

Meeting Minutes

APPROVED

Local Historic District Study Committee

Monday, July 10, 2023

12 Kent Way, 2nd Floor Hearing Room

Members Present: Chair Robin Etheridge, Vice Chair Joy Michaud, Secretary Elizabeth Paliga, Lon Hachmeister

Members Absent: N/A

Committee Chair, Robin Etheridge, opened the meeting at 5:38 p.m.

Elect Committee Chair, Vice Chair & Secretary for New Committee Term

Joy Michaud nominated Robin Etheridge as Chair, Lon Hachmeister seconded, and the motion passed. Robin Etheridge nominated Joy Michaud as Vice Chair, Elizabeth Paliga seconded, and the motion passed. Robin Etheridge nominated Elizabeth Paliga as Secretary, Joy Michaud seconded, and the motion passed.

Motion: A motion was made to elect Robin Etheridge as Chair and was passed by all present.

Motion: A motion was made to elect Joy Michaud as Vice Chair and was passed by all present.

Motion: A motion was made to elect Elizabeth Paliga as Secretary and was passed by all present.

Reading of the Lower Green Study Committee's Mission Statement and Purpose & Goals

Vice Chair, Joy Michaud, read the Mission Statement and Purpose & Goals into the record.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes from the April 12th meeting, which was passed by all present.

Review Status of Newbury Citizen Survey:

Secretary, Elizabeth Paliga, updated the citizen survey following feedback from community members at the information session on Saturday, July 08, adding the question "Are you a resident of Newbury?" as a required first question. Similarly, an option to include a name as well as address was amended. The updated survey has been uploaded as a SurveyMonkey link to the Local Historic District Study Committee webpage on the town website. Committee member, Lon Hachmeister mentioned it could be a good idea to send the proposed second survey (about specific features that the local historic district would protect or exempt from review) out on a watermarked page with the quarterly town taxes. Lon will follow up with Julie on if that is possible and what the process might be if it is. Joy brought up Newbury Cultural Council grants as a possible way to fund such an endeavor as the committee has no designated budget and will look into this.

Elizabeth mentioned the email the committee received from the Newbury Day Committee and asked if it might be possible to include our survey with their own which they intend to send out this summer. Robin Etheridge will follow up on this. Lon said it is important to make sure not just the QR code is included but also the web address for those who are unable to scan QR codes.

Comments from Newbury's Planning Board and Select Board Regarding the Work of the Lower Green Study Committee:

Lon has not yet gone before the Planning and Select Boards to inform them of our efforts. First it is important to have a summary statement of significance for the area of the Lower Green and the process of the study committee. He will work on writing up such a statement for approval at the next study committee meeting.

Review Energy Efficiency in Local Historic Districts FAQs:

Joy read the questions aloud and Elizabeth asked that any comments, edits or additional questions from committee members be emailed for inclusion and approval at the next committee meeting.

Update on Lower Green Historic District Statement of Significance:

This was something former committee member, Madison Vlass, was working on and the committee has no updates at this time. It is felt that in order to be more efficient and make more meaningful progress, the study committee needs to form sub-committees to start researching parts of the study report in manageable chunks. One such committee, consisting of Lon and Joy, will write an introductory paragraph or précis for comment and approval at the next meeting. Elizabeth mentioned that many other study committees hire a consultant to help with this research and report writing because it includes a monumental amount of research to be done into the history, narrative, architecture and significance of the area. The cultural council grants Joy mentioned may be a good resource for this type of consultant. Elizabeth also mentioned that the research required for the study report will be a good starting point for any National Register or State Register nominations in the future. Further discussion on sub-committees occurred. It was decided that in order to better break up the study report into chunks, Elizabeth & Robin will create a study report outline for the next meeting.

Review of Proposed Boundaries of Lower Green Local Historic District

Robin then read the following statement into the record:

‘The Historic Districts Act has served Massachusetts’ communities well for over fifty years, helping to protect thousands of significant historic resources. Because local historic districts have direct impact on property rights, the question of their legal basis and constitutionality often arises. Historic district controls exist within the broader context of land use regulations that have been extensively reviewed and examined by the Courts.

During the course of the Lower Green Historic District Study Committee’s deliberations & meetings, at least two properties abutting the Lower Green have presented their concerns about inclusion in the proposed Local Historic District. The Lower Green Historic District Study Committee would prefer that the proposed Lower Green Local Historic District and regulations should encompass all properties, amongst others, abutting the Lower Green, in line with Massachusetts Historical Commission practice. However, in recognition of the abovementioned concerns, the Lower Green Historic District Study Committee proposes that several properties that are currently in the course of development/renovation/restoration at this time should be exempt from the Lower Green Local Historic District Regulations at this time.

In addition, property that may be considered has an abandoned, non-restorable structure which could be developed in the future. It is significant in that it completely encompasses the First Settlers Burial Ground, a historically significant property that should be protected. We are recommending a similar exemption to this property if it is included within the Local Historic District boundary until we approach the owner and ascertain how to treat this significant historic landmark located completely within a developable piece of private property.

The properties concerned are 240 High Road, 277 High Road, & 2 Cottage Road.

Motion: A motion was made to approve this statement and was passed by all present.

Additional Business:

With the departure of committee member Madison Vlass, the committee is seeking to fill its fifth position. After a discussion, it was determined Robin will approach the Select Board and put forward Patricia Skibble & Bethany Groff-Dorau as possible replacements on the committee.

Motion: A motion was made to recommend the abovementioned names to the Select Board for appointment to the study committee and was passed by all present.

The committee then discussed Newbury Day, which will occur in August. The study committee will have a table for the proceedings and discussed which committee members would be present. Preparation will be discussed at a future date.

Robin acknowledged the successful information session that occurred on Saturday, July 8th, at the Lower Green Schoolhouse. The committee will host a further two information sessions later this year, on dates and at locations yet to be determined but intending to encourage as much community involvement as possible.

Also, on Saturday, members of the First Sons & Daughters of Newbury invited the study committee to view old maps of they have of the Lower Green. Robin has begun the process to gain access to their archives.

Regarding community outreach, Joy read the committee's email & mailing address into record:

LHDSCCommittee@townofnewbury.com

LHDSC
Town Hall
12 Kent Way
Suite 200
Byfield, MA 01922

Elizabeth will continue to try to get onto Newbury social media.

The Newburyport Daily News published an article on the proceedings of the study committee and will want to follow up at a later date once future things happen. Lon mentioned a future sub-committee should analyze the data of the current survey.

Public Comment:

There were no public comments at this meeting.

Adjournment:

The next meeting of the Local Historic District Study Committee was set for **Tuesday, August 15th at 5:30 p.m.**

The committee adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Elizabeth Paliga". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end of the name.

Elizabeth Paliga

Secretary, Local Historic District Study Committee