



TOWN OF WHATELY Whately, Massachusetts

Historical Commission

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Minutes of the February 19, 2024 Zoom Meeting, 5 pm

Meeting participants: Donna Wiley, chair, Susan Baron, Allison Bell, Judy Markland, Alan McArdle.

The revised minutes of the January 15, 2024 meeting were unanimously approved.

Center School The group discussed their reactions to the answers to the questions from the Proposal Evaluation Committee that were provided by the two applicants for the purchase and rehabilitation of the Center School. The following points were among those raised.

The ad hoc committee met once, decided that further information was needed from each applicant, and collaborated in identifying questions to be asked.. Since Brian Domina is leaving his position. he has passed on his portion of the project responsibilities to Sylvie Jensen who is the Community Development Administrator for Whately.

Reactions to Cyr/Gelormini condo project responses

- No one from the Cyr/Gelormini group has been in the building. It is not entirely clear that they have a solid idea of current conditions in the building.
- By and large, they seem to be making a good faith effort to preserve the building, either for continued use by the town or residential development
- Building condition issues, particularly concerning the roof and its supports, do not seem to be a major problem for the proposal.
- The responses did at least mention all of the historic preservation issues that are raised by the Historical Commission.

Reactions to Obear single-family project responses

- Obear's response explained the multiple reasons for the delays in the Blue School (East Whately School) project.
- Previous Obear projects, as checked by Donna Wiley, have been done with good compliance to the Secretary of the Interior's and Massachusetts standards
- No mention was made of façade issues raised by the historical commission, including the need for window restoration.

- Roof repairs may be an issue. The cost of slate roofing is very high. Economic feasibility is a legitimate issue in applying the Secretary's Standards. Composite slate may be a possible alternative but its economics aren't known.

Other discussion included the reasons why the school lot is non-conforming, which will likely preclude replacing the building if torn down. First, the lot is too small. 40,000 square feet is required but the lot has about 2/3 that. Second, 200 feet of frontage on one street is needed for the lot, but does not exist. Variances or special permits are possible but the allowable reasons for variances do not work well with this project.

These reactions were collected by Donna Wiley who will bring them to the next meeting of the Proposal Review Committee.

North Street area form history section

Judy Markland has received several submissions on local history to help fill out the area form. Good progress is being made. Judy is looking to create a general historical summary for the area. Allison Bell has provided history of Quonquont Farm and other farms on North Street while Donna Wiley has drafted summary sections on eighteenth and nineteenth century history.

Discussion included making a list of people who could be interviewed, more information on nineteenth century industry, maple sugar houses in the area and the Great Swamp as an area of potential interest.

Other Issues

Alan announced that he will need to resign from the Historical Commission in the near future. Health and other issues are leading to this need.

The next meeting will be on March 18 at 5pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan McArdle

