

Newburyport Historical Commission

February 11, 2021

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, Patricia Peknik, Joe Morgan, Christopher Fay, Malcolm Carnwath and Marc Cendron. Peter McNamee was absent. Also in attendance were Planner Katelyn Sullivan and note taker Gretchen Joy.

3. General Business

a) Newburyport Preservation Trust Request for Support for CPA Application

Andrea Eigerman described the plan for the installation of two interpretive signs to educate the community about the birthplace of William Lloyd Garrison at 3-5 School Street. The signs would be located in Garrison Gardens, a part of Atwood Park. One sign would focus on Garrison himself and the other on the historic structure and the value of preserving it. The Parks Commission has approved of the plan. Patricia Peknik said she is excited about the project. She appreciates the messages about Garrison and that small homes are worthy of preservation.

Malcolm Carnwath moved to provide a letter of support for the Garrison Birthplace Signage application. Christopher Fay seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

b) Newburyport Maritime Society Request for Support for CPA Application

Greg Colling discussed the continuing work that is being done to preserve the Custom House Maritime Museum. The next phase of the work involves the restoration of the front doors and the replacement of the rear doors. The front doors date from approximately 1872. Their restoration and new hardware would make the doors more secure, energy efficient and easier to operate. The existing aluminum storefront doors on the rear façade do not prevent wind and water from entering the building. These doors would be replaced with wood ones appropriate to the period of the structure.

Christopher Fay moved to provide a letter of support for the Custom House Maritime Museum Door Restoration Project application. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Marc Cendron, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

4) Updates from the Chair

a) Fowle's Sign and Storefront

Patricia Peknik provided a presentation on the history of the Fowle's storefront. Stephen Fowle moved his business to this location in 1865. The installation date of the neon sign, which is a focal point on State Street, is unknown. The use of neon began in this country in 1923, but was limited during the Depression due to its cost. Ms. Peknik asked for assistance in determining the date of the sign. She is hopeful that the cars in a photograph of State Street could help date it. The ivory metal band sign dates from 1941. Both signs are protected under the DOD Ordinance and may not be altered without approval from the Historical Commission. Ms. Peknik also asked for assistance in finding a small sign advertising Boston and New York papers had hung below the neon sign. It was in place in January 2012 but was missing in 2013. Chris Skiba of Newburyport Development said he would contact the former tenants of the storefront. The location of a second small sign that was hanging below the neon sign at least until the 1980s is also unknown.

b) Building Code

The item was continued from the previous meeting in order to allow Andy Port to participate in the discussion, but he was not able to be in attendance. Glenn Richards said he discussed the matter with Katelyn Sullivan and Patricia Peknik. He summarized their discussion by saying that while new construction must comply with the building codes, there are exemptions for historic homes. The Building Commission has latitude when determining which features relating to a proposed construction project must be brought up to code.

5. Approval of Minutes

Christopher Fay moved to approve the minutes of the January 28, 2021, meeting. Joe Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Glenn Richards, yes; Patricia Peknik, yes; Joe Morgan, yes; Christopher Fay, yes; Malcolm Carnwath, yes).

6. Adjournment

Marc Cendron moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 p.m. Christopher Fay seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.