

Hadley Historical Commission Minutes for February 28, 2017 Compiled by Jeffrey Mish

Members Present: Jeffrey Mish, Margaret Freeman, Kate Kentfield, Carolyn Holstein

Members Absent: Marjorie Pratt Townsend, Tom McGee, Ginger Goldsbury

Guests: David Moskin, Dan Regish, Todd Ford

Meeting came to order at 7:00 on a motion from Kentfield, Freeman seconded.

The February 21, 2017 minutes were approved; the November and January minutes could not be approved due to an absence of members who were present at each respective meeting.

County Courthouse

Todd Ford of the Hampshire Council of Governments came to the meeting requesting that the Commission endorse the Council's plan to restore the Hampshire County Courthouse in Northampton. The courthouse was built in 1886 and has only undergone minimal restoration since (a window replacement in the 1970s). The Council would like each town in Hampshire County to provide funds relative to their population size based on an even share of 1.3 million dollars per town if population was not being considered. The project is being done in phases (Phase I, the steps, has already been completed) and the Council is currently seeking funding for restoration of the tower (Phase II), which costs 1.5 million dollars to complete.

Kentfield asked if there was a deadline, to which Ford responded that there was not one, and that payments could be given in increments. He also clarified that it's the Commission's role to decide whether or not the building is historic and worthy of preservation, and not to make the final decision about giving funds to the project. If the Commission endorses the project, then the town is responsible for choosing whether or not to fund it. Kentfield said that the Commission would get back to Ford at a later date.

Historic Preservation

Library Trustee, David Moskin, and Building Committee member, Dan Regish, showed up to discuss historic preservation issues.

Regish began by emphasizing that the Building Committee believes that Russell School should be saved, but has put it on the back burner in light of more pressing issues with the library and North Hadley Hall. Moskin added that not all library trustees want to destroy Hooker School and asked Regish if the Building Committee was convinced that Hooker School would not be suited for a library. Regish responded by saying that Hooker School, as well as Russell School, were built before Hadley had a dike, and were thus constructed to avoid flooding (entrances above ground level, many steps), which no longer meets current building codes. He also mentioned that there is an issue with the heating system, as well as health concerns.

Regish suggested that the Commission secure funds for documenting Hooker School in its entirety (exterior, interior, and material culture) before it is demolished. Moskin said that he knows Steve Schreiber of the Umass Architecture Department, and could ask him if a student would undertake the project.

Regish also stated that by knocking down Hooker School to create a new library the town is “taking from history to make history,” reminding everyone that one day the new library will be considered a historic structure, and should thus incorporate pieces of Hooker School in its design and construction as a way to unite the present and past.

Regish mentioned that other disassembled pieces of Hooker School could be auctioned off to make money for the Commission.

Moskin said that not enough money was being budgeted for the proper maintenance of the town’s buildings, adding that the preservation of historic structures has been “criminally underfunded.” He suggested that the Commission put pressure on the Selectmen to restructure the town budget, as he believes a disproportionate amount of money goes to salaries and wages.

Moskin and Regish believe that taxes will have to go up to achieve preservation costs.

Moskin said that Umass has purchased twenty-seven acres from Montgomery Rose on River Drive, suggesting that the Commission ask Umass to donate four acres to the town for the proposed substation that is threatening North Hadley Hall. Regish told him that the land might be in APR.

Regish said that the Building Committee would back the Commission to get CPA money to update the Old Mohawk Study of historic structures.

The Commission voted to hold a special meeting on March 14th.

Kentfield made a motion to adjourn at 9:10, Holstein seconded.