

Ipswich Historical Commission Minutes
Meeting March 11, 2019

Members in attendance: John Fiske, Gordon Harris, Steve Miles, Lee Hathaway, Laura Gresh
Ruth Strachan, Kerry Macklin,

Also in attendance pending Alternate Members: Tom and Tess Schutte

Minutes

Minutes for December (2018) meeting and Special Meeting in January (2019)

Steve motioned to accept both minutes

Ruth seconded

Motion carried.

Membership

Chris Morse submitted his resignation from IHC. Chris also served as vice-chair.

John nominated Gordon to vice-chair. Gordon agreed to accept the nomination. Laura seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

Kerry was asked to if she would like to become a voting member from her current Alternate membership. Kerry agreed.

John asked Tom and Tess Schutte if they would be interested in becoming Alternate Members. They said they would and agreed to submit application and resumes to the town manager.

Demo Delay By-law Amendment

Ethan is working to get this on the agenda as a warrant.

It was noted that demolition by neglect" by-laws were not common in most towns in Massachusetts. For the six communities that have this by-law, the public health or building inspector administered the by-law.

Ruth said she attended a seminar on this subject in Lowell and reported that some historic commissions have established a list of buildings that are endangered. Letters are sent to those on this list.

It was noted that the IHC serves the town to protect historic assets and we can only be effective motivators, since we have no enforcement power.

It was noted that a list of endangered properties for neglect should include the entire town.

A house mentioned is at the corner of Green and County.

John suggested inviting the building inspector to a meeting to discuss this. John said he would do this. Kerry said the Community Preservation Act would be a solution to assisting owners who are unable to afford home maintenance.

She also noted that the opinion town-wide seems to be anti-tax and it might not be the right time to introduce this.

Steve said the Affordable Housing and the Open Space commissions would need to be on-board for this to move forward.

Gordon mentioned the available funds in the Harold Bowen fund with \$40,000.

Noted: if assistance were provided to any homeowner for their home, they should be willing to commit to a preservation agreement.

Tom mentioned promoting estate planning to encourage residents to consider and commit funds to add to the Harold Bowen Fund. Increasing the existing Harold Bowen Fund could help provide funds necessary to preserve historic endangered properties.

Demolition Delay discussion continued

The amendment to the by-law should include the following:

1. Increase time from 12 months to 24 months
2. Provide other means of public notice in addition to the newspaper
3. As soon as a property is targeted for demolition, notification to the IHC by all boards involved is mandatory – this will allow appropriate solutions be considered, recommended, and executed.
4. The Board of Public Health would be involved in demolition approval or denial.
5. Risk categories should be established – if an owner claims “hardship”, a definition of “hardship” should be established. Hardship should be applicable to the property and not the homeowner.
6. Perhaps the ZBA stipulation of hardship would be appropriate.
7. Language change – “efforts would include but not be limited to”

Gordon noted that houses built in the 1940s are becoming historic.

Laura mentioned the 5 criteria for designating a property on the National Register. These are:

- The facet of history of the local area, State, or the nation that the property represents;
- Whether that facet of prehistory or history is significant;
- Whether it is a type of property that has relevance and importance in illustrating the historic context;
- How the property illustrates that history; and finally
- Whether the property possesses the physical features (architecture) necessary to convey the aspect of prehistory or history with which it is associated.

John said he preferred a fixed date be established instead of 100 years to define a historic property.

Kerry made a motion to have a cut-off date of 1930 to designate a historic property.

Ruth seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

The plan is to have this warrant for the Town Meeting in October.

Interpretive Signage

Design of the Choate Bridge sign is complete. Edits were noted to make to the sign

Laura will submit edited version to John. Then sign will be ready for fabrication.

A sign for Hammett Street should be next on IHC agenda for signage.

Printing

Gordon said we have \$1000.00 in IHC account.

Laura suggested we have Mary Conley plaques made without date / year awarded. We could then order more plaques for a better price. Date is not necessary.

Gordon motioned that \$800.00 be approved to fabricate 4 Mary Conley Award plaques.

John seconded the motion.

All members voted in favor.

Old Business

The demolition delay for the house on Linebrook has expired and the house is back on the market.

It was mentioned that taking photos to document the house should be taken.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Gresh

Secretary

Minutes approved April 16, 2019