

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Honorable Board of Selectmen,

The Annual Report of the Historical Commission for the period of January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017 is hereby respectfully submitted.

The Historical Commission is governed under Town By-Law, Article VII, Section III and Chapter 40, Section 8d of the Massachusetts General Laws for the identification, preservation and protection of the Historical and Archaeological assets of the Town.

Townwide Historic Preservation Plan

We began to work with historic preservation professionals at the Public Archaeology Laboratory based in Pawtucket to begin the arduous task of gathering information and research to prepare a Townwide Historic Preservation Plan. This project was financed in part with Federal Funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, through the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman. Matching funds were voted for this project Town Meeting in 2016. The total project cost was \$25,000. The project was completed in September and the matching funds were reimbursed to the Town in late December.

The Townwide Historic Preservation Report is available for viewing on the Town of North Attleborough web site and hard copies are available at the Richards Memorial Library. The purpose of the plan is to: 1. Identify and articulate community preservation goals. 2. Help eliminate confusion about the purpose of local preservation by-laws and regulations. 3. Educate the public about the community's history and heritage. 4. Create an agenda for future preservation work and a way to measure the town's preservation progress. The report dates early habitation within the current town limits to 9000 B.P.(years before the present time).It is an interesting and well documented history of historic preservation in North Attleborough with many recommendations for various town boards and commissions to carry local preservation activities well into the future.

Holmes One Room Schoolhouse/615 Hoppin Hill Avenue

We discussed landscape improvements which include grading of the site, rebuilding of the stone wall on the east side of the school and planting perennials to beautify the site. We hope to complete this project in 2018.

Holmes Memorial Hall/623 Hoppin Hill Avenue

We continue to add this building to our Capital Improvements Projects for funding. In combination with the Holmes School this community hall can continue to serve the town when restored. A barrier free bathroom, heat and insulation will be added to the building as it never had these amenities. Boy Scout Adam Mirza completed the project of adding a ramp to the back of the building for his Eagle Scout project per the specifications of our preservation architect.

Mann Family Burial Ground/Draper Avenue

At the October Town Meeting the RTM voted to fund our CIP request in the amount of \$25,000 for the restoration of this much deteriorating site. We will request bids for this project in the spring of 2018 and hope to complete it before the end of the year.

Powder House/Mount Hope Street

This site continues to attract many visitors. We maintain the steps and clear the path as needed through the efforts of volunteers. We are concerned that the rotted wood shingle roof needs repair/ replacement again and will do what we can to maintain the structure as funding allows. This is one of the sites that the Rehoboth Minutemen, in period dress, take pride in showing and discussing with the third graders on their local history tour of the Town.

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Codding Farm House and Barn/217 High Street

Reuse of these buildings is our vision and we hope to engage the community and other Town Boards and Commissions to assist us with this goal in the future. We continued with the Curb Appeal project to maintain the perennial flower bed and foundation plantings at the front of the house with help from volunteer Frank Merrill.

Community Gardens

This year we turned the Community Gardens over to a private non-profit, North Attleborough Community Gardens Inc. as we needed to focus on other projects.

North Attleborough Post Office Centennial Celebration

We were invited to assist the Postmaster to research the history of the North Attleborough Post Office for a Centennial Celebration this year. The event which took place in October also allowed us to share in the opening of the cornerstone box and to be able to add some new items to the box before it was replaced. The descendants of James Monroe, who built of the Post Office Building in 2016 , were in attendance and their stories will be recorded for future generations.

Proposed Cell Towers

Per the Federal 106 Review Process, we are a commenting party for any proposed cell tower installations in Town. Our mission here is to “ avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects” to any buildings and or view sheds from historic buildings within or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. We have been commenting on a roof installation within our Town Center Historic District and are diligently working to mitigate an intrusive and unattractive installation in the center of Town.

Demolition Delay By Reviews

Per the Town’s Demolition Delay By-Law we review too many proposed demolitions for neglected historic homes with good architectural structure and historic value to the Town. It is unfortunate that property owners let their historic buildings deteriorate as a result of deferred maintenance. This past year we have delayed the demolition of one historic house for six months. During this period the owner, a commercial developer, is supposed to work with us to seek alternatives to demolition but since six months is a short period it does not allow much to be done. A longer term would allow time to find alternatives to the needless demolition of historic homes in town.

Historic District Signs

We purchased two “Entering Town Center National Register District” signs for either end of the district on North and South Washington Streets . These were installed by the DPW. We ordered one more of these same signs to be located from the Elm St. approach to the center of Town.

Web Site Development

Members Susan Taylor, Christina Eustace and William Fasulo worked on updating our web site. They also considered launching a Historical Commission Facebook page to reach out to the public.

Volunteer Assistance

As part of the Senior Work Off Project, we are grateful to volunteer Mary Coogan who completed several projects in our office. Ron Desrosiers worked at the Holmes Memorial Hall to replace and paint new clapboards and trim boards on the front of the building to the top of the first story. A third volunteer, Jim Keegan, worked on clearing the path to the Powder House and cleared weeds and brush at the Mann Burial Ground. All volunteers did an outstanding job!

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Furniture

We were able to have an original oak Assessors Cabinet that was given to us by the Assessors Dept. reglued and cleaned. It is now available for everyone to enjoy in the Selectmen's suite.

Member Gary Demers donated a more appropriate oak teacher's desk for the Holmes School. He had the smaller oak desk there which was a donation from Suzanne Holmes, but not an original to the school, moved to our town hall office to replace a worn computer desk.

Cultural Site Protection

We have had three Executive Sessions to discuss the protection of archaeological sites which are threatened by new development. The location of these sites is not public information to prevent looting and site destruction per Mass. General Law Chapter 40, Section 8d. Two of our members were invited to attend a meeting with the Army Corps. of Engineers to discuss how to "avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects" to these archaeological sites.

Funding

Our annual general fund budget has been under \$1000 for many years which only allows minimum funding for offices expenses and maintenance to historic buildings and sites. Donations to the Historical Commission have moved such projects at the Mann Burial Ground Preservation Plan and Tablestone Repair forward. Donations to the Historical Commission can be made anytime for a specific site or town owned property or project.

Passage of the Community Preservation Act would greatly move the efforts of the Historical Commission forward. When the Historical Commission was formed in 1977, they inherited historic sites and buildings that had not been maintained for decades and as a result we still have much work to do to restore our historic sites to a dignified and visitor friendly appearance. Funding of our projects is currently only possible through CIP requests and Town Meeting Article funding requests for specific projects

Members/Meetings

New members Christina Eustace, William Fasulo and Marjorie Johnson were appointed to our commission to fill vacancies. Peter Cox retired from the commission. William Fasulo also retired from the commission late in the year as he unexpectedly moved out of state. We have room for one full member to fill Mr. Fasulo's term. Overlapping three year terms of members expire every year, so it is fair to say that we can welcome new members and alternates each year if current members do not ask to be reappointed.

Our meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesday's of each month from 7-9 pm at the Dept. of Public Works Public Meeting Room, 49 Whiting Street unless otherwise posted on the town web site. We welcome anyone interested in learning about the process of historic preservation at the government level, or who would like to assist with our projects to attend our meetings.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann J. Chapdelaine, Chairperson

Russell Kenney, Vice-Chair

Christina Eustace

William Fasulo

Alan Goldberg

Susan Taylor

Bonnie Whiteside

Gary Demers, Alternate

Marjorie Johnson, Alternate