

**Medfield Historical Commission
February 10, 2021 Meeting
Minutes**

Starting here: Joe Opiela recorded the minutes.

Present members of Historical Commission in attendance: David Temple, Maria Baler, Seth Meehan, Tracey Hogan, Joe Opiela.

Approximately 30-40 others in attendance at various times including principals and representatives for Open Space Builders, neighbors of the Clark Tavern, members of the Historical District Commission, members of the Board of Directors of the Peak House Heritage Center, and interested Medfield citizens.

7:34—David Temple called meeting to order. David says we are going to have a hearing about the Clark Tavern.

First order of business to review and approve the minutes at the last meeting. Members approved the minutes.

David announcement: He has been co-chair for almost 30 years. Wanted Seth to serve as co-chair and run this meeting. Seth accepted co-chairmanship.

Seth: Made plug for two open slots. Please reach out if you are interested in joining the commission.

Seth explains: Our function is to apply the Demolition Delay Bylaw as circumstances warrant.

Seth showed and discussed the Demolition Delay Bylaw main points:

Is building a “historically significant structure?”

Should building be “preferably preserved?”

If yes to both these questions, then 18-month delay is invoked.

If delay is invoked, the by-law permits the commission to lift the delay under certain circumstances.

HC went on a site visit on 2/6. We have letters from HDC and Town Historian.

Seth explained the 18-month delay is not standard among towns, but is used in Medfield because of the historical nature of our town.

Referred to significant history of the Clark Tavern as recounted by Richard DeSorgher over the years: Nathan Hale, Ballroom, waystation for Revolutionary War troops, interim place for St. Edward’s services after the church fire.

Cheryl O’Malley spoke to the fact that it was the residence of one of the original 13 Medfield families. Also spoke to the dendrochronology.

Attorney Ted Cannon spoke as a representative for Open Space Builders. Would challenge anyone to argue that it is NOT historically significant. HC has seen the state of it in the walkthrough. Let commission know that LCB tried vigorously to find someone who might buy and rehabilitate. Were unsuccessful. Fortunately, were able to find Dave and Rob MacCready to come up with “a terrific plan to make the best of this situation.” It’s a great opportunity to preserve the nature of the historic site. One of the most historically significant sites in Medfield. However, because it is in a decaying state, he said he does not see that it can be “Preferably Preserved.” But even if the commission finds that it can be preferably preserved, hopes the commission will agree that the LCB have tried to find people too. Even if commission finds it should be preferably preserved, he encouraged the commission to go forward with the MacCready plan.

Mike Taylor: made a point of order. Counsel for MacCready has acknowledged that the place is historically significant. So the point is conceded.

HC voted unanimously that the building is “historically significant.”

Seth—reviewed definition of “preferably preserved.”

Scott of 365 Main Street spoke. In full agreement that structure keeps deteriorating. The LInert plan was opposed by the neighbors. LCB was brought to court by the town. Fred King bought the properties around it.

Taylor: What’s the difference between preserve, rehabilitate, and restore? Let’s focus on “Preserve, rehabilitate and restore.” Oversees preservation efforts in Medfield. Look at preservation guidelines issued by Dept of Interior. Made the point that “restoring” is not knocking down the structure.

Maria Baler: Whether or not someone is willing to preserve, rehabilitate or restore, the question we need to address is will the destruction of the building be detrimental to the historical character of Medfield.

Cheryl O’Malley—no question about that. Clark Tavern has been there for almost 400 years building and rebuilding on that land.

Temple—agree that it is significant. The issue is whether the building is salvageable? Borderline. Sometimes it’s hopeless and sometimes it can be done. We don’t have any opinion from a certified structural engineer about the moving of the structure.

Joe says it should be Preferably Preserved. Maria agrees that it should be.

John Thompson. One of criteria that state would use. How many examples of buildings this old are left? How many examples from this time period exist? Need to consider the age and context of what we have left in losing this property.

Tracey—It is a significant structure and should be preferably preserved.

Seth—Is there a motion?

Maria moves that it should be “preferably preserved.” Board votes unanimously yes.

Seth: We should start with a summary of the plan. Help us understand the process. How has the plan changed since last January? How did we get to the point of having to dismantle?

David Sharff, architect for the Clark Tavern rebuild—Showed the most current version of drawings. Had a site plan and sketch a year ago. The MacCreadys were optimistic the structure could be moved a year ago. Since that time, it has become clear that it could not be moved from its current foundation onto a new foundation. They made every attempt to change the size and shape of the plan. MacCreadys have been open to reusing what they could.

The HC looked at a sketch of renovated plan. However, it was difficult to see the details on the Zoom broadcast and the sketch itself was fuzzy. Sharff stated: Ballroom has been shortened. Ceiling would replicate arched ballroom ceiling. Reuse carved arch beams. Would keep them exposed so the beauty of that could be retained. Some other timbers. Wainscoting. Some intact beams. Go with what we can. The main part of the tavern.

Maria asked: Can you take us through why it is not possible to restore the tavern. Why do you need to dismantle?

Sharff replied: It's two structures that have been pushed together. The right side was altered in the 1930s. It has been assembled over the course of time. Timbers from other buildings have been used to create the present structure. Ballroom has big hole in the roof (from a tree that fell on it about six months ago). Pieces there cannot be salvaged. Roof and ceiling of the second floor are starting to collapse. Corner posts were carved out. So there is no corner support. If the tavern was lifted in order to move it, the frame would fall apart. It is too large and in two pieces to begin with.

Sharff was asked: Is it feasible to fit other buildings on the site if the Tavern is not moved and stays in its present location? David Sharff states he is not comfortable addressing that.

The HC asked: Have the MacCreadys considered re-conceiving the outbuildings to fit around the Tavern in its present location? Rob MacCready says that there is no way to make the project possible without moving the building. Reducing the number of units from 5 to 4 to accommodate the reduced space will not work. Further, it would be very difficult to comply with current building codes in trying to renovate the existing Tavern building.

Starting here Tracey Hogan recorded the minutes (8:15 to 8:45):

Sharff showed a slide of the floor plan that was presented in January and explained why the building cannot be lifted due to the damage in the ballroom and corner supports. He was asked by Joe Opiela if there were more options explored in order to fit the desired units without lifting the building and he said there were not more options explored.

Rob MacCready said a lot went into the current plan to show off the assets of the building and it cannot be lifted since it is too dangerous

Doug Whitla, a local builder, was asked for his opinion of the condition of the building and he said he has been through it many times and a lot of damage has taken place over the years including a fire, replacement of the front roof section, and corner posts that have been removed. The building is in tough shape. The roof on the second floor is rotted. The ballroom has suffered tree damage

and the structure is collapsing. The previous owners removed all the plaster and lathe which was probably a good thing and preserved the building more by allowing it to breathe. No one is stepping up to sink the money into it that would be necessary to preserve this building. It has been 12-13 years and nothing has happened. When pressed by Michael Taylor, he stated he did not like to give a monetary figure with just a brief run through of the building but his very rough estimate for remodel was between 2-3 million dollars. The only way is to dismantle and repurpose the building. The building is deteriorating fast. Better to dismantle the building now while the timber is still there to do it. Flooring and beams could be reused in a visual rather than a structural way.

Michael Taylor stated the property could qualify for tax credits of approximately 1 million but stated the property would have to be a rental in order to qualify for the credits. He also pressed to have the demolition delay continue until the town could vote at town meeting on April 2 on the Historic District Commission warrant to create a historic district which would include the Clark Tavern property.

John Thompson asked if there was any possibility that the town would buy the property and it was stated there was no interest at this time.

Starting here, Maria Baler recorded the minutes (8:45 to adjournment):

John Thompson stated that the archaeological resources of the Clark Tavern property are significant. Both historic and pre-historic cultural remains are present on the site. He recommends a "site examination." Public Archaeology Lab (PAL) did an examination of part but not all of the property. It is important to do this because of the history of the property and the archaeological significance of the area. The Historical Commission should recommend a site examination before earth is moved. It will not take long to do.

Attorney Cannon states that a site examination was performed by PAL on August 2, 2017. The result of that examination was that the site lacks integrity with limited resource value. PAL did not recommend further archaeological investigation.

It was pointed out by John Thompson and others that the 2017 investigation covered the back area of the Tavern and around the side of the building, but did not do the front of the building or where the septic system was located, which was already disturbed land.

Per John Thompson, the immediate area around the Tavern building is the area of importance, in order to capture items in the builder's trench around the foundation and the area outside the threshold where debris that is swept out of the house would be located.

Attorney Cannon stated that the MacCreadys were not willing to commit to another archaeological site examination.

Tracey Hogan stated that she is aware that a coin from the 1500's was found near the front stoop of the Tavern.

Joe Opiela stated that section (F)(3) of the by-law states that the Commission may lift the delay if it determines that the demolition may be conducted in a manner not detrimental to the historical

resources of the Town. In his opinion, dismantling the Tavern is detrimental to the historical resources of Medfield.

Chris Potts spoke about a meeting she attended where there was an agreement that an archaeological examination would be done at the front of the Tavern.

Maria Baler questioned whether there is enough information yet as to whether the Commission is satisfied that there is no reasonable likelihood that the owner or another reasonable person is willing to preserve, rehabilitate or restore the Tavern.

Rob Gregg, President of the Peak House Heritage Center said we are dealing with reality vs. the unknown.

Mike Taylor said that there would be no impact on the Peak House if the historic district is created. The Peak House is included because the Peak House and the Tavern are inextricably linked.

Matt S., a neighbor to the Peak House, stated it is impossible to preserve, rehabilitate or restore the building without dismantling it. He is worried about what will happen next. What is the probability of another developer being successful at restoring the Tavern? He is interested in seeing something done there.

Rob Babson of 34 Indian Hill Road is a Director of the Peak House Heritage Center. He stated that the Town has worked for multiple years to find a reasonable solution to maintaining the historic structure of the Tavern. In his opinion, having a sound structure that is visually appealing and a replica of the Tavern is true to the original vision of the Clark Tavern next to the Peak House as the gateway to Medfield. It would be nice to rehabilitate the Tavern but it does not seem to be able to be reasonably or economically done. We don't know of anyone who will do this. The MacCready's plan is not perfect, but it will preserve the image of what is there – the Clark House, the Clark Tavern and the Peak House. We need to take action so that it can be done before the Tavern building collapses.

David Temple quoted the saying “don't let perfect be the enemy of the good” or fairly good. After 18 months of delay the Tavern building will be “toast.” It has been languishing for 13 years.

Cheryl O'Malley wonders if there is a possibility that there is another option.

Rob MacCready stated that there is no possibility to reuse the existing Tavern Building.

The historic district is not in place, the tax credits that may attract a new owner are not in place.

Richard DeSorgher's letter encourages the Commission to allow a Town meeting vote to put the historic district in place.

Joe Opiela states he is not prepared to lift the delay tonight. He respects the work put into the current plan, but does not understand why it is not possible to restore the building. He would like to think there is a way to build 5 units on the lot and make the economics work while leaving the Tavern in place.

Tracy Hogan stated there are no guarantees about what the MacCreadys will re-use. It could be nothing. Need to explore what can fit on the lot without moving the Tavern building.

Rob MacCready stated that when they renovated the Ord Block, they replaced the siding, doors, windows, corner boards, floor joists, roof shingles, and the building looks virtually the same as it did before. They were trying to do the same thing with the Tavern. But he is not sure he could even get a sign-off to structurally preserve the Tavern building. Older lumber cannot be signed off on easily. Doesn't see how it could be done without endless resources. Tax credits would not make it more attractive since all of the units would need to remain rental units for a period of time. They have experience with this at the Ord Block and it is not financially viable.

Chris Potts inquired about whether the wetlands would cause site constraints?

Attorney Cannon responded that there are wetlands in the Northwest corner of the site that require buildings to be pushed away from that corner.

Seth Meehan stated his opinion that not moving forward may be detrimental to the historical resources of the Town.

Cheryl O'Malley confirmed that the oldest portion of the Tavern building is the Western side.

Connie Sweeney asked whether it is possible to save the Western portion of the building where it stands now.

Rob MacCready said that to his knowledge a structural engineer has not looked at the building. In his opinion the building is not structurally sound.

David Sharff said he consults with engineers on a regular basis as part of his work. There is no way to evaluate the structural integrity of a building this old. The engineers will not certify that it is structurally sound. They would need to make it structurally sound by putting a new structure beside the antique pieces of the structure.

Connie Sweeney stated there are unanswered questions. Trying to find a solution to preserve most of the structure.

Michele Feinsilver Hoye, a Director of the Peak House Heritage Center, stated that the MacCreadys have worked hard to create a landscape that is in keeping with the historic nature of the property. They replicated what was done at the Peak House in terms of plants and herbs, and hired a landscape architect to create an attractive "gateway to Medfield." They intend to use native trees and shrubs that are indigenous to Medfield and create a seamless, synthesized site. They are to be commended for their work on the planning of this site, which has been going on for 2 years, and she believes it will be extraordinary when it is done. They have also done a lot of work we are not aware of with the Peak House, which will all be for naught if they are not allowed to get this project done.

Concerns were expressed about further damage happening to the Tavern building due to the weather.

If the demolition delay is lifted, all permits need to be issued before any work is done. No work would begin until late April as they will need to acquire the property and then obtain the necessary permits.

Tracey Hogan asked if the hole in the roof could be covered.

Attorney Cannon indicated that the current owner, LCB, is not interested in investing any more money into the site. He reiterated that it took an entire year to find a buyer for the site. As to the by-law that says the delay can be lifted if the Commission is satisfied that for at least 6 months the owner has made continuing, bona fide and reasonable efforts to locate a purchaser who will restore the structure without success – LCB has put substantial effort into finding someone to do this already and has not been able to do so.

David Temple makes a MOTION: TO LIFT THE DEMOLITION DELAY and allow the MacCreadys to go ahead with their plan to demolish by dismantling the Tavern, with the proviso that an archaeological site examination be done before they disturb the ground surrounding the Tavern where the PAL survey was not done.

VOTED: 3-2 TO LIFT THE DEMOLITION DELAY. The Commission voted:

- Maria Baler – Yes
- Tracey Hogan – No
- Joseph Opiela – No
- David Temple – Yes
- Seth Meehan – Yes

John Thompsen clarified that we want a “site examination survey” done, which is an intensive survey of a small area. It will not stop or delay the project. It will recover whatever history remains in the ground close to or under the site.

Scenic Roads Act Discussion

- The Commission heard Chris Potts speak in support of her proposal to add some scenic roads to those covered under the Scenic Roads Act, MGL c. 40, Section 15C
- Any Town can designate a road a scenic road
- Medfield has not done so since 2004.
- Chris wants to bring forth some roads to Town Meeting.
- The rationale is to protect old stone walls and shade trees in the public way along these roads. If someone wants to cut down a tree or dismantle a stone wall, they need to go before the Planning Board. There is a \$300 fine for doing so without permission.
- She has done research on various roads and has narrowed it down to:
 - Farm Street
 - Elm Street
 - Plain Street
 - Nebo Street
 - Millbrook
- She has not decided whether to bring forth all of them at the same time, or 2 at a time each year. She will probably just do a couple every year.
- Would consider recommendations about which roads are worthy of this designation.

- Elm Street residents are on board with the designation for Elm Street.
- John Thompsen stated that most stone walls in Medfield are 18th century, not 19th century. Also, that you cannot judge the age of a tree from its diameter, which depends on light and soil. There are many trees on the State Hospital property that are small but are over 100 years old.
- David Temple agreed that the scenic road proposal was a good idea, and introducing a couple at a time makes sense.
- Signs will designate the roads as scenic roads.
- Chris will circulate a survey about which roads to choose.

Other Business

- The commission has received demolition permit applications for an 1800's house on Harding Street (78 Harding) and a garage at 18 Pound Street.
- Next meeting is March 2. We will view the properties before then.