

Members

Samuel D. Obar, Chair
Christine M. Cochran, Vice Chair
Kathleen A. Birtwell
George B. Ransom
Roger F. Turner, Jr.
Melissa Totten, Associate



Walpole Historical Commission

Walpole Town Hall
135 School Street
Walpole, MA 02081

The Walpole Historical Commission held a workshop meeting on Thursday, July 20, 2017 at the Walpole Town Hall, Room 116.

The following members were in attendance:

Samuel D. Obar, Regular Member, Chair
Christine M. Cochran, Regular Member, Vice Chair
Kathleen A. Birtwell, Regular Member
George B. Ransom, Regular Member
Roger F. Turner, Jr., Regular Member

The following members were not in attendance:

Melissa Totten, Associate Member

The following guests were in attendance:

John O'Leary, 776 Washington Street

Chairman Sam Obar called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

● **Open Meeting Law**

Mr. Obar briefly summarized what was discussed during the Open Meeting Law seminar held in June. Commission members can not pass notes during the meeting or whisper to each other if there is a chance it may be overheard by another member, constituting a quorum. If a subcommittee is formed, or a group of the Commission is formed that appears to be a subcommittee, it would be subject to the Open Meeting Law. The Commission can only meet at ADA-accessible locations, which means they can not meet at the Deacon Willard Lewis House. If the Commission meets at Town Meeting, this is considered exempt under the Open Meeting Law and would not have to be posted. The chairman is the only person allowed by law to speak during meetings. All communication must go through the chair. All minutes must be approved within a reasonable timeframe, recommended by the Attorney General to be done at the next meeting. The approved minutes must be filed with the Town Clerk. All documents submitted as part of the record must be included with the minutes.

The Attorney General's office also allows a body to approve minutes automatically unless a member objects and wants them on the agenda.

Mr. Obar suggested that the Commission adopt a policy of all minutes being approved automatically unless a member wants to discuss it on the agenda. The chairman will send all minutes to members and if they have amendments for them, they must respond that they want it on the next agenda for discussion. Otherwise, the minutes will be automatically approved.

- **Barn Survey**

George Ransom drafted a survey that would be sent to owners of barns in Walpole. He has a list of all barns in Walpole according to the Assessor Department. He will serve as the point person for the barn survey project, which will be done in conjunction with the Walpole Historical Society. Sam Obar and John Anderson of the Historical Society will draft a cover letter to go with the survey. It will get mailed to each barn property owner. A postcard will be sent as a follow-up to those who do not respond, within 3 weeks. The postage will be partially paid for by the Society and partially paid by the Commission. The letters will be sent in September.

Mr. Obar will be responsible for: drafting the cover letter with John Anderson; obtaining the funding from the Society for half of the postage; setting up the online survey; finalizing the mailing list with Mr. Ransom. Katie Birtwell will be responsible for addressing each envelope. Christine Cochrane and Roger Turner will print the letters. Mr. Ransom will serve as the contact person and will coordinate Commission members going to the barn to take pictures, obtain documentation, etc. All documentation and photos will be stored by the Historical Society.

- **Demolition Delay Bylaw**

Mrs. Cochrane said the Demolition Delay Bylaw, as written, is ineffective. It has not been updated since it was created in 1973.

The Mass. Historical Commission has a model Demolition Delay Bylaw that would serve as a good template for any revisions to our bylaw. Chris Skelly at the MHC would be a good resource.

Mr. Obar asked what the Commission thinks about increasing the demolition delay from six months to something longer. The model bylaw specifies 18 months, though most towns are 12 or 6 months.

Mr. Obar asked the Commission members to consider how long the delay should be and to come to the next meeting with an opinion to be discussed on this issue.

Mr. Obar said he would like to obtain opinion from the Town Counsel as to whether a decision made by the Commission relative to historical significance has a “sunset provision.”

Mr. Ransom developed a survey/checklist to use when members look at a historic house.

The model bylaw includes a provision for collecting an administration fee. Mr. Obar is to ask Mr. Skelly what other towns have Historical Commission fees, and what the average fee is.

The Commission discussed making the following changes to the Demolition Delay Bylaw: adding a definition of “bona fide” in the definitions section; removing superfluous words in Section 3; adding the word “completed” in Section 4 and adding a sentence that a determination may be postponed with the written consent of the applicant; fixing a typo in Section 5; adding a new section called “Administration” based on the model bylaw; and replacing the language in the “Enforcement” section with language from the model bylaw.

The Commission will review the changes at the next meeting.

- **Town Hall Attic Records**

Mr. Obar noted that we have a list from the Finance Director of the records stored in the Town Hall attic. They have not been destroyed yet. If we want copies, we should review the list and we can obtain copies. No further action needs to be taken at this time.

- **Other items not reasonably anticipated by the chair 48 hours in advance**

The Commission received a letter from the FCC regarding an antenna being placed in South Norwood.

The Commission has received correspondence from the MBTA and Mr. Obar suggests that the Commission use the MBTA’s request for feedback to their projects as an opportunity to convince the MBTA to agree to allow a National Historic Register plaque to be placed at Union Station. The chairman will determine a course to take on this.

Mr. Ransom made a motion to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Turner seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 5-0-0.