Groton Historical Commission- Minutes

August 13, 2025

7pm – Groton Town Hall

1. Aubrey Theall called the meeting to order at 7pm. Commissioners Tom Horsman, Joshua Vollmar, Amanda Chang and Richard Nason in attendance. From the public Bruce Easom, Eleanor Gavazzi, Jenny Chang, Judy Anderson, Jack Parker and Don Black attending
2. The Chair moved historical markers/monuments up in the agenda to accommodate some of our guests. Mr. Black from the Old Burying Ground Commission expressed unhappiness with the fact that the Historical Commission had discussed the possible need for preservation work at the Old Burying Ground without first addressing with the Old Burying Ground Commission. Ms. Gavazzi (also of the Old Burying Ground Commission) also expressed displeasure. Aubrey Theall stated that this appears to be a mis-understanding and that HistComm's intentions are friendly. It was agreed that Old Burying Ground Commission should manage its own affairs. Historical Commission is willing to help if requested.

Also related to the topic Joshua Vollmar related that he and Jim Derosiers are working on a pilot program to install historical signage at sites connected to Destination Groton's historical walking tour of Groton. It will be necessary to first gain approval from several Town entities including the Sign Committee, Historic Districts Commission and possibly the Planning Board. The Chair will reach out to the Town Manager to determine what needs to be done.

1. July minutes were accepted as presented by unanimous vote.
2. Update on use of AI in the future to record meetings, draft minutes. The Chair reported that the donation check from the Changs has been given to the Town Manager and it is hoped that we will soon have the software subscription.
3. Press release re: Prescott House preservation efforts was submitted to the Town Manager. Press release has been issued. Joshua Vollmar suggested posting it to social media.
4. Open FY25 funded CPC project updates:
   1. Historical mile marker project. Richard Nason reported that the new mile marker has been installed on Boston Road and showed a photograph. It looks excellent. The mile marker on Old Ayer was found not to have been toppled by a plow but to have toppled due to unstable ground conditions owing to a nearby brook. The marker itself has been found to be very large and heavy. It has been taken off site to be cleaned and will be returned and re-installed shortly. It may be moved a very short distance to more stable ground if the Highway Department is agreeable.
5. FY26 funded CPC project updates:
   1. Bancroft Castle. Chair reports that the grant and clawback agreement is being negotiated and that the engineer is preparing a proposal to draft bid specs and consult during the project.
   2. Prescott School is moving along with their renovations and expect an early fall completion.
   3. History Center is moving along with their project.
   4. Williams Barn. Bruce Easom joined on behalf of the Williams Barn Committee seeking help from Historical Commission. He related that the CPC proposal did not include obtaining bid specs from a qualified engineer. While there is a $20k contingency this may not be enough to cover the added costs. If not then some work will be cut from the project. The priority is repair of a failing foundation wall. The Chair advised that the work should follow the Secretary of the Interior's standards for the treatment of historic properties. Michael Danti is our resident expert in masonry conservation (was not able to attend tonight), we will see if he is able to further advise.
6. Updates regarding digital storage project in cooperation with the Groton Public Library. No update.
7. Discussion of revisiting metal detector bylaw. No update.
8. Discussion regarding proceduralizing out review of demo permit applications. No update, Aubrey Theall promises to develop a draft as his schedule permits.
9. Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of the meeting. None.
10. New business. None.
11. Meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote shortly before 8pm.