

Town of Stockbridge Historical Commission
Minutes of Meeting
August 23, 2023

The Town of Stockbridge Historical SHC (SHC) held a Zoom meeting on Wednesday, August 23, 2023, beginning at 10:30 AM. Present were Chairman Linda Jackson, Maria Carr, and Clerk Peter Williams, constituting all members of the SHC. Ms. Jackson presided over the meeting. The meeting's agenda, date, time and place were duly posted at the Town Offices at least two business days in advance of the meeting. The purpose of the meeting, as stated in the public notice, was for the SHC to review with the Town Administrator Michael Canales the status of Town historic assets.

Mr. Canales was unable to access Zoom on a computer and so attended via telephone connection and was unable "share screen."

Chime Tower: Mr. Canales reported that the Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, longstanding experts in the field, had been awarded the contract to replace the bell frame racking system and to restore the chime stand and related parts. Some of the "internals" already have been removed and are being restored. Per the SHC's recommendation the one additional bell that was added in the 70s is being retained. Verdin has built the new racking system and plans to do the installation during the period from September 26th through October 5th. The bells will come out that week and be stored in the DPW garage. Verdin can do it all in one week. Next up (a different contractor and contract) will be the cupola work. A final report from EDM will be coming and will be shared with the SHC. The parties discussed the best approach for matching slate, etc.

George Washington Plaque: This historic plaque, formally in front of the Town Offices, is in Mr. Canales' office. Ms. Carr asked about the possibility of displaying the plaque in a display cabinet in the front hall by the George Washington statue there. Ms. Jackson noted that, regarding such a potential display in the Town Offices, it would be good to get the Stockbridge Munsee Community involved, perhaps chronicling the gift by Washington to the tribe for having supported the Revolution. Ms. Carr has a photo of the stone stand that formally held the plaque. Ms. Carr also has the history re why we had the plaque: in 1932, in honor of Washington's 200th birthday, Congress passed an act setting up a United States Bicentennial Commission with the President of the U.S. as its chairman. It was a nationwide celebration in which every state, city, and town, along with many organizations and institutions, as well as individuals, would participate. Mr. Canales stated that if the SHC wants to put together recommendations regarding what should be in a display case in the front foyer of the Town Offices, that would be good; and this detail would affect the size, etc. of the display case. Ms. Carr noted that three historic plaques are in Procter Hall, and perhaps it would be good to have a second display case with the plaques from the Hall. Ms. Jackson volunteered to review certain

materials related to Mount Vernon that Rick Wilcox has. Ms. Carr also noted that there also is stored in the Town Offices a plaque re Alexis de Tocqueville, given to the town by CSPAN following a series that it did retracing de Tocqueville's historic trip through the United States in 1831. De Tocqueville came to Stockbridge to meet with the Sedgwicks. Maria will send Michael a copy of a photo of the plaque. There was discussion that the plaques in Procter Hall should be removed before the building is turned over to a new owner. Maria will send Mr. Canales photos of those plaques.

Procter Hall: Mr. Canales stated his belief that a sale is close to happening between the Church and the Waldorf school. The Town position is that the property has no value to the Town. The Church will notify the Town that the lease is over and then the town will need to decide if it would contest that. The building would go back to the Church and the Church would sell to Waldorf. Ms. Jackson suggested that Waldorf should have a historical room somewhere in the Hall and that the Procter gift plaque should stay in the building. For now, Mr. Canales stated, the Town still controls the building. Once the Town gets notice that a sale is happening, we'll need to decide what should stay there and what should be removed.

Potential Storage of Historic Artifacts in Town Offices: Ms. Jackson inquired whether we have a space in the Town Offices where historic materials could be stored. Mr. Canales said that a tenant has vacated space in the Offices that might work and there was discussion of keeping that space available to store materials from Procter Hall.

Soldiers Memorial: Mr. Canales reported that the restoration work on the Memorial is done. Allegrone and Amanda Trienens did the work. A towns person has asked about a light to illuminate the monument. Ms. Jackson would like to see a fence, which you could hang wreaths on. There are old photos of the fence of the past. Mr. Canales will ask Amanda if her group could come up with proposed fencing. Maria has the old photos of the Memorial with the fence around it. If we want lighting, we could put in solar lights, Mr. Canales suggested. Mr. Jackson thinks the fence is a greater priority and that Ms. Trienens could find a good fence, perhaps of aluminum. Mr. Canales will contact her, and Ms. Carr will send Mr. Canales historic photos of the fence.

Town Cemetery: The Cemetery Commission has scheduled two more cleaning weeks for volunteers. Preservation Inc. also will be conducting two days of training of the Highway Department to learn to reset old stones. The Sargeant tombs restoration is underway. The group briefly discussed how best to support the tombstones when they are re-raised off of the ground. Preservation Inc. is thinking of putting the stones up on a more stable foundation than the historic posts to be safer. Ms. Jackson stated that Preservation, Inc. should document what they find, and Mr. Canales and Mr. Williams stated that Preservation Inc. is doing this.

Stone Arch Bridge: Mr. Canales reported that over the last 18-24 months, since the bridge was closed with fencing, the Selectboard has been looking at a few options, and

is now looking at one more possibility. (The bridge will collapse sooner or later if nothing is done.) One option is to remove the bridge and make a pedestrian bridge over the utility "bridge" that is there. If that option were followed, it would still require something to be done with the wing walls. Option 2: Take down bridge, save stones, build a new bridge and make the new bridge a Chapter 85 bridge that could accommodate cars. Option 3: This is the newest possibility, currently in the early stages of investigation, which involves work that would save the bridge but only allow it to be used as a pedestrian bridge. Ms. Jackson noted that the Town took \$50K in historic preservation funds from the state and the SHC should be involved from the beginning. Mr. Canales said that there is no plan right now; just a concept to see if the bridge could be saved. Mr. Canales thinks the 10-year restriction based upon the state funds would be lifted in 2025, 10 years since the funding. There might be state money for a chapter 85 bridge. The other 2 options would likely be just Stockbridge funds, unless perhaps the MHC might help with option 3, but state monies are not substantial for historic restoration. Michael will send the SHC a copy of the "option 3" proposal. Ms. Jackson noted another possible source of some funds: Save America's Treasures. She is not sure that bridges would qualify. Also maybe check the Middlefield bridges; check for what they are doing. Mr. Canales says that the lack of maintenance is a problem for us; last was in 1997. Even that work identified more to be done, but nothing was done. Finally bridge was closed by the state in 2012. Nothing done since then either. We should have maintained the bridge all along. Since it has been closed, we have new higher standards to meet. Ms. Jackson expressed appreciation that the Town is listening to more opinions as to how the bridge might be saved. Mr. Canales says there is some splitting and pulling apart on the foundations now happening.

Tuckerman Bridge: Mr. Canales stated that the two foundations that underlie the bridge are both in good shape, and those are the most historic. He believes that the metal superstructure is not very unique. But the foundations are stone-set which is unique. It's a bit concerning they are on sand, not bedrock, but this can be addressed by pouring concrete around them and get that down to the bedrock. The bridge keeps dropping in weight class, so the plan is to close the bridge for about 18 months, and then the steel top will be replaced. This will be Town funds, not the state. We are getting the designs done now in advance. Mr. Canales has applied for some grants. And we have some funding in place. Tuckerman time frame: now in design and engineering; then submit to State; takes a year; then out to bid, then close the bridge so superstructure can be removed, etc. Total about 3 years. We have town funding of about \$2 million set aside. It is valuable that we can reuse the foundations; that saves many millions of dollars. Ms. Jackson wondered about the metal superstructure. Mr. Canales stated that there will be an all-new superstructure. The stone piers are being saved. The bridge was replaced in the past, Mr. Canales stated, and Ms. Carr agreed that there was an old bridge there before. Ms. Jackson stated that the present bridge has been there a long time and that it may be listed in the Main Street National Register Historic District. The SHC will check this point and get back to Mr. Canales. Mr. Canales said that the current plan is to replace what is there now in a very similar way. ["The SHC checked and the

Tuckerman Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places."]

Community Preservation Plan: Stockbridge has no such plan now; such a plan covers more than just historic assets. Mr. Canales stated that we are putting together some materials along those lines; he thinks this might be a CPC responsibility. Ms. Jackson said that it should be a town expense; there is not enough CPC money to fund creation of such a plan.

Second Averic Road bridge: This bridge is in design phase in the small bridge program. Mr. Canales can seek funding for that. The new bridge will be like the current, first, one, although he understands that some people don't like the guardrails, they are required by state law. Ms. Carr wonders what happened to the old fencing that was near the bridge. They were historic as fabricated at the factory there and were similar to what is on the Curtisville bridge now. Mr. Canales notes that if the Curtisville bridge is reconstructed for car traffic, it will have to have modern guardrails. If it's just a pedestrian bridge we will have more flexibility. Ms. Jackson stated that we should keep historic features that are not being used in reconstruction and chronicle them. We need to keep an eye on that in contracts.

The SHC adjourned the meeting at 11:32 AM.

Dated: Stockbridge, Massachusetts
February 15, 2024

Peter C. Williams
Peter C. Williams
Clerk