

Newburyport Historical Commission

January 26, 2023

Online Meeting

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Glenn Richards called an online meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Glenn Richards, Joe Morgan, Biff Bouse and Christopher Fay. Andrew Bernhardt and Marc Cendron were absent. Also in attendance were Planning Director Andy Port, Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. Requests for Letter of Support for CPA Funding

a) Perkins Art and Research Center

Bethany Dorau described the plans for the use of the third floor of Perkins Art and Research Center for the enhanced storage of the museum's collections. She said a great number of objects from the history of the community have been donated in recent years. The third and fourth floors of the Cushing House are full of artifacts that need better care. Only one-third of the 240 framed paintings in the collection can be displayed at any one time in the Cushing House.

In the past year, the Museum has studied the feasibility of rehabilitating the Perkins Mint as an archival and storage space. CPA funds are being sought for the first phase of this work, which involves the provision of a climate-controlled storage space on the third floor of the structure. The framed paintings would be stored laterally and flat storage would be provided for unframed pieces.

Joe Morgan asked about the previous work that has been done on the building. Ms. Dorau said the building was donated to the Museum in 2007. The building's envelope has been stabilized and a new roof was installed. The windows and doors were restored in their original locations. Utilities and a rudimentary security system were added. Some remaining masonry issues must be addressed and the stairs must be stabilized for public use. Mr. Morgan commented that the majority of the requested funds would be used for the storage system and he recommended carrying a 10% contingency.

Biff Bouse asked if the building would be used only for storage or if it would be open to members of the public. Ms. Dorau said the third-floor storage area would be accessible to the public for research. In the second phase of the project, the second floor of the building would be rehabilitated for use as a research library and book-storage area. Space would be available for the telling of the story of the Perkins Mint.

Biff Bouse moved to provide a letter of support for the CPA application. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes).

b) Perkins Playground Historical Interpretive Panel

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Dave Pasiuk requested a letter of support for funding for an interpretive panel for the Perkins Playground, which would bring awareness to Joppa's contribution to 19th century life in Newburyport. The area was the site of the Newburyport Gas and Electric Company from the 1850s to the 1930s. The gas produced was used primarily to light the streetlamps in the downtown. The panel would also mention that the park is named for Edward G Perkins, a former City Council president, and the ballfield was named for Sean Perkins, who had been a member of the high school baseball team.

Christopher Fay asked about the treatment of the negative aspect of the site's history, when it was used as a children's playground before remediation took place. Mr. Pasiuk said he has not yet decided how to treat this topic and he would be happy to have the content reviewed.

Joe Morgan said he does not think the panels would qualify for CPA funding. Glenn Richards said the guidelines indicate funds are to be used for tangible resources, and not education, interpretation, or heightening the awareness of history, but CPA funds have been used in the past for similar projects. He said it is a worthy project, but the CPC would have to decide if it qualifies for funding. As he is interested in educational projects and believes in the importance of historical panels, he will write a letter as an individual. The Historical Commission chose not to vote to provide a letter of support.

4. Correspondence

A letter regarding the Atkinson Common Rock Tower CPA application was received and filed.

5. Updates from the Chair

The annual election of the Chair and Vice Chair was postponed to a meeting when more members would be in attendance.

6. Minutes

Biff Bouse moved to approve the minutes of the January 12 meeting. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Biff Bouse, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes).

7. Adjournment

Christopher Fay moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Biff Bouse seconded the motion. The motion was approved.