



Town of Sudbury

Historical Commission

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MINUTES

DECEMBER 10, 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING

Present: Chair Chris Hagger, Vice-Chair Diana Warren, Diana Cebra, Taryn Trexler, Jan Costa, Marjorie Katz, Steve Greene, Fred Bautze

Others Present:

Director of Planning and Community Development Adam Duchesneau, Planning & Zoning Coordinator Beth Perry, Board of Selectmen members Janie Dretler and Charles Russo, Rick Conard, Railroad Historian – Wayland Historical Commission; Stacy Spies, Historical Preservation Consultant

Mr. Hagger opened the meeting at 7:00 PM

Eversource – Transmission Line Project

Mr. Hagger recommended the Sudbury Historical Commission review the presented National Historical Register-eligible features associated with the Sudbury rail way.

Ms. Warren opined regarding re-design of the proposed Eversource Transmission Line project, to avoid any adverse effects on the historical resource.

Ms. Warren stated that the MA Historical Commission (MHC) had indicated the railroad corridor was National Register-eligible. She noted the survey report and criterion statement prepared by Ms. Spies, would be submitted to the MHC.

Ms. Trexler inquired about significant railroad features found on the railway. Ms. Spies itemized; the culverts, the signal system, the diamond, battery boxes, and many whistle posts. Ms. Spies maintained that rail, ties, and any above-ground features would be most significant. Ms. Spies added that the Section Tool House and Bridges 127 and 128, had already been listed and mentioned by Eversource.

Ms. Trexler asked about ownership of the Section Tool House. Mr. Duchesneau confirmed that the MBTA owned the land around, and including the Section Tool House and diamond; and MA DCR (Department of Conservation and Recreation) held the lease for the Mass. Central Rail ROW.

Ms. Warren asked if Eversource leased from the MBTA. Mr. Duchesneau responded the lease was held with DCR, and Eversource was partnering with DCR.

Ms. Costa noted Eversource was proceeding with the process, and suggested the Commission submit the inventory report to MHC as soon as possible. Ms. Spies agreed that the timely submission of the

inventory report was an important first step, in order to ensure that MHC present the official statement of National Register-eligibility.

Ms. Costa asked if the Sudbury Historical Commission (SHC) should implement a timetable going forward. Ms. Spies responded that Section 106 dictates that the agency – The US Army Corps of Engineers - sets the timeline, which could take a significant period of time.

Mr. Greene queried if the rail trail had to meet specific width standards, and how that might effect historical features. Ms. Warren answered that under Section 106, the focus was the protection of resources.

Mr. Greene stressed the importance of maintaining the Section Tool House. He read an excerpt from the Eversource Cultural Resource document, which included that alterations would adversely effect the Section Tool House; and such adversity could be minimized during planning and construction.

Mr. Bautze stated that much valuable information had been presented to SHC, and he appreciated it.

Ms. Katz expressed her concern about the absence of a project timeline, but understood the rationale. Ms. Katz asked if there might be a downside to presenting the historical features inventory as a whole, rather than presenting each feature separately. Ms. Warren stressed that ultimately, submitting the features as a whole, would advance the significance of each feature.

Ms. Cebra thanked Mr. Duchesneau for providing the Commissioners with the 1998 Section House Report, compiled by Rick Conard; which advocated for the preservation of the Section Tool House. She stressed that the Town endorsed preservation and that aspect must be reinforced at this time. Ms. Cebra detailed that there were only two such station houses in the State (Sudbury and Ipswich).

Ms. Cebra recommended that Ms. Spies provide addendum to her rail inventory report, in consideration of the fact that the residents of Sudbury contributed much time and money towards preservation/restoration of the Section Tool House. Ms. Spies replied that she would be including this aspect in her report.

Ms. Cebra asked Mr. Conard about his involvement with the 1998 report. Mr. Conard responded he offered to undertake a research project regarding the history of the Station Tool House, and utilized the Boston & Maine Historical Archives in that research. He credited the Sudbury Historical Commission, who secured the founding for the Station preservation project.

Ms. Cebra asked Mr. Concord to present another public program/presentation regarding the importance of the railroad in Sudbury.

Ms. Cebra queried if the next steps in the Eversource rail project be addressed in a more urgent mode basis, going forward. Ms. Spies agreed that submitting her finalized report to MHC as soon as possible, would be beneficial, especially in consideration of the Eversource memorandum of Agreement status.

Ms. Cebra asked if the overgrowth within the railway could obstruct other features from being identified. Ms. Spies responded that there could be some smaller features being concealed, and stated she would include an addendum sheet of such itemized features, as well as the inclusion of archeological sites.

Mr. Hagger asked about the timeframe for completion of the inventory/survey report. Ms. Spies responded the report would be completed by the end of the month.

Selectman Dretler asked if the inventory report was posted anywhere. Mr. Hagger responded not, because the report was not completed. Selectman Dretler stated she would review the report when posted.

Selectman Dretler asked if the Commissioners had toured and compared other historically significant rail ways which had been converted to rail trails, such as those in Concord and Wayland. Mr. Hagger responded that many of the Commissioners had familiarity, especially with the preservation of the diamond in Concord. He detailed Mr. Conard had provided extensive information about such preservation efforts with the Wayland rail trail.

Selectman Russo mentioned the relevance of the Blackstone Canal restoration project, and the preservation of many artifacts. He indicated that he was looking forward to reading the inventory report.

Phyllis Halpern of the Weston Historical Commission, stated that most of the rail trail in Weston had been completed, adding that the width of the paved section/s of the Weston trail was 10 feet wide, per DCR requirements.

Mr. Hagger asked Ms. Halpern which artifacts were saved from the Weston railway. Ms. Halpern responded milestones, section markers, rail rests, a tell-tale, and a station on either side (some 60 feet). She detailed that Sudbury and Waltham had many more significant features, when compared to Weston. She mentioned that the Weston station was not in good condition at this time. Ms. Halpern acknowledged Mr. Conard provided help when the Weston rail trail was being planned.

Resident Nick Pernice, 255 Peakham Road, affirmed he was very much against the proposed Eversource Transmission Line project, and stressed the project would not benefit the Town.

Ms. Warren suggested that the Commissioners consider Town acquisition of the Section Tool House from the MBTA. She affirmed that the preservation of the historic rail features were important learning tools for the children of the Town, and serve as a primary cultural asset in Sudbury. She also suggested that the Commissioners consider various provisions in the Memorandum of Agreement.

Ms. Warren referred to the cow passes in Weston, and asked Ms. Spies if there was a cow pass in Sudbury. Ms. Spies responded she would include the cow pass on a secondary data listing, to indicate that such passes are likely there, but are buried.

Ms. Warren noted that within the project area, there are other resources that would be impacted; such as the George Pitts Tavern Historic District. She mentioned the proposed clear-cutting around the Section Tool House, and archeological tribal artifacts that would be impacted.

Ms. Warren outlined an action plan:

- Submission of letter to MHC, to include the MA Historical Commission Inventory of the Historic Resource (referred to as Ms. Spies Inventory Report)
- Submit National Register Criteria Statement (also referred to as a report)

Ms. Warren offered to compose the draft letter to be submitted to the MHC along with the MA Historical Commission Inventory of the Historic Resource. Ms. Warren stated that she was ready to express the opinion that “this undertaking will have an adverse effect on the linear National Register Eligible Historic District Corridor,” and suggested that the Sudbury Historical Commissioners make a decision regarding such adverse effect.

The Commissioners supported the action plan suggested by Ms. Warren.

Ms. Warren maintained that preserving the historic district corridor was not in conflict with the creation of the public-use rail trail. Ms. Warren indicated that the railroad shaped the character and development of Sudbury.

Mr. Hagger suggested that Ms. Warren draft the proposed letter, and present the drafted letter at the next Sudbury Historical Commission meeting.

Ms. Warren suggested the Commission support and approve engaging Ms. Spies for an additional block of consulting hours for \$500.

Mr. Greene motioned to extend the contract hours for Preservation Consultant Stacy Spies, totaling \$500.00; and to extend the contract agreement period to February 1, 2021. Ms. Warren seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous 7-0; Greene-aye, Hagger-aye, Costa-aye, Trexler-aye, Cebra-aye, Warren-aye, Katz-aye

VOTED: To extend the contract hours for Preservation Consultant Stacy Spies, totaling \$500.00; and to extend the contract agreement period to February 1, 2021.

Date for Next Meeting(s)

Mr. Hagger stated the next SHC meeting would be held on December 15, 2020; and a placeholder for a December 29, 2020 meeting would be held regarding the Eversource Transmission Line project, if necessary.

Approval of November 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Trexler commented that she needed additional time to review the minutes. Mr. Hagger affirmed that the approval of the November 9th and November 17th meeting minutes would be on the December 15th meeting agenda.

Adjourn

Ms. Warren motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hagger seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous 7-0; Greene-aye, Hagger-aye, Costa-aye, Trexler-aye, Cebra-aye, Warren-aye, Katz-aye

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:11 PM