

Medfield Historical Commission

July 28, 2021 Meeting

Minutes

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Members present: co-chair David Temple; Peter Fletcher; co-chair Seth Meehan; Doug Whitla

Members absent: Maria Baler; Joe Opiela; Kirstin Poler

Others present and participating: Jean Mineo; Lisa Ogrinc; John Thompson; Chris McCue Potts; Mike Quinlan

7:03 pm – Meehan called the meeting to order, and the members present identified themselves in a roll call.

Adam Opiela

The members observed a moment of silence in the memory of the late Adam Opiela, a Medfield High graduate, college history major, and son of Opiela.

Minutes

Members reviewed the following minutes

-- Minutes, March 31, with David, Peter, Seth and Doug voting unanimously to approve

-- Minutes, April 5, with David, Peter, and Seth voting unanimously to approve

-- Minutes, May 5, with David, Peter, Seth and Doug voting unanimously to approve

Meehan will provide the approved minutes to town hall to posting on the commission's website.

Board questionnaire

The members discussed the questionnaire from the Board of Selectmen. Fletcher and Whitla were comfortable with Meehan and Temple completing and submitting the questionnaire.

Town seal

Members discussed the question Selectman Peterson shared with Temple as to whether the commission is willing to review the town seal. In advance, members reviewed materials related to the town seal as well to how other towns have chosen to review their seals or not. Temple, Whitla, and Fletcher gave their views of the seal, especially as related to the visual reference to the King Philip's War. None considered the image overtly disrespectful. Temple mentioned the Mashpee seal as a counter example. All welcomed comment at the meeting and going forward. Jean Mineo, through the zoom Q/A, explained that the imagery of the war depicted in a cross was troubling. The members determined that changing the seal did not appear a pressing matter and hoped the conversation would continue. Meehan noted that reviews of seals elsewhere were only approved by a town meeting vote and that a change will result in considerable expense to the town. Temple and Meehan will update Peterson on the discussion who was invited to attend the meeting.

Demo-delay research

Members reviewed work Fletcher had done in collecting aspects found in demolition delay bylaws in other towns. Fletcher and Whitla agreed that a review of plans for any project should be introduced to the process to help with documentation and decision-making. Fletcher believed that a fixed year

rather than a sliding time period (in the last fifty years) would be a better approach as would a trigger such as a proposal to change 50% or more of a structure. In the current bylaw, all agreed that the current eighteen-month delay is a good deterrent and it is beneficial to have the permit expire at some time after approval and to have a permit not be transferrable from one owner to the next. Members agreed for the next meeting to review the bylaw and Fletcher's research with an eye towards tweaking the existing bylaw rather than writing an entirely new one.

62 Bridge Street barn/garage

Members reviewed the petition of Ogrinc, of 62 Bridge Street, to demolish the barn/garage on her property. In advance, the commission members had also reviewed the findings of Ogrinc's structural consultant, which concluded: "I would recommend demolition of the building as the floor structure is a hazard." Meehan explained the process of the demolish-delay bylaw, and Ogrinc explained her history with the structure. Recently, Ogrinc had attempted to sell her property this year, but two buyers pulled offers after an inspection of the barn/garage.

Members provided observations of their visits to the structure and their views of photographs precirculated by Temple. Whitla agreed with the assessment of the structural consultant. None found the structure to be of historical significance. Whitla thought that with milled wood and the like that the structure might have been a kit from the 1940s. Thompson asked if any future work on building a new barn/garage would raise any archaeological concerns with Bridge Street's history with King Philip's War, but he determined the work would not likely disturb relevant land.

Temple moved not to find the barn/garage at 62 Bridge Street of historical significance, Whitla seconded, and the members voted unanimously in favor. Temple also raised the issue of informing the building department that, pending town counsel's consent, the commission would not need to hold another hearing if a similar petition filed were by a subsequent owner given the evening's vote and the safety concerns, and the members agreed.

During a site visit, Ogrinc had asked Meehan if an approved demolition permit was transferrable from one owner to the next. Meehan contacted the building department, and Gary Pelletier, the building commissioner, explained, "As for Bridge St, approval for demolition of a structure older than 50 years is for the commission to determine, and I would think that approval would be for the "Site/Structure" and not approval for an individual to demolish it. That said the "Demolition Permit" is issued to the owner and their agent to demolish a structure, so if the owner of the property changes, the permit would be null and void and the new owner would need to re-apply for a demolition permit."

Archaeological dig updates

Thompson was present for an update on various archaeological digs in town.

Meehan provided the following updates

- For 49 Elm St, Meehan contacted the building department, and Gary Pelletier, the building commissioner, explained, "As of this date no permit application has been filed for the new lot created by Mr Smith on Elm St, and I am aware of the district requirements as they relate to this property and the survey."

- For the Clark Tavern, Rob MacCready of Open Space builders shared the conclusions from PAL's June report: "Subsurface testing at the Clark Tavern consisted of the excavation of sixteen 50-x-50-centimeter test pits, one 1-x-1-meter excavation unit, and three 1-x-0.5-meter excavation units. A

total of 690 post-contact artifacts were recovered at the site, and a stone paving feature was identified in the yard to the northwest of the tavern building. The recovered artifact assemblage consists of a low- to moderate-density mix of domestic and architectural debris distributed fairly uniformly around the tavern building. The stone paving feature is interpreted as an early nineteenth-century work yard likely constructed about the same time as the ca. 1810 rear ell addition to the tavern. Although the stone paved work yard illustrates a new functional dimension to the use of the yard space surrounding the tavern in the nineteenth century, it is neither rare nor incongruous with the known history of the property and is not recommended as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. On the basis of the results of the intensive survey and site examination, no further archaeological investigations are recommended for the Clark Tavern project area.”

Thompson reviewed the PAL report for the Clark Tavern and found it thoroughly documented. He wondered if the state historical commission might get involved but did not think so based on the report’s findings. He also rose the issue that there might be graves on the property.

- For the digs on the Wheelock property – for the proposed school and water treatment plant – the members reviewed a July 14, 2021, letter by the Massachusetts Historical Commission in response to the PAL’s survey. The state commission asked for an ASAPP (an archaeological site avoidance and protection plan) during any construction. Meehan heard from Mike Quinlan, chair of the school building committee, that his committee will have PAL develop the ASAPP but only if the site is approved by the town. Thompson requested that he and the members see a draft of that plan and that they also have access to the site during construction.

Of the Clark Tavern report, Potts asked what would happen with the artefacts discovered. Meehan explained that they are currently held by PAL and are the property of Open Space, which paid for the survey. Meehan will ask Open Space about any future plans with the artefacts.

Of the Wheelock digs, Potts asked how the commission might get the authority to mandate the requests Thompson made. Quinlan just arrived at the meeting and promised that Thompson could review any protection plan and visit the site. His committee, though, would ask PAL for such a plan only after a favorable the town on the school project. Quinlan also will send Thompson a copy of the soils report and boring logs.

Adjournment

At 8:42 pm, the members voted unanimously to adjourn until August 25 at 7pm.