

Jul 25 2023 4:11 pm

Fitchburg Historical Commission

Meeting Minutes for the Fitchburg Historical Commission Hybrid Meeting on May 25, 2023, at 3:00 P.M.

Members Present: Keith Chenot, Don Ostrowski, Ellen DiGeronimo, and Andrew Lipasti

Members Absent: Charles Sternaimolo

Meeting Guests: none

Chairman Keith Chenot called the meeting to order at 3:10pm and noted a quorum was present.

1. Public comment period: None

2. Review and approve minutes of the April 27, 2023, meeting:

Don noted corrections to two items regarding historic building demolition delay and stone wall preservation. Ellen made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Don. The motion was approved unanimously by members present.

3. Freedom's Way Hidden Treasures list and host event – May 20, 11am @ FHS:

Keith noted a follow-up on this Hidden Treasures event held on Saturday, May 20. It was attended by a small group which did a walking tour of the Upper Common and Upper Main St. areas. He mentioned that in the past we had more walking and trolley tours in Fitchburg hosted mostly by the Historical Society. This is an idea we could think about doing more of.

4. Update of Monument Park repairs:

We discussed the restoration repairs and updates for Monument Park. Keith has talked with James Bunnell of the Parks Dept. and he may have a landscaper to help maintain the Park. James is also checking with the DPW on a fence repair budget.

5. Update on historic building demolition delay:

Don and Andy did a presentation at the Historical Society Board Meeting on May 17. Don started by clarifying certain items about the historic building demolition delay. Amy Green, City Councilor and Historical Society President, helped with our discussion and wanted to help move the demolition delay ordinance forward. She noted we have to look at other cities with a demolition delay and how their ordinance is set up and enacted.

Don noted we need to use our historic resources to help promote our city. He also noted that we, the Historical Commission, are not set up for doing a demolition delay ordinance hearing including holding meetings and doing judgments. Keith suggested we could invite the Mayor to our next meeting in June to present our two ordinances. He also noted that the demolition delay ordinance is not a restriction on demolition, but just a delay on doing the demolition.

6. Update on appreciation and preservation of historic stone walls and structures:

Don has sent a draft copy of the historic stone walls preservation ordinance to City Councilor Sam Squailia. We can present this to the Mayor at the next meeting. Keith noted we need to prepare for the meeting with the Mayor.

7. Update on Historic Districts information brochure/map information guide, signage, web posting and FSU faculty-led student project coordination ongoing for fall/spring 2021/2022 and 2022/2023:

Keith noted this item is on delay. The designer is doing final corrections and graphics but is very busy with other projects at this time.

8. Wallace Building entry stones reuse – “temporarily” stored in FRA space:

There are no specific updates at this time. If we meet with the Community Developer we could mention this item to them for possible ideas.

9. Historic Marker update:

Keith noted we have the first application for a new historic marker. It was submitted by the owner of the Debonis building on Main St. Keith will check if the historic marker brochures have been printed by the Community Development office. Andy will help check if the brochures are done by our next meeting.

10. Project to document and share Main Street building histories, historic districts, tax credit, and other restoration/reuse incentives:

Ellen noted this is an economic development plan. We can have a map handout.

11. Commission membership vacancy update:

Keith has contacted the local Realtor Association looking for a nomination for the two Commission vacancies. Ellen is talking to a lawyer for a nomination as well.

12. Summer schedule:

We will continue on with our regular monthly meeting schedule.

13. New business:

Keith noted the Wallace Way stairway could use some maintenance. This was a gift to the city from Rodney Wallace. It would also be nice to relamp the stairway.

We also discussed the old Worcester County Courthouse which may become city property and go up for sale. It is included in the city’s Monument Park Historic District.

14. Next meeting:

Historical Commission Meeting: June 29, 2023, 3:00 PM, City Hall Room 101A and Zoom hybrid.

15. Adjournment:

Andy made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Ellen. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 5:07pm.

Submitted by Andrew Lipasti, Secretary, Fitchburg Historical Commission