**DRAFT**

Groton Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

April 12, 2023

Groton Town Hall

7:00 PM

Attending: Historical Commissioners Aubrey Theall, Micheal LaTerz, Bob Degroot, Joshua Vollmar

Guests: Chip Detwiller, Anna Eliot

Aubrey Theall called the meeting to order at 7pm. Order of discussion was altered from the agenda as Bob DeGroot was not able to arrive until a few minutes after 7pm (4 members required for a quorum and there were various votes required).

**Inventory of Historic Assets:** Michael Danti continues to be in Iraq on an archeological dig, tabled until his return.

**Old Meetinghouse Updates:** Allen King was unable to attend due to personal obligations, no update beyond the fact that window work is visibly underway. Tabled until Allen is next able to join.

**Historic Commission web page update:** Michael LaTerz has worked with the Town's IT department to update the Historical Commissions sub-page on the town's web page, with good results. Future phases will add more content. Thanks to Michael for this effort.

**Historic Commission files**: Michael LaTerz is working with Joshua Vollmar to document as time permits.

**Historical Commission Fundraising:** There was a conceptual discussion of using Historical Commission to raise funds for Prescott House. Aubrey has discussed with Mark Haddad, Town has no objection and has an account we can use to deposit funds to. There is precedent as well. Commission would consider with some reservation but would require a future vote.

**Prescott House Discussion:** Aubrey Theall related detail of a meeting with Gary Shepherd, whose firm is constructing the new Groton Hill Music Center. A letter from Mr. Shepherd was read into the minutes (attached as Appendix A). GHM would like to conduct limited demolition per Mr. Shepherd. This would include a portion of the existing barn deemed structurally unsound, the option of demolishing a non-historical cape style house on the property and potentially partial demolition of some of the newer portions of the Prescott House, perhaps with an agreement that the historical portions remain standing for some (as yet undetermined) additional period.

There has been an outreach to Groton School through Mark Haddad (Town Manager) to see if they have interest in relocating the house to campus, per the suggestion of former Select Board Member Jack Petropoulos. Later learned Groton School was not willing to take a meeting.

Discussion of a real estate listing by local Realtor Cheryl King. Would need to raise between $750-2,100 for an ad in Antiques Home Magazine. Chip Detwiller and Anna Eliot expressed a preference to try to preserve the house on site. Joshua Vollmar pointed out that we may need to work on parallel paths owing to time constraints.

Discussion of Groton Hill Music's application for a demolition permit for 170 Old Ayer Rd. (on file with Building Inspector). Demolition delay bylaw requires the Historical Commission to make a determination as to historical significance. Property was determined to be historically significant by unanimous vote of the Historical Commission for the purposes of the demolition delay bylaw. The Building inspector will be notified in writing.

The vote as to historical significance triggers the need to hold a public hearing. Logistics were discussed. Public hearing was set for 5/3/23.

**Discussion of the Deluxe Corp. site redevelopment:** Discussion of the viewshed from Common Street vs. Main Street prompted by Joshua Vollmar. The proposed 4 story buildings are presently proposed to be situated toward the rear of the parcel (closer to Common St.) to reduce visibility from Main St., however Main St. is significantly developed in this area. Common St. is notable for its rural, agricultural nature. Joshua Vollmar agreed to prepare a letter to the Zoning Board suggesting that it would be preferable to not have the buildings be visible from Common St.

**Discussion of 68 Boston Road & 599 Lowell Road, public hearings posted by Conservation Commission in the Groton Herald related to re-development**: Questions was asked at what point is the Historical Commission notified of applications for demolition. Aubrey Theall to request Building Inspector send us all applications for demo permits as Assessor database isn't always reliable in terms of age of structures. Subsequent to the meeting this request was made.

**New member recruiting, filling Vice Chair and Secretary roles**. Aubrey Theall reached out to Erin Haugen, has not received a response. Aubrey to attempt to contact Angela Trowbridge who attended a prior meeting.

**Open Meeting Law Reminder:**, avoiding accidental "meetings" by creating a quorum through "Reply All" emails.

**Minutes from last meeting**: Were accepted by unanimous vote.

Meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 8:55pm.

**Appendix A**

**Email to Aubrey Theall from Gary Shepherd (read into minutes at meeting):**

Aubrey.

Thank you for reaching out and also for meeting with me on the site of 170 Old Ayer Rd Groton, Prescott House March 2,2023. As we discussed the options that may work for mutual benefit of all those involved in the property and the community interest of preservation. Groton Hill has and continues to be interested in being a good neighbor while contribution to their mission and goals of the organization remains paramount.

I have been and remain the point of contact for the development of this location and even though Groton Hill Music owns this property this is more complicated with the different tiers of territory everyone tries to maintain in the overall objective to deliver a community music center for the benefit of all. This however may not and probably will not make everyone happy. That said. We are committed to doing our part to exhaust the options to obtain these goals.

After much discussion through the development process, we have concluded that there is no place for the current Prescott house structure on that property. I am willing to listen to suggestions as to what will be mutually beneficial to the Town of Groton. I did apply and have held back on the demolition process since our building permit application during the development some 7 years ago, while community chatter has rattled around with no real conversation so here, we are.1 We would like to remove the old barn with exception to the newest and most structural sound section of the old barn. 2 have the option to remove the single-family white cape behind the barn.  3 ultimately see the Prescott house removed from the site in whatever manner makes most practical sense. You and I discussed many options of how to task that and nothing is off the table for discussion while understanding liability and foot traffic concerns are of the highest priority. We could cut the new section off the house while researching potential options or anything else only limited by our imagination. To be clear this cannot be a place of public use or access, this is a buffer for the music center. This has been long since talked about and now we are here. I look forward to hearing the opinion of your board.

Gary Shepherd