Groton Historical Commission- Agenda

January 22, 2025

7pm – Groton Town Hall

1. Meeting was called to order by the Chair at 7:01pm. Jennifer Rand from the Historic District Commission and Jennifer Doherty from the Massachusetts Historical Commission in attendance and in addition to the Chair Commissioners Joshua Vollmar, Michael Danti, Thomas Horsman, Gus Widmayer and Richard Nason in attendance.
2. December minutes were accepted as presented by unanimous vote.
3. There was a discussion of Groton's demolition delay bylaw and possible enhancements thereto. Joshua Vollmar presented some highlights of a draft revised bylaw he is working on which is based on similar bylaws in MA (Danvers, Dunstable) as well as Mass Historical Commission's model bylaw. The Prescott House situation exposed a loophole in the existing demo delay bylaw which is to offer a historic structure to be moved (vs. putting the structure and underlying land on offer) as a means of satisfying the bylaws requirement of making a good faith effort to sell the historic structure in question. Town Counsel has opined that this concept is allowable under the law. Jennifer Doherty from MHC participated in the discussion. She suggested that the Historical Commission consider what happens if the terms of the bylaw are not met, does this create an indefinite delay? The bylaw is unclear on this. She also suggested that the Historical Commission might pursue an amendment to Groton's zoning bylaws to allow the Zoning Board to approve non-conforming lots in situations where sub-dividing a parcel could save a historic structure and mentioned that this has been done in other towns. She also mentioned that a few communities have gone to 24 month delays (Groton has an 18 month delay).
4. Historical monuments/markers discussion. There was a discussion of cleaning the Prescott Monument, Michael Danti was receptive and will evaluate.
5. FY25 funded CPC project updates:
   1. Bancroft Castle- Partial report is in hand. Project should be closed out soon.
   2. Historical mile marker project. Missing marker has been located! Work will move forward when the ground thaws.
6. FY26 CPC funding cycle application update:
   1. Draft CPC application for Bancroft Castle was submitted 1/14/25.
7. Historical Plaque Program.
   1. Discussion of 9-11 Elm St., 193 Chicopee Row historic plaque applications (Bob & Rhonda Mullins). Applications were approved as presented by unanimous vote.
   2. Sign bylaw revisions, need to attend a future Sign Committee meeting.
8. Annual report discussion. Approved by unanimous vote.
9. Request for letters of support for CPC grant applications:
   1. Groton History Center. Condition improvements to the History Center's attic where Groton related historical items are stored. Unanimously approved.
   2. Groton Conservation Commission. There was a discussion of whether or not it was appropriate for HistComm to support ConComm's land acquisition/preservation efforts. A vote was taken to provide a letter of support for ConComm's land acquisitions to the extent they help preserve Groton's historical landscapes and viewsheds. Vote was 5-1 in favor with Richard Nason opposed. Richard expressed opposition based on removal of properties from the tax roll when acquired by ConComm.
10. Digital storage project in cooperation with the Groton Public Library. Gus Widmayer to discuss with Vanessa Abraham from the Library. We will need to find an alternative source of funding as CPC cannot fund.
11. Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of the meeting.

* There was a discussion of closer cooperation with the Historic District Commission which was represented by Jennifer Rand. The two entities have had relatively little engagement in recent years. It appears both Commissions are receptive to working more closely together. A delegate from HistComm will attend an upcoming HDC meeting.
* Richard Nason raised the issue of archeological interest in the Prescott House site. While there is interest and likely would be items of interest that could be excavated there would be a need for meaningful funding and also permission from Groton Hill Music. Without a likely source of funding seeking GHM's approval is somewhat moot. Michael Danti suggested that so long as the site of the house is going to remain in a green field state what lies in the ground will remain there for future archeologists.

1. New business (none).
2. Adjourn.