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WESTFIELD CITY CLERK

Westfield Historical Commission Meeting
November 19, 2018 Minutes

Councilors Cindy Gaylord, Carly Bannish, Cindy Bronson, Ellen McEwan, Debbie Oppermann, and Amanda Goodheart Parks present.

Commissioner Gaylord called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Public Participation:

Pack 820 Arrow of Light Cub Scouts attended the meeting as part of earning a merit badge. They were thanked for their interest in civic engagement and encouraged to follow up with the Commission if they had any questions.

Robert Madison of Feeding Hills, MA, author of *New Haven and Northampton Canal Greenway Bike and Rail Trails*, returned to discuss the donation of canal signs. Mr. Madison and the Southwick Historical Society wishes to donate two signs and poles to the WHC to be installed at the intersection of Shaker Road/Cardinal Lane, as well as Arch Street, the two locations in the city where the canal is still visible. Councilor Gaylord said Mr. Madison will be added to the agenda of the next City Council Meeting, during which time he will need to formally offer the signs/poles to the City of Westfield as a gift. Mr. Madison noted he intends to publish an article in the Westfield State University *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* about the canal, and hopes to give a copy of the article to the Historical Commission for public distribution.

Christian C. Carey, Architect, P.C. of Westfield, MA, presented the Historic Structures Report for the West Farms/Wyben Schoolhouse. Mr. Carey stated that in his professional opinion, the schoolhouse is worthy of listing on the Massachusetts and National Registers of Historic Places due to its important connections to the history of rural education. Architecturally, it is not unique, as the structure is utilitarian in style and purpose, but its connection to Westfield State University, the Normal School, as well as its many original finishes, all make it historically significant.

To restore the schoolhouse to museum use, several major variances will be needed. Four strategies were presented in the report:

1. "Mothball" the property - temporary fix for 3-5 years to stabilize, weather tight, protect the building. Estimate of \$75,000-\$120,000
2. Renovation/restoration to museum - expensive option, but one that has great potential. Estimate of \$350,000-\$500,000
3. Ownership transfer to non-profit - "caretaker" organization that could operate more freely than the city regarding regulations, funding, etc.
4. Sale to a private owner - potential risk, should only be considered as a last chance strategy.

Mr. Carey recommends a combination of strategy 1 and 3. The City “mothballs” the property, and then it transfers ownership to a “friends” non-profit group for major renovation work. There are several areas of potential preservation concern including lean of the structure, the foundation, the roof, etc.

Councilor Goodheart Parks inquired about Mr. Carey’s thoughts regarding the Historical Commission moving forward with a National Register nomination. He stated a register nomination is lengthy and expensive (around \$10,000), but thinks it might be a good tool to raise awareness in the community.

City Councilor Dan Allie explained the process of transferring ownership of schoolhouse to a non-profit organization. Mr. Allie inquired about the Commission’s interest in transferring ownership. Councilor Gaylord stated the Commission needs time to review the report and discuss its findings.

Councilor Gaylord and the Commission thanked Mr. Carey for his work in developing the report.

Secretary’s Report

No minutes from October 2018 meeting were presented due to change in WHC Secretary. A vote on accepting these minutes is tabled to the December 2018 meeting.

Treasurer’s Report

Councilor Bannish, Treasurer reported the following balances:

General Fund \$4,937.50

Historical Gift Account \$22,963.26

G/L Account \$3,089

Councilor Bannish will inquire as to the dramatic increase in the Historical Gift Account from last month. She will also inquire as to why the Westfield Evening News and Sanitation Company from the Ghost Tours still have not been paid.

Unfinished Business

350th Committee Update: Councilor Gaylord reported that the kickoff for the 350th lecture series will be on November 28, 2018 at 6:30pm at Scanlon Hall at Westfield State University. Additional information regarding future lectures is available on the 350th website. 350th commemorative book will be available for sale at the first lecture.

TaMara Conde Update: Councilor Gaylord reported that she is in communication with Ms. Conde about scheduling Old Burying Ground gate repair for spring 2019. Councilor Gaylord reported that there will be a stone cleaning date in late April 2019.

Sign for Old Burying Ground gate: Originally assigned to Councilor Deviny, who has resigned from the WHC. Tabled to future meeting.

New Business

First Night: Councilor Gaylord recommended that WHC members participate in the First Night celebrations, as well as the local Historic House Tours. These activities are organized by Westfield on Weekends.

Landlord Fowler Tavern Update: Councilor Gaylord reported that Mr. Tierney is moving forward with restoring the tavern as previously discussed with the Commission.

Minutes: Councilor Goodheart Parks announced that going forward, all WHC members will have electronic access to WHC minutes, agendas, and auxiliary documents via the WHC Google Account. Log-in and password information will be distributed to WHC members via email.

Councilor McEwan made a motion to adjourn. Councilor Bannish seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:24pm.

Upcoming Meeting Dates: December 17, 2018, January 28, 2019, February 25, 2019

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Goodheart Parks, Secretary

