

Ipswich Historical Commission Minutes
Meeting January 13, 2020

Members in attendance: John Fiske, Gordon Harris, Lee Hathaway, Linda Grimes, Laura Gresh, Steve Miles

Alternate Members: Tom Schutte, Tess Schutte, Bill Effner

Others in attendance:

Chris Ireland, new owner of 153 Argilla Road, Isaac Goodale House

Bill Farefield, County Street

John Page, 90-92 High Street

Kristen Grubbs, Planning Department

Isaac Goodale House, 153 Argilla Road

Chris Ireland introduced himself as the new owner of 153 Argilla Road and inquired about steps to take for making changes to the interior. He expressed an interest in changing the kitchen and bathrooms. It was noted that the kitchen is not included in the Preservation Agreement (PA) but the southern façade is.

John suggested submitting rough plans to see if the proposed changes would violate the Preservation Agreement. The IHC would put any proposed plans on the monthly agenda for members to review.

Gordon said if an architectural feature is not mentioned in the PA it is not under our purview.

Chris noted that the screened porch is not included in the PA. He also expressed the desire for any changes made to be done the right way to maintain the historic integrity of the house.

John Shatwell House, 90-92 High Street

Owner John Page said any restoration work done to his house is by Bob Weatherall.

John Page questioned if the house date posted on Facebook on October 14 for the Merchant House.

Gordon said he was willing to change information on the website if information is found that sheds new light. He noted the church was considered the center of the town. He said settlers often built shacks before building better residences. Gordon did say he thought the house dated to 1680. High Street was one of the earliest roads in the country.

John said records when land was granted give a start to dating a house. Deeds add more evidence. He said the only way to date a house accurately is by dendrochronology.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for December 9th

Linda moved to approve. Lee seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

High Street traffic discussion

John Page expressed concern about the heavy traffic and speed of vehicles traveling on High Street. He said traffic has an impact on historic preservation of houses. He has had damage to his foundation from heavy truck traffic.

The speed limit is 25 MPH in these areas. It was noted that this is not enforced by the Police Department.

John Fiske thought working with the Police Department initially to support the IHC's concerns of heavy traffic and exceeding speed limits in these historic neighborhoods would be a starting point. He suggested making a proposal to the Police Department for awareness of speed in these areas.

It was suggested that the IHC work with the DPW to plant trees and implement other traffic calming strategies when repaving High Street.

It was suggested the IHC represent residents of historic districts when repaving and designing High Street changes.

Steve said the IHC was to be consulted with the High Street repaving project.

Kristen said departments are now meeting regularly – DPW, Planning, Police and that we should write a letter to DPW and Town Manager. Owners should report any damage to houses to the Town Manager.

Tess suggested getting together with neighbors and writing a letter to the Police Department, copying the IHC. If the letter were submitted to the IHC we would unanimously support it.

Demolition Review By-law (DR)

The cut-off point of age of house to be considered by the IHC was discussed.

Two alternatives were debated – cut-off to be considered historic --1900 or more than 75 years old.

A discussion followed to determine if all demolition requests need to be submitted to the IHC or should we not be made aware unless the building meets age criteria and is considered historic.

Tess thought we should evaluate all demolition requests because a house -- no matter what age – can have an impact on the streetscape of a historic neighborhood.

Also discussed – is it necessary to have a public meeting when a DR request is made.

John thought privacy issues for the homeowner would ensue by having an open meeting” at a private residence.

It was noted that the building inspector and assessor's records are not always correct. Also we have had several building inspectors in the past few years and it would be best to have an across the board standard.

In the past John and /or Gordon look at a property, send IHC members photos, then ask via email if a building is thought to be historically significant. IHC members are always invited to look at the property as well. If there is a possibility for the building to be historically significant a public meeting is called.

Steve made a motion that the cut-off date of 1900 be criteria for a property to be considered historic. Linda seconded the motion. Laura abstained. All other members voted in favor

John motioned we accept these changes made to DR by-law 1987. Gordon seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Gordon made a motion for John to work with Kristen to implement these changes. Linda seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Gordon made a motion to present an article to the warrant with amendments of the Demolition Review By-law with Kristen and John fine-tuning. Steve seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Demolition by Neglect

It was suggested that we leave this piece out and address at another town meeting.

Linda noted it was difficult to approach a homeowner with a house in disrepair.

The IHC will research and explore possible grants for the homeowner. The IHC would be perceived more positively by assisting a homeowner with funds available.

Laura made a motion for the meeting to adjourn. Lee seconded. All voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Gresh
Secretary

Minutes approved 2-10-20