

May 08 2023 7:55 am

Fitchburg Historical Commission

Meeting Minutes for the Fitchburg Historical Commission Hybrid Meeting on March 30, 2023, at 3:00 P.M.

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

Members Absent: Charles Sternaimolo

Meeting Guests: Four guests from NewVue Communities: Marc Dohan, Steve Cook, Anne Retimayer, and Maureen Cavanaugh

Chairman Keith Chenot called the meeting to order at 3:17pm and noted a quorum was present.

1. Public comment period: None

2. Review and approve minutes of the February 23, 2023, meeting:

Ellen moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Don. The motion was approved unanimously by members present.

3. Freedom's Way Hidden Treasures list and host May event :

Andy noted working with Susan Navarre on this event. The date of Saturday, May 20 at 11:00am has been chosen. It will start at the Historical Society building and include a walking tour of Fitchburg's Hidden Treasures on the Upper Common and Monument Park. The monuments and sculptures at these sites will be discussed, as well as architectural information of the area buildings. Susan and Keith will be leading the walking tour. Keith will be working on a map of the area locations. Andy will be doing a handout with info on the war monuments, and he will be available at the Society building.

Ellen will help check if this event can be put on the City Calendar. This date will coincide with a Fitchburg Food Truck Festival at 166 Boulder Drive from 12-7pm.

4. Update of Monument Park:

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 noted working with the DPW and Parks Commissioners on this item. This is an ongoing item.

5. Update on B.F. Brown Project and the Academy Street Educational District NR application:

Four guests from NewVue Communities did a presentation and an update on the B.F. Brown Project which includes the B.F. Brown School, Annex, and City Stable. This is an adaptive reuse of two historic schools and a former carriage house to create about 60 apartments at the intersection of Elm and Academy Streets.

This project will create a mix of both affordable and market rate apartments, and will include artist-preference affordable rental housing. This is a Fitchburg Arts Community project, and will be located across the street from the Fitchburg Art Museum.

Steve Cook from NewVue noted they have been working on this project for 10 years, and have put in extra effort on the B.F. Brown building after a recent fire. He mentioned the auditorium in the school will be converted into an artist studio space and a sound studio space.

The NewVue guests noted there has been a lot of support for this project both city and state wide providing historical tax credits, financing, grants, and loans. The construction is scheduled to start in May 2023 with a planned completion in Dec. 2024.

Ellen asked if the Wallace Way steps would be restored as part of the project. They said the steps will be included in the restoration along with the three buildings, the retaining wall, and the park.

Keith thanked the group for their presentation, and noted that the restoration of the three buildings and the steps is a great project.

6. Update on historic building demolition delay:

No updates.

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

No updates. Don mentioned he will be taking a flight over Fitchburg's waterways and will be looking at dams and possible beaver dams along the Nashua River and brooks.

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 there is no final version yet from the designer. He is working on this item.

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

No update.

10. Historic Marker update:

Keith gave an update on this item. The Historical Commission website has been updated with a new historic marker sign brochure and pricing. He will look at getting about 100 brochures printed.

Don asked about getting reimbursements from the previous sign maker's family for the previous paid markers that have not been made. Keith noted the family is aware of this issue and plans to send out the reimbursement payments. The people that had applied for the signs will have to reapply for a new sign.

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

Keith has talked with Ellen about an Upper Common Historic District nomination.

12. Commission membership vacancy:

Keith has emailed us some information on filling the vacancy on the Commission. It is an excerpt from the founding ordinance of the Commission and notes that the members should represent certain groups of people in the area such as AIA members, Historians, Historical Society members, Realtors, Lawyers, and Planning Board members.

Don asked if Meagen represented one of those groups, and Ellen noted she was on the Worcester Historical Commission. Ellen will check with other groups in Fitchburg for a member recommendation. Keith's email noted we could be thinking about a member from the following: Fitchburg Board of Realtors, a lawyer that is a resident, and a member of the Planning Board.

13. New business: None.

14. Next meeting:

Historical Commission Meeting: April 27, 2023, 3:00 PM, City Hall Room 101A and Zoom hybrid.

15. Adjournment:

Ellen made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Don. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 4:45pm.

Submitted by Andrew Lipasti, Secretary, Fitchburg Historical Commission