for Golding's consideration – needed by May. Student teams will be assigned in August and they come to the island to work in October. Projects are delivered in December.

Discussion continued: Using assistance from WPI is a great idea and would be beneficial for the Town. The DPW recycling coordinator has been working on this topic internally as well. Commission was very receptive to this idea and expressed enthusiasm behind it.

Clement: Can we incentivize people to recycle homes/materials? Are people aware that Housing Nantucket has a lot of items that might be of use to builders/homeowners?

Anne: HN does not have a lot of staff and the facility/basement is more "word-of-mouth"

Observations: Tax credits for historic recycling is not financially motivating to all buyers. Can we manufacture some financial motivation (reference town of Lexington)?

Lexington Example: At their Town Meeting, the citizens of Lexington, MA passed a 'surcharge on demolitions'. It is calculated on a square-foot basis, and creates a fund for affordable housing. They are experiencing a lot of gentrification and this was a creative solution to combat the ever-changing fabric of the town.

Relevance to Nantucket: If Nantucket instituted a similar 'surcharge on demolitions', might it be possible to offer a 'surcharge waiver' to incentive salvaging/recycling of historic homes? Float this idea to WPI students as a possible solution.

Project Concerns and Further Discussion:

Dawn: Thinks that this would be a worthy project. Concerns about bandwidth to institute something like this. Also concerns about land-use/location. Lead paint issues in historic homes as well. Open to talk to Libby about this further and would need collaboration from a few town departments. NHC should be focused on the historic aspects.

Anne: Has worked with WPI before. It is important to have realistic expectations of the students. They are not consultants and it requires a lot of time and shepherding. Maybe re-thinking the 'take-it-or-leave-it' could be part of the WPI students' business plan. Also expressed that HN would host these students.

Dawn: Interest from waste management companies and others who want to take over the landfill contract (which expires in 2025). Would be good to incorporate something like this now to add to their proposal.

Angus: We need space on Nantucket to have a facility for recyclable building materials. Incorporating this into the land-fill facility is a great day.

Path Forward: Get a proposal to Dominic.

Possible Barriers to Success/Questions: Guidance needed from select board and Town Manager. What is the right way to do this? How can we make this island-wide? Should we make this island-wide? Devising the best direction to go. Can we ask Dominic what his thoughts are?

Single-prong approach, or multiple-prong approach (meaning, is this a NHC project, or do other groups want to get involved?). Ultimately it is up to WPI whether they wish to work on this.

Motion for Hillary to work with Holly and Anne to develop what Dominic needs in terms of a proposal (in coordination with Town Manager): Angus M.

Second: Georgia R.

All in favor via roll call

6. Survey Grant Approved

We appreciate the support of the Town. This is such great news and we are thrilled to be kicking off and island-wide survey of our historic structures. It is long overdue and we are proud of our Commission. We received the third largest grant in the past few years. They gave us 22.5k, 2.5k more than we applied for.

Holly: We have documents that Dawn H. to sign. Once we receive the grant package from MHC, we will go over the specifics and creating an RFP as part of the procurement process.

Next Steps: Wait to hear from MHC and get RFP ready ASAP to lock in a quality/experienced consultant.

7. Sidewalk Review

We sent a letter to MHC regarding the sidewalks (in packet). The Phelan Family owns the most important parcel for this project. They have been in touch with us and the Tree Advisory Committee will be working with the Phelan's to devise the best path while retaining the trees.

We have offered to continue to help and support them. We hope for a positive outcome on this project.

8. Select Board Updates on Projects: We, as a Commission, unanimously feel as if the NHC has not been adequately represented in the project plans, and there has been little to no acknowledgment of the recommendations and substantial research on historic pavement. Next week's Select Board meeting will include extensive updates on projects that will renovate historic sidewalks, and yet there is no policy in place. It has been almost two years since this was promised. Hillary is concerned that the DPW director is refusing to work with her, and this has become an obstacle.

Discussion: We want to be effective and be able to work with the DPW, Town Admin and the select board.

Dawn: It may be helpful if different board members are tasked with different projects so that other voices from the Commissioners are being heard too.

Hilary: We would love technical feedback from the Town on both reports. There are two parts:
1.) We had a qualified preservation engineer offer recommendations and standards of treatment. He also took part in a walking tour with the DPW director and other NHC Commissioners.
2.) Also, our recommendations regarding preservation planning (I.e., what steps need to be taken to preserve street artifacts. Where do they go and how should they be treated)?

Holly: As far as the sidewalk policy is concerned... it is being looked over by town admin and Libby is in the process of reviewing it and will be in touch.

(Dawn Hill Holdgate left the meeting)

Pleasant, Sparks and Williams: Our comments have not been referenced in the Select Board's agenda. No public meetings or information sessions have been held even though BETA's (project consultant) proposal has place holders for public meetings. None have occurred to-date.

9. Sewer Main Project:

The proposed project has a sewer line running all the way through town. We support these projects and have no interest in holding up the sewer main project, but we hope that historical aspects can be considered (the law requires historic material be acknowledged and maximum efforts be made to avoid adverse effects).

We have been told that we would be advised about the project and that has not happened. MHC has reviewed PNF (project notification form) the 40% plan (the portion outside the town, not inside the town). The Commission wants to make sure these projects are taking into account the historic fabric and street artifacts that might be in jeopardy.

Discussion: In the interest of bringing a new voice to the discussion with the Town, Angus volunteered to make a statement.

The sewer main project outside of town that has been reviewed by MHC and determined there is no adverse effect. However, the select board will be reviewing this project under the assumption that there are no concerns on the sewer main project. We have only received information from the MHC about the portion outside of town. We have not been notified about the portion in-town, regarding potential adverse effect. The Commission should contact the MHC for more information and make concerns known to Sewer Department, Select Board.

Path Forward: What can we do to protect our National Historic Landmark? We have the opportunity to offer feedback to the select board. What would be appropriate to do/say at the next select board meeting? Can we read a letter? Should we nominate someone, other than Hillary, to read the letter? We need to figure out the best way to articulate our frustration either during public comment, or to call an NHC meeting to order during the SB's important Wednesday meeting.

Holly: Has not been advised/updated on the sidewalk construction downtown, and is subsequently concerned. The working group has not met since summer 2019, and if NHC are to say something at the SB meeting, it should be in regard to the sidewalks at the waterfront.

Hillary: Can we show depth and breadth of Commission to have each Commissioner in leadership roles? Who would be best to articulate our concerns/frustrations to SB?

Angus: We should all support Hillary, and each other. Angus has volunteered to be a spokesperson for the Commission at the SB meeting. Tom agreed that we should vocalize our frustration to SB and unite as a Commission so our voice is louder.

Mickey: We do not want to all get in front of the SB and speak. If we are all there it may be a more effective means of showing our support. As many Commissioners should plan to attend Wednesday's meeting.

Motion to post a meeting of the NHC to coincide with next week's Select Board meeting. Have letter drafted (by Hillary and Angus) and presented at the next meeting of the select board. Hillary will ask Dawn what/when the most appropriate time/forum to read our letter is: Angus

Second: Tom

All in favor via roll call

10. Other Business

Recommendations for to the HDC regarding Demolition

- a. Mickey and Ben want to focus on demolitions. Once a building is gone, there is nothing we can do about it. We want our focus here

- b. The work that the pending surveys will do will help provide the HDC with accurate information, so we already have the ball rolling on this.
- c. Maybe we can help devise a new application for demolition. Looking at what other towns require and some other case studies.
- d. Outreach to other Commissions around the state. Process regarding the application.
- e. Defining demotions (partial, total, etc.)
- f. 'Timing is everything' – what can we do to adjust expand timeline? Reconsideration of policy.

Historic Tax Credits

Update: David and Hillary are working with NARED to offer a Continuing Education class for Realtors on Nantucket. This project is off the ground and a project plan is in the works.

Small/Revolving Loan Fund: The town of Arlington has small loan fund. The Town got a community development block grant from HUD in the 80's to start a private loan fund. \$1500-\$15k at 50% of prime to private owners of historic buildings to do replacements (windows, porches, chimney, etc.) Note: Not everyone who owns a historic home has the wherewithal to do this work themselves.

Comments:

Georgia: A lot of people who live in older homes are not the richest Nantucketer's that we may think of. If we established a revolving loan fund to help owners keep their homes in character and offer. There is still a need for something like this on Nantucket

Concept: Offer small loans at low interest rates to make preservation projects on historic homes more affordable and accessible. We cannot use CPC funds for this, so we would likely have to raise funds privately. There is a lot of deferred maintenance on these historic homes that may push them up the list for demolition.

Path Forward: The goal is to see more structures preserved and we are trying to develop a portfolio of incentives for people to use financial tools to preserve their homes/businesses.

Motion to adjourn: Angus

Second: Georgia

All in favor via roll call