

Jun 27 2023 11:23 am

Fitchburg Historical Commission

Meeting Minutes for the Fitchburg Historical Commission Hybrid Meeting on January 26, 2023, at 3:00 P.M.

Members Present: Keith Chenot, Don Ostrowski, Sam Blair, Ellen DiGeronimo, Meagen Donoghue, Charles Sternaimolo, and Andrew Lipasti

Members Absent: None

Meeting Guests: Mayor Stephen DiNatale, Jon Rudzinski representing Rees-Larkin Development

Chairman Keith Chenot called the meeting to order at 3:15pm and noted a quorum was present.

1. Public comment period: None

2. Review and approve minutes of the December 15, 2022, meeting:

Charles moved to approve the minutes as amended. Seconded by Ellen. The motion was approved unanimously by members present.

3. Review and approve minutes of the December 21, 2022, meeting and continued public hearing:

Ellen moved to approve the minutes as amended. Seconded by Charles. The motion was approved unanimously by members present.

4. Moran Square Redevelopment Project Syndicate Block building update with Jon Rudzinski representing Rees-Larkin Development:

Jon presented an update including photos on the Moran Square Redevelopment Project noting the buildings are nearing completion. The buildings include: the Summer St. Fire Station, the Syndicate Block which housed the Harper Furniture Building, and a new building between those two. They are treating the area as one building and there will be 44 units of mixed income housing along with retail space on the street level.

Jon noted a special permit was done for this development and they have local support and Historical Commission support. This support is helpful for doing the federal and state tax credits. He noted a period of historical significance in keeping the look of the fire station, which will have two units on the second floor and a common area on the first floor. The Syndicate Block building is also maintaining the historic look of its facade. For construction of the new building the National Park Service required masonry and brick on the front of the building. The buildings are using a passive house standard for energy efficiency, and the windows have a double-hung style look.

Keith thanked Jon for his presentation and the redevelopment project in Moran Square, and said he would like to see Jon work on other Fitchburg development projects.

5. Update of Monument Park:

Keith noted we are looking at restoration repairs and updates for Monument Park. They include:

- Recommendation for park bench replacement
- Cast iron fencing repair and restoration
- Stone entry step repair
- Monument base repair

Keith asked Mayor DiNatale for help with the Monument Park repairs and working with the DPW and Nicholas Erickson, Commissioner of Public Works. He also noted that the Historical Commission is tasked with overseeing Monument Park through the local historic district guidelines. We would like to get the repairs into the city's workflow and budget.

The Mayor noted we will need to look at the monument itself for restoration, and that he will talk with Commissioner Erickson.

Don mentioned that we need the park updates for people to be attracted to it. Charles asked what our next steps would be. Keith said we will wait for a follow-up, budgeting, and coordination of repairs and updates. Keith noted he will resend the Mayor a letter with the requested repairs and updates.

6. Update on historic building demolition delay:

Don noted that he and Andy met with the Board of Directors of the Fitchburg Historical Society (FHS) and did a presentation about the appreciation and preservation of the city's historic stone walls. We also mentioned the proposed historic building demolition delay ordinance, and will plan to present more information about this ordinance at another FHS Board meeting.

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

Don mentioned that he and Andy met with the Board of Directors of the Fitchburg Historical Society (FHS) and did a presentation about the appreciation and preservation of the city's historic stone walls. Andy noted that the Board expressed an interest in this preservation and proposed ordinance topic. Andy also noted that work continues on completing an article for the FHS newsletter on the stone wall ordinance.

8. 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 he has a tentative meeting with the designer and others in early February. They are trying to get the graphics wrapped-up. This will be a great piece about Fitchburg.

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

This is an ongoing item. Keith mentioned the Rodney Wallace R.W. stone may be placed at the Rail Trail end in Fitchburg. Ellen noted she will call Stephen Hay regarding the use of the Rail Trail end property near the Fitchburg Plumbing building.

10. Historic Marker – new sign maker update:

Keith is still working on this item. We talked about reconsidering Wass-Arthur Signs as a selection. We are looking at the method of payment with the NJ site.

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

Ellen is working on this item, gathering information on all the buildings and doing a write-up.

12. MHC future workshops:

Keith mentioned to look at the MHC virtual workshops which are listed at the end of the agenda. They are a good resource for our Historical Commission.

13. Annual election of officers: Chair position and Secretary position:

A motion was made by Charles to elect Keith Chenot as Chairman. It was seconded by Ellen and approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Don to elect Andrew Lipasti as Secretary. It was seconded by Ellen and approved unanimously.

14. New business:

Keith talked about the Rail Trail and adding historic signage at sites like the old South Fitchburg Rail Station, the Poor Farm, the County Jail, Fifth Street Bridge, the Patch, St. Bernard's Church, the old FG&E Plant, Stone Arch Bridges, and the Nashua River.

The Fitchburg end of the Rail Trail ends at Hayden Passway near Fitchburg Plumbing Supply and this spot needs improvement such as bicycle parking and signage. This area is the property of the Hay's Family Trust and we are hoping to use some of this property for improvements to the trail end.

Mayor DiNatale noted he would like to get the principals together in a meeting to discuss improvements of this planned Rail Trail ending area.

The Mayor thanked us for a good Historical Commission meeting and we thanked him for joining us.

15. Next meeting:

Historical Commission Meeting: February 23, 2023, 3 PM, City Hall Room 101A and Zoom hybrid.

16. Adjournment:

Andy made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Charles. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 5:03pm.

Submitted by Andrew Lipasti, Secretary, Fitchburg Historical Commission