

Methuen Historic District Commission
March 26, 2009 at 7:00 P.M.
Great Hall – Searles Building
41 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844

MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order of Regular Meeting

Chairman Dufresne called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

2. Roll Call

Raymond Dufresne, Chair	Present	Joseph Fisichelli	Absent
Joseph Bella	Present	Christine Metzemaekers	Present
Peter Cameron	Present	Katherine Robinson, Alternate	Present
Robert Fabino	Absent		

Others in Attendance

Alene Reich, Historic Planner, City of Methuen

3. Acceptance of January 8, 2009 Minutes

MOTION to accept the minutes of the January 8, 2009 meeting. Seconded.

UNANIMOUS VOTE.

5. New Business

a. Vacancies on Commission

Reich reported on vacancies: 1 Member and 2 Alternates

b. Talent Bank Applications

Reich asked Commissioners to help recruit by gathering talent bank applications from interested residents and also to return Talent Bank applications when up for renewal.

c. Collections Housing Update

Reich provided handout regarding space requirements for new housing and reported on findings of the Datalogging study completed by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

Chair/Commissioner Dufresne asked if a temporary situation would suffice. Commissioner Bella called a temporary situation “life saving” for the collection. Commissioner Robinson spoke to the importance of conditioned space to control temperature and humidity. Commissioner Cameron asked about housing the collection at the Tenney Gatehouse. The Tenney Gatehouse came up repeatedly in

discussion. Commissioner Bella (also a member of the Historical Society (HS)) presented myriad reasons why the Tenney Gatehouse (TG) is not the appropriate site including that: the collection does not belong to the HS, the basement of TG is not hospitable, and the HS relies on TG event rentals for operating funds. Commissioners concurred that most sensitive items from the collection should be moved to a safer location, including possibly the TG.

Chair/Commissioner Dufresne asked Reich about the status of the proposed move to the Central School (CS). Reich responded that one of the two spaces identified were available. Commissioner Metzemaekers suggested at least a short-term move to the CS, suggested that the Commission recommend immediate transfer of collection to CS. Commissioner Metzemaekers asked Reich about conditions in the CS space. Reich reported that the attic space is unconditioned. Commissioner Metzemaekers asked if there were any other spaces available at the CS. Reich reported that none were available.

Commissioner Bella mentioned that other spaces had been identified by the Mayor's Committee on Housing of the Collection. As an example, the Espillat Building would have been great but would be a rental situation. Commissioners agreed that any private space would be too expensive.

Commissioner Bella asked about identifying space at the City-owned Sanborn Hall. Reich reported that Sanborn Hall is not available.

Commission supports emergency measures to move the collection to a safe facility.
Chair/Commissioner Dufresne to write a letter of support.

d. Sign Guidelines Update

Reich handed out copies of existing Sign Guidelines, last published in the early 1990s. Commissioner Robinson asked for examples from other towns, opportunity to reflect on past cases in the creation of a new document. Chair/Commissioner Dufresne suggested a separate session to address the sign guide.

e. Railroad Station

Reich updated the Commission on activity vis-à-vis the Railroad Station and the platform awnings. Reich passed out copies of a deed provided by Shauna Jamal, an attorney working with the Union, a tenant of the building, which states that the awning must be removed. Reich spoke of her meeting with the City Solicitor, shared his legal opinion.

Commissioner Robinson suggested that the language could pertain to the porte-cochere that was removed long ago, which would mean that the deed restriction could have already been satisfied. Commissioners discussed the enforceability of the deed restriction, vagueness of language and intent, eventual State involvement because the building is owned at least in part by the MBTA.

Chair/Commissioner Dufresne asked about additional new business. There was none.

6. Other Business

a. Certificates of Non-Applicability

Chair/Commissioner Dufresne presented two Certificates of Non-Applicability, which had been issued since the last meeting: 1) A back-up generator not visible from public way at 110 Broadway and 2) Emergency masonry intervention at 51 Osgood St. The Commissioners review the case files.

b. Recognition

Reich told the Commission that Former Commissioner Martha Welch will be honored at the April 21 City Council Meeting.

c. Tour of Historic Deerfield

Commissioner Bella provided handouts for a bus trip to Historic Deerfield and gave details about the trip.

MOTION to adjourn by Commissioner Metzemaekers. Seconded.

UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Alene Reich