

Montague Historical Commission
Minutes/summary of MHC meeting of March 27, 2023

Meeting held in person at the Montague Town Hall and on-line.

Commissioners present:

David Brule
Chris Clawson
Ed Gregory
Suzanne LoMonto
Janel Nockleby
Not attending: Chris Sawyer-Lauçanno

Members of the public attending:

Mary Melonis
John Shanahan

Proceedings:

1. Discussion of the marquee being planned for the Shea theatre.
 - a. JS comments that the current sign is too big, blinds cover the windows, the sense and style of the architecture has been ignored.
 - b. He has heard that to develop a more historical-appearing marquee “would take too much time”. He disagrees.
 - c. What would a new marquee look like? JS seeks help from the MHC.
 - d. Commissioner SLM is a board member of the Shea; advises that very little actual planning has yet taken place and multiple boards will be involved including Zoning, Administrators, Board of Selectmen, Historical Commission, Shea Board; the Shea is town-owned and in the National Registry of Historic Places.
 - e. A first step will be to have the marquee project placed on the Shea board agenda.
 - f. The potential Shea marquee will be on the April agenda of the MHC also.
 - g. The commissioners requested Ed G to find photos of original marquee.
2. Commissioner JN brings forward a number of items:
 - a. **An Historical Preservation Plan** should be a priority for the MHC.
 - 1) Determining if there is preservation act funding, potential National Registry sites in other villages, what could be the vision? etc.
 - 2) There will be a virtual workshop on April 6 10-11:30.
 - b. **Cabot Camp**
 - 1) A finished draft plan by First Light should be finalized by March 31.
 - 2) FL should take steps to find an organization to take responsibility to preserve the building. This will require a survey and

assessment, market study and/or find a re-use for the building.
No demolition anticipated.

- 3) JN recommends contact with Town Administrator Steve Ellis in writing and/or invitation to attend April MHC meeting.

b. Farren artifacts:

- 1) How to contact a liaison with Trinity to get scope and timeline of demolition.
 - 2) NB: stained glass has been removed, but what about statues, plaques, bricks of significance to residents?
 - 3) SLM recommends contacting Steve Ellis about the above.
 - 4) An interested resident has suggested organizing a book and/or photo site for residents to contribute photos of the Farren, memories, etc.
 - 5) How to do that? Seek grant funding? Documentation site or book could be developed by MHC?
3. New homes to be built on corner of First Street and L Street. DB questions whether qualified archaeologist would be present to monitor in case Indigenous, colonial or industrial period artifacts turn up during ground disturbance. Noted that ground has already been heavily disturbed, but as was observed during demolition of the Grand Trunk, artifacts could be uncovered. A rep from MHC should be present.
 4. The so-called “Blacksmith Shop” in Montague Center: funds have been allocated to assess the structural security of the building; Parks and Rec Dept would eventually seek to demolish.
 5. Montague Center Library:
 - a. Resident MM communicates wishes from Montague Center residents that it should remain intact and preserved.
 - b. It is not just a library but embodies the spirit of the village.
 - c. Commissioner CC reminds all of the building’s historic value as the early Montague Town Hall going back to the 1850s. Building should be considered as having historical and architectural value that should not be altered.
 6. JN seeks information on the process of the Canal District. What progress on Final Report? Etc. Apparently this is a WIP.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00

Submitted by D. Brule, chairman