

**Town of Stockbridge Historical Commission**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**February 21, 2023**

The Town of Stockbridge Historical SHC (SHC) held a hybrid meeting at the Town Offices on Tuesday, February 21, 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 the FY24 applications to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for funds relating to Town historic resources.

Prior to the meeting, individual SHC members had reviewed the Community Preservation Act (CPA) as amended most recently on August 11, 2016, and the CPA's relevant procedures as summarized in the Community Preservation Coalition flow chart entitled "Qualifying Historic Projects for CPA Funding" (the "Flow Chart," attached hereto). The SHC also had reviewed a statutory language excerpt entitled "Excerpts from CPA re Preservation of Historic Resources" (attached hereto) that was prepared by Mr. Williams and which quotes relevant excerpts from the CPA.

Ms. Jackson noted that we have six proposed historic project applications to consider. The goal is to determine whether each project qualifies under the CPA. The SHC then reviewed the current CPA applications.

Berkshire Theater Group (Rehabilitation/restoration of roof, dormers and cupola): The Commission began its review of this application pursuant to the three steps in the attached CPC Flow Chart and concluded that the first two steps are satisfied, i.e., the application involves a "building", namely the Berkshire Theatre Festival Playhouse on the BTG campus (step 1) and that building is individually listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places (step 2). Turning to the third step, whether the proposed project would preserve, rehabilitate or restore the historic resource, the Commission found that the proposed historic rehabilitation/restoration work (part of a larger, long-term rehabilitation/restoration project) involves capital improvements or extraordinary repairs to the Playhouse, or restoration thereof, which is to be accomplished according to the Secretary's Standards, and so the proposed work constitutes rehabilitation and/or restoration under the CPA.

Beerkschire Waldorf High School (Rehabilitation/restoration of Old Town Hall): This project seeks funds to rehabilitate the Old Town Hall located in the Main Street National Register Historic District, to which it is a contributing building (steps 1 and 2). The SHC next considered step 3. The proposed work for which funding is sought in the present application is to rehabilitate and/or restore both the exterior and interior of the Hall.

According to the presented drawings, the exterior is to be restored with no significant changes except to enable compliance with the ADA, while the interior is to be rehabilitated in part, with some changes. The estimated cost of the entire project is \$4.2 million. A \$292K bid to remove asbestos and other toxic interior features is included with the application, as well \$264K bid for ADA and accessibility upgrades. The SHC found that the proposed work constitutes rehabilitation and/or restoration of the Hall as defined in the CPA.

Chesterwood : This application seeks funding for the restoration of the brick walls in Chesterwood's Studio Garden; the walls are a structure integral to Chesterwood, and thus covered under CPA step 1. The Commission has previously noted that Chesterwood is listed on the National and State Register of Historic Places. The Commission next turned to whether the proposed work constitutes rehabilitation and/or restoration of the walls under the CPA. The proposed work is set forth in detail in the application. The work's total cost is \$135,900 and \$20,000 of CPA funds is requested. The Commission found that the work meets the requisite definitions under the CPA.

Town of Stockbridge / Sergeant Tombs Restoration: This application is to continue the preservation and restoration of two fallen table tombs in the Stockbridge Cemetery. The Cemetery is within the boundaries of the Main Street National Register Historic District and is listed as contributing thereto. The tombs are those of John Sergeant and his wife Abigail. John Sergeant was the appointed Colonial missionary to the Indigenous people living within the boundaries of Stockbridge at the time of Sergeant's appointment in the 1730s. Sergeant is central to the early history of Stockbridge, which was chartered by the General Court as a mission to the Indigenous people. The tombs are artifacts within the meaning of the CPA, thus meeting the step 1 threshold. Regarding step 2, John Sergeant's tomb is cited in the Main Street National Register Historic District Registration Form as individually contributing to the District (Sec 7, p. 21). Abigail Sergeant's tomb is not so listed; however, the SHC found that her companion stone to her husband's is significant to the history of Stockbridge. Accordingly step 2 of the CPA test is satisfied. Finally, step 3 is satisfied, as the proposed work is to preserve and/or restore the two tombs.

Stockbridge Library, Museum & Archives (SLMA) (first application): This project seeks funds to preserve and restore 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs that are part of the Anson Clark photography collection located in the SLMA. Step 1: the photographs are "artifacts" under the CPA. Regarding step 2, the SHC considered whether the photographs are significant to the history or culture of Stockbridge, and the SHC found in the affirmative for the following reasons. Anson Clark was a local pioneer of photography working in Stockbridge and West Stockbridge during the 1840s and 1850s, and he resided in Curtisville. Most significantly, he created in 1845 the only known photograph of Agrippa Hull, a seminal African-American figure in the history of Stockbridge. The Hull photograph is one of 9 images in the Anson Clark Collection, donated to the SLMA in

1949. The Hull photograph has been conserved; the other 8 have not been conserved and are the subject of this application. One of the photographs, dated 1841, is a very early image of the center of West Stockbridge, the town bordering Stockbridge to the west. The others appear to date from the same time period and show scenes and/or people. The preservation of the entire collection is important, as collectively the images depict very early images of the historic people, architecture and culture of Stockbridge and its environs. Regarding step 3, the SHC found that the proposed project, which involves a professional conservator, retired from the George Eastman House, competently preserving these delicate artifacts and this work constitutes preservation of the artifacts under the CPA.

Stockbridge Library, Museum & Archives (SLMA) (second application): This project seeks \$5,600 in unmatched funds to digitize master microfilm reels that contain important historical records of Stockbridge. The reels of microfilm qualify as artifacts (step 1) and so the next question is whether they are significant to the history or culture of Stockbridge (step 2). The SHC answered this question in the affirmative. The reels in question contain three sets of records: (1) Stockbridge Congregational Church (1766-1850), (2) Berkshire Playhouse Scrapbooks (1928-1978) and (3) the Berkshire News (a Stockbridge publication) (1890-95); each is fundamental to the history and culture of Stockbridge. As elaborated in greater detail in the application, the Church records depict colonial Town social trends, customs and people; the Scrapbooks chronicle early-mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century arts and culture in Stockbridge, and the Berkshire News reports on 19<sup>th</sup> century Stockbridge history. The final question is whether the digitization of these historic records qualifies as “preservation” of these historic assets under the CPA. To answer this question, the SHC researched whether other similar digitization projects have been approved under the CPA, and the SHC found numerous examples in the affirmative. See <https://www.communitypreservation.org/advanced-search?keywords=digitize>. Accordingly, the SHC found that the plan to have a highly-regarded contractor digitize the historic records qualifies as preservation thereof under the CPA.

These minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved by the SHC prior to the close of the meeting.

The SHC adjourned the meeting at 11:38 AM.

Dated: Stockbridge, Massachusetts  
February 21, 2023

Peter C. Williams  
Peter C. Williams  
Clerk

Attachments:

**Excerpts from CPA re  
Preservation of Historic Resources (emphasis added)**

Section 5(b)(1): The community preservation committee shall study the needs, possibilities and resources of the city or town regarding community preservation, including the consideration of regional projects for community preservation. **The committee shall consult with existing municipal boards, including the conservation SHC, the historical SHC, the planning board, the board of park SHCers and the housing authority, or persons acting in those capacities or performing like duties, in conducting such studies.**

Section 5(b)(2): "The community preservation committee shall make recommendations to the legislative body [the Town Meeting] ... for the acquisition, **preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources ....**"

Section 2 (Definitions):

**"Historic resources"**, a building, structure, vessel, real property, document or artifact that is *listed on the state register of historic places or has been determined by the local historic preservation SHC to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture or culture of a city or town.*

**"Preservation"**, protection of personal or real property from injury, harm or destruction.

**"Rehabilitation"**, capital improvements, or the making of extraordinary repairs, to historic resources, open spaces, lands for recreational use and community housing for the purpose of making such historic resources, open spaces, lands for recreational use and community housing functional for their intended uses, including, but not limited to, improvements to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal, state or local building or access codes; provided, that with respect to historic resources, "rehabilitation" shall comply with the Standards for Rehabilitation stated in the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties codified in 36 C.F.R. Part 68....

**"Restoration"** is not defined in the CPA.]

*Prepared by PCW, 2/4/15*

## Qualifying Historic Projects for CPA Funding

