



# Town of Sudbury

## Historical Commission

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### MINUTES

**May 10, 2022 AT 6:30 PM**

### **VIRTUAL MEETING**

Present: Chair Chris Hagger, Vice-Chair Diana Warren, Diana Cebra, Steve Greene, Jan Costa, Taryn Trexler, Marjorie Katz, Chris Durall, Kathryn McGrath

Others Present: Planning & Zoning Coordinator Beth Perry, Historic Preservation Consultant Peter Benton

Mr. Hagger opened the Historical Commission meeting at 6:30 PM. Roll Call was taken: Hagger-present, Greene-present, Cebra-present, Costa-present, Trexler-present, Warren-present, Katz-present

#### **Historic Preservation Plan including discussion of overall schedule to complete HPP and draft HPP Recommendations**

Mr. Benton thanked Mr. Greene for sharing the “Pictorial History of Sudbury,” with him; and found it most helpful with his drafting of historical context of the Town.

Mr. Benton noted that the purpose of tonight’s meeting was not to vote on aspects of Chapter 8, but to discuss the draft.

Mr. Benton outlined some key recommendations, stressing the importance of such recommendations and the need to reach out to the other stakeholders/other Boards and Commissions and get their input. Mr. Benton acknowledged that the Historic Preservation Plan project was slated to end in June. He stated the MA Historical Commission deadline was September.

Mr. Benton noted he needed to compose the chapter regarding municipal policy and municipal properties.

Ms. Warren noted that primary outreach took place during Phase 2 of the project. She stated that a second Historic Preservation Forum would be upcoming, which will be part of the continued outreach. Ms. Warren confirmed that Mr. Benton has met with many Town Boards, including Conservation Commission, CPC, and others; as well as meeting with groups outside of Town government. Ms. Warren recommended that Mr. Benton meet with the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Planning Board as a whole, the and the Select Board. Ms. Warren concurred that end of June did not have to be the absolute project deadline, and further development of the HPP project will continue into July and August as needed.

Mr. Benton indicated that the survey was somewhat disappointing as only 100-116 people continued completing the survey beyond question 3. He questioned if the survey was too complicated and not succinct. He further noted that many people taking the survey were complaining.

Ms. Katz agreed with Mr. Benton's assessment. She expressed further concern about the manner in which the Sudbury Historical Commission (SHC) and the Sudbury Historic Districts Commission (SHDC) were written up, which might have contributed to the negative perception of the Sudbury Historical Commission. Ms. Katz opined that a critical factor might focus on the Demolition Delay Bylaw.

Ms. Cebra commented that she did not consider the perception of the Historical Commissions to be all negative, adding the mission of the Sudbury Historical Commission, would likely not please a certain percentage of the residents. Ms. Cebra commented that the survey was rather involved, which might be why a number of people did not complete the survey.

Ms. Costa stated that the SHC had a considerable amount of demolition delay activity, and many of the cases had been successful for both the Town and the homeowner. She acknowledged that several demolition delay cases had been difficult and contentious; sometimes intra-Commission dynamics had not been optimal.

Mr. Greene mentioned there was a division of interest between age groups in Town; with the older residents indicated increased empathy and interest in historic preservation.

Ms. Trexler stated she was not surprised with the results, and agreed with comments made by Ms. Katz, acknowledging that the introduction describing the SHC vs. the SHDC needed to reflect a more- balanced depiction. She stated that SHDC was viewed more favorably when compared to SHC. She suggested the Demolition Delay process be further examined, and result in a clearer process.

Ms. McGrath stated the SHC outreach efforts at the Colonial Fair proved to be beneficial, and suggested the Commission present at another fair/event. She stated she thought the Demolition Delay was good the way it is, and that during meeting discussions to display a standard sheet on the demolition bylaw process timeline so the public gets used to it.

Mr. Durall noted the focus was civic engagement, which would encourage resident participation.

Ms. Warren concurred with Mr. Benton regarding a proposed plan to advance Sudbury agricultural history and the rail history, and help Sudbury qualify as a Nation Register nominee, and advance the level of understanding. She stressed that Sudbury's history and its develop is different than difference than Concord.

Ms. Warren stated that the SHC is not a unique among other towns and boards in Sudbury, as many Boards had challenges with applicants, and expressed differences among members. She noted that perceptions are not often reflective of the truth. Ms. Warren elaborated that only a few demolition delay applications had been challenging, and mentioned the Stone Tavern and the Nobscot Road as examples. She stressed that difficult applicants, leave a negative perception.

Ms. Warren commented that the Demolition Delay Bylaw has been amended because the Building Inspector had suggested that the bylaw be amended to make it easy for property owners to understand the process better and to also add wording for partial demolitions. She also commented that Sudbury's Demolition bylaw was in the mainstream of demolition bylaws in Massachusetts and was not an outlier.

Mr. Hagger stated that his concern focused on the comment in the draft chapter about the SHC not working in unison with other Town boards/committees/stakeholders. He noted that some perceptions regarding the way SHC meetings were conducted, were correct. He acknowledged there were negative perceptions about SHC.

Ms. Katz commented that if Mr. Benton felt that there was a negative perception of the Commission, the Commissioners should take this finding seriously, as the comments were provided by an objective professional.

Ms. Cebra noted that the Commission is now working with a different building inspector, and that makes a difference; in addition to changes in membership of various committees/boards; causing changes with communications. She opined about COVID affecting the person-to-person exchange, as well.

Ms. Warren stated that engagement and coordination between boards and commission/committees should be facilitated by the implementation of preservation mechanisms and tools into processes like zoning. She expressed need to break down silos.

Ms. Costa spoke about prioritizing the recommendations.

Mr. Benton concluded that many responding stakeholders were not in favor of the preservation plan as presented, especially regarding buildings outside the historic districts. He stated that public perception needed to be worked on; in order to build public support and coordination with Boards and Commissions. Mr. Benton listed his most critical recommendations:

- Possibility of writing a National Register thematic nomination for the entire Town by a professional, based on agricultural history; including mills and greenhouses. He spoke of the benefits associated with Sudbury being a National Register nominee.
- Establish closer relationships with several Town entities; to bring the natural resources and historical resources together. He recommended the formation of an informal “Stewardship Working Group,” for the stakeholders and include SVT and Conservation Commission which might meet once or twice per year.
- Recommended language changes to building/planning and Zoning and subdivision bylaws/regulations. He suggested a change in language to draw attention to natural and historical resources.

Mr. Hagger noted that pages 19 and 20 of Mr. Benton’s report should be reviewed by the Commissioners. He suggested identifying the historical features detailed within the plan, and that those features be incorporated into a new Town policy.

- Recommended improving the Bylaw language that the Planning Department works with, and not include additional regulations. Ms. McGrath recommended adding language regarding Town-wide archeological survey/study within Planning Board regulations. Mr. Benton opined that archeological considerations could be included in the definition of historical resources. He suggested an archeological “sensitivity map” be in place, and recommended an indigenous cultural landscape study to be included for future consideration.
- Rte. 20 Corridor study should be performed to identify all the historical resources along the Corridor. The Stone Tavern was presented an example of repurposing development, which did not qualify as development with historical benefit, as a school might have. Mr. Hagger

commented that if the Planning Board could adopt such repurposing recommendation go forward, that would be a huge improvement in maintaining historical features. He stated the architects on the Planning Board and SHDC might be interested in this concept.

- Town-wide historical presentation bring commissions together and promote the sites and increase public engagement. He mentioned National Heritage area projects. He exampled Abraham Lincoln sites. Related discussion took place.

Commission members agreed with the need for a historical writer in Town.

Mr. Hagger recommended another meeting with Mr. Benton to address additional short-term goals. He recommended several initiatives to be considered:

- The Town hire a preservation planner
- Consideration of providing added programs for two railroad corridors
- Study of the Pine Lakes area. Mr. Benton said he would add that piece to the report.

Mr. Hagger recommended the role of the SHC be further discussed at the next SHC meeting.

#### **Date of Next Meeting (s)**

May 17, 2022 and June 7, 2022 (continued discussion with Mr. Benton).

#### **Adjourn**

**Mr. Hagger motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Greene seconded the motion. It was voted unanimously 6-0; Hagger-aye, Cebra-aye, Greene-aye, Costa-aye, Trexler-aye, Katz-aye**

Ms. Warren had left the meeting earlier to make her presentation to the Select Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.