

NORWICH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Wednesday, August 5, 2020

Meeting was held by Zoom platform due to COVID-19

Members Present: Deb Brien, Anne Silberfarb, Jess Phelps, Folger Tuggle, Phil Zea, Nancy Osgood

Members absent: Bill Aldrich

Also present: Rod Francis, Norwich Planning and Zoning Director and Certified Local Government Coordinator, and Peter Brink, past vice-chair of the NHPC

Acting chair, Nancy Osgood, called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm

1. Approval of Agenda
Phil Zea moved, and Folger Tuggle seconded the motion to approve the meeting agenda as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.
2. Review and Approval of Minutes from the last NHPC meeting of November 11, 2019
Deb Brien moved, and Anne Silberfarb seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the November 11, 2019 meeting as circulated. The motion passed with four yays and one abstention.
3. Election of Officers
There being no other nominations, Anne Silberfarb moved, and Deb Brien seconded the motion to elect Nancy Osgood as Chair and Phil Zea as Vice Chair of the commission. The motion passed unanimously.
4. Review draft RFP for the Norwich Barn Survey
Rod Francis began the review of the draft RFP by illustrating the parameters of the barn survey, noting that structures built after 1970 would not be included, and walking the commission through the outline of the project and the RFP. There was discussion as to the definition of a barn for the purpose of this project and whether there is a need for the commission and the RFP to include a clear definition of the word "barn" and whether historic barns that are no longer used for agricultural purposes should be included, for example the barn at Happy Hill. There was consensus that regardless of current use, those structures should be included. There was also discussion regarding extant historic ancillary structures such as chicken coops, sheds, and corn cribs and whether they should be included. Several members felt they should be mentioned in the context of how the buildings related to one another, how the farm was laid out and worked. There are sections in the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation standard survey form to note related structures and write full architectural descriptions of the farm buildings and their significance.

Rod Francis summarized the contractor selection criteria making special mention of the need to track volunteer hours and make sure the maximum grant funds can be extended to the town. This updated RFP format puts the responsibility of maximizing and

documenting volunteer time on the consultant and ties their compensation to performance on this point. The updated format also institutes more consultant accountability by requiring them to submit monthly reports and adhere to deadlines during the course of the contract.

Due to Covid-19 parameters, the only accepted method of submission for contractor proposals will be email.

Phil Zea emphasized the need for review of photographic archives as evidence of historic barns that are no longer extant and that they be included in the survey. Nancy Osgood noted the importance of photographs and other visual representations of these structures to document the evolution of the structures and how their use may have changed over time.

Peter Brink made the point that the desire of the commission is to use the survey to not only document these barns, but also to educate and encourage preservation of these buildings. This will be achieved in part by a public program offered by the consultant and information posted under "Historic Preservation" on the Norwich Historical Society's website.

Folger Tuggle raised the question of whether the selected contractor might use subcontractors, and whether the commission approves of and is inclined to allow that arrangement. Peter suggested that such an arrangement would need to be spelled out in the final contract and Rod indicated that language addressing that will in fact be included.

There was discussion as whether Covid precautions might impact the efficacy of the survey. Rod said he would include such language to address that in the RFP.

Deb Brien moved, and Folger Tuggle seconded the motion to approve the RFP with suggested edits. The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Other business

a. Update on Podcast Grant: Sarah Rooker could not attend the meeting. In lieu of that she sent the following report:

Three podcast driving tours were produced for this project: Norwich Schools, Rivers & Mills, and Early Settlement. Each tour includes 8 - 9 stops with historical narration. A website, printed individual maps, and a final map/brochure combining all three tours accompanies the podcasts.

Challenges and Opportunities

COVID-19 certainly impacted this project. We had the schooling podcast recorded and partially edited and the Early Settlement Tour partially recorded at the CATV community access studios just before we had to shelter-in-place. Luckily CATV's philosophy is to train community members in how to use the equipment, so Sarah Rooker was able to pick up the audio editing at home. The Early Settlement Tour narrations proved to be not of the quality we wanted and we were unable to gather narrators back at CATV, so we asked the owners of the houses on the tour if they would narrate. Everyone agreed and narrated into their phones. Sarah Rooker then edited the texted narrations. Despite the lack of a sound booth, they came out pretty well. Several homeowners improved on the narrations, adding little stories and correcting some history. It turned the podcast project into a community-wide effort. David Macaulay stepped in

to narrate the Rivers & Mills podcast and carefully critiqued the content. The podcasts proved to be the perfect activity for the community while sheltering-in-place. Many people wrote to say that they enjoyed being able to leave their homes safely. Quite a few families also took the tours. The Norwich 3rd grade teachers decided to assign all three podcasts to the students as part of their Norwich history unit and they proved to be exactly what families needed with distance learning. A local retired teacher re-wrote the Early Settlement podcast in a family-friendly way and we had a beloved school principal and student narrate it. We were able to hire Center for Cartoon Studies graduate, Emily Zea, to create an accompanying comic book for the Early Settlement podcast. She Zoomed with the kids to explain her process of using place, history, and art to tell story. She'll be working with the 4th grade in the fall, creating a comic book to accompany the Mills & Rivers podcast. We are now working with a local e-bike touring company to connect the podcasts to their touring program.

Publicity:

Webpages for the project begin at: <https://norwichhistory.org/podcast-driving-tours/> The comic book is there as a flipbook. While it wasn't funded as part of this project, it became an integral teaching tool.

Valley News Article:

<https://www.vnews.com/Norwich-Historical-Society-starts-podcast-accompanied-tours-of-historic-sites-in-town-33793433>

[Schooling Podcast Enews:](#)

[Mills & River Podcast Enews:](#)

b. Salute to Peter Brink: Knowing that we all wished to recognize the wonderful contributions that Peter Brink made to the commission, Nancy Osgood read the following salute and asked that it be made a formal part of these minutes.

“The Norwich Historic Preservation Commission thanks Peter Brink for his outstanding contribution to the commission and to the Town of Norwich. A champion of historic preservation and Norwich history, Peter, together with Nancy Hoggson and then singly, led the Commission from its inception in 2010 to the present. Thanks to his vision and leadership, the Commission successfully applied for Certified Local Government Grants culminating in Norwich schoolhouses, private properties, and historic districts being added to the National Register of Historic Places and a series of podcast driving tours developed by the Norwich Historical Society. The Commission salutes him for his exemplary leadership and accomplishments.”

Nancy Osgood moved, and Phil Zea seconded the motion to include the document in the record of this meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting: Rod Francis indicated that he would circulate another doodle poll to determine the date of our next meeting, which will probably be mid-September.

There being no other business, Anne Silberfarb moved, and Folger Tuggle seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The vote was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 2:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Brien