

Town of Sutton
Historic Commission Meeting Minutes
November 28, 2023

Approval
4/10/24
3-0
MB

Meeting Started at 7:07 p.m. via Hybrid

Members Present:

Keith Downer – Chairman
Mark Brown – Clerk
Paul Dunn – Member
Rochelle Forsythe – Member

Members Absent:

Donna Rossio – Member
Christopher Leary – Member

Review and Approve Minutes:

August 29, 2023 minutes approval was tabled as there were insufficient members present to vote on them.

Public Forum:

Brian Stevenson, 664 Central Turnpike.

1. As a representative of the Sutton Historical Society (SHS): General Rufus Putnam Building (houses the Museum)
 - a. Building is owned by the Town of Sutton.
 - b. The SHS's use of the build is via a "verbal agreement" with the Town of Sutton. There is no formal lease etc.
 - c. This informal arrangement has been equitable to date, however, SHS has just voted to invest \$12,000 in improvements on the building to safeguard the museum artifacts stored within (Replacement Storm Windows, Pest Control, Gutters Cleaned and Locks Changed).
 - d. With this investment and the lack of a formal agreement, there is concern among the SHS membership that the Town of Sutton could repurpose the build and the value of SHS's investment would be lost.
 - e. SHS is requesting the Historic Commission's assistance in obtaining a lease for the build with the Town of Sutton.

Comments/Questions

R. Forsythe (member of both organizations), no comments, but does feel a formal agreement is needed.

M. Brown asks whether the lack of a lease impacts SHS's ability to apply for grants for these improvements. B. Stevenson is not sure, but, will look into. M. Brown also agrees that the lack of a lease does pose a risk for SHS's investment.

P. Dunn, not sure how a lease with the town is initiated. He had assumed that SHS had a lease as the Water's Farm organization does for that property.

K. Downer, recalls that there was a previous town warrant regarding the use of this building by the SHS. B. Stevenson responds that it was in the 1980's and that it was more of a "maintenance agreement". K. Downer asks B. Stevenson to confirm the scope of the planned \$12k investment (listed above). He is not sure how the conditions of a building lease with the town may differ from those of Water's Farm (which was a gift to the town). He also asks B. Stevenson to confirm that SHS has previously invested in a new heating system for that build (confirmed the approximate \$3000 investment). As the building is presently part of a Massachusetts Historical Commission registered historical district (Sutton Center) it is appropriate to request assistance from Sutton Historic Commission.

M. Brown, followup question on the storm windows affecting the historic nature of the building. B. Stevenson responds that this is an enhancement of existing windows not a new addition.

P. Dunn, comments that the proposed single-pane storm window enhancement is actually more historically accurate than what is currently on the building.

K. Downer requests that B. Stevenson prepare a proposal for the Historic Commission prior to the next town meeting.

2. As a citizen of the Town of Sutton:

- a. Concerned about the Town of Sutton's proposed alteration of the Town Common to add additional parking and how it might drastically effect the Common as a whole.
- b. Shaw Farm, the property is under utilized. Comments that Sutton is an agriculture based town and that the numbers of the town youth that attend Norfolk Agricultural High School supports that need. Also, notes the success of the local 4-H organization. Feels the Shaw barn should be put to use rather than demolished.

Comments/Questions

K. Downer states for clarity that neither of these issues have been brought before the board at this time.

B. Stevenson clarifies that he is not asking for anything at this time, he just wants to bring these topics to the commissions attention.

R. Forsythe has no comments but has heard the general concerns and feels that now would be the time to address them.

P. Dunn for confirmation that the Commission made a statement against the Common alteration ~8 years ago.

K. Downer confirmed the statement, Massachusetts general law states as the land is common (though some dispute that), any alterations need to be brought up for a vote at a Town Meeting. This slowed/halted the proposal at the time (recalls that proposal involved changes to make right hand turns by Fire Apparatus exiting the station easier). Regarding the Shaw barn, he refers to the failed attempt to introduce a demolition by-law that supported the opportunity to repair/relocate buildings of historical value over demolition.

Public Hearing: None.

Board Business:

Review of Application for Special Permit for 120 Burbank Road, creation of 5 lots from existing property.

K. Downer notes that there are no known documented areas impacted by this project, however there are to the East and South East of the property.

P. Dunn, not sure of relevancy, but notes the way the common driveway is presented in the document seems strange to him, not sure if there may be others.

M. Brown comments that the existing house is being demolished to make an access way. K. Downer and P. Dunn comment on house has some age and is past farm land, but, no known significance/impact. The property is listed in the Massachusetts Historical Commissions registry.

Department of the Army (US Army Corps of Engineers) regarding Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife's application to permit the permanent discharge of fill to lower the High Water Mark of Singletary Brook to allow the removal of Schoolhouse Pond Dam and replace the culvert.

K. Downer, this is the continuation of a current project. This is an informational packet and is not a request for comment from the Historic Commission.

P. Dunn comments that the dams where built for a reason and now they are being removed (good for the environment). We are essentially choosing our histories, just find it interesting.

Old Business: None

New Business:

K. Downer just states that we as a Board should take note of the upcoming town projects and be aware and prepared.

Announcements / Correspondence:

K. Downer received notification that updates (Period of July 4th - June 30th) for the Annual Report are due by February 13th 2024.

K. Downer letter of retirement from the Historic Commission after over 25 years of service. He feels there is a need for fresh ideas and perspectives. He sees some challenges in the future and questions the towns interest in preserving the rural nature as it exists today.

* A motion to adjourn was made by M. Brown and seconded by R. Forsythe at 7:51p.m., it was carried. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:

Keith Downer, Chair

