

Minutes
Watertown Historical Commission
Thursday, January 12, 2017
Philip Pane Lower Hearing Room
7:00 p.m.

Historical Commission Members Present: David J. Russo, Thomas Melone, Susan Steele, Marilynne K. Roach, Donald Berg,

Member(s) Absent: Elisabeth H. Loukas

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Susan C. Jenness

David J. Russo chaired.

1) Informational Discussion - Bigelow Chapel Addition and New Crematory, Mt. Auburn Cemetery. Gus Fraser representing.

Gus Fraser appeared to introduce the project to the Historical Commission members. Fraser explained that William Rawn Associates was hired by Mt. Auburn Cemetery to conduct a feasibility study regarding their desired plans to revitalize Bigelow Chapel and to replace the aging crematory which was built in 1969.

Fraser explained that the Mt. Auburn Cemetery had wanted to be able to offer a higher level of services to their clients that would allow the family and loved ones to participate in the beginning of the cremation process. Mt. Auburn has also had a desire to integrate more ADA compliant standards into the chapel beyond the chair lift system now in place to create a more welcoming environment, easier for all visitors to navigate.

Sam Lasky of William Rawn Associates was introduced by Fraser to discuss the rationale and challenges of the design of the cemetery as it exists today.

He explained that William Rawn Associates Architects had designed the New Green House Structures on Grove Street which was completed in 2013. Lasky said that this project was a great opportunity for them to discover the rich history of Mt. Auburn Cemetery, and also how they began to consider the future of possibilities available offered by the eclectic blend of periods designed into the landscape and buildings of Mt. Auburn.

Lasky explained how Mt. Auburn Cemetery had never been a static place throughout the 1900's and that there are markers of the many different periods appearing throughout the space. Periods layer one over the other and offer filters of various periods blending into one another giving the cemetery the perception of being an aggregate of all of these varied periods together.

Bigelow Chapel is located at the Mt. Auburn Street entrance of the cemetery. This addition would involve an increase in the size of the chapel as it is now. Within the new, larger space

would be plans to allow families to gather for services and view the cremation process in a way that is visible from the chapel itself through a large window. Parts of the landscape would also be visible from the chapel allowing the landscape to become part of the indoor experience.

Russo questioned Lasky about the building element which is seen from the viewing room at the top of the chancel window and wanted to know whether or not this element would be visible from inside the chapel. Although Lasky had studied the window in great detail, he was not entirely sure whether or not the element Russo was concerned with could be seen from inside. Russo asked Lasky to come back to the commission with an answer to the question.

The HC will now wait for the Massachusetts Historical Commission to contact them for their comments about this project.

Mt. Auburn Cemetery is now working on the aspects involved in the permitting the project.

2) Review of Mass. Historical Commission's 11/23/2016 letter delivered to the Watertown Historical Commission regarding the Arsenal on the Charles Project-single Environmental Impact Report.

After a brief discussion of the letter, which summarizes the Mass. Historical findings of Phase I of the Arsenal on the Charles Project, the Historical Commission had no questions at this point, and declined to submit any comments.

Phase II of this project will follow the same process.

3) Section 106 review- Invitation to Comment Letter- Mass Dot Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Program. Safety renovations to two pedestrian crossing locations at Main St. between library and post office and the intersection of Pleasant Street and Howard Street.

This letter was shared with the Historical Commission seeking to know whether or not installation of lights in the area of this project would have a historical impact to the area.

After a brief discussion of the letter, no comments were made.

4) Review of 2017 Meeting Dates and Filing Deadlines for the Historical Commission.

After a review of the meeting and filing dates for the Historical Commission meetings in 2017 a motion was made to accept the dates as submitted.

5) Minutes– November 10, 2016

After a brief review and discussing a minor correction the minutes of the November 10, 2016 HC meeting were adopted by unanimous vote.

Motion: A motion was made by Melone to adopt the November minutes with a minor modification. Roach seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached adopting the November 10, 2016 minutes.

6) New Business

- a. Review of Letter from K & P regarding Ballot Questions and Political Activity for Town Officials, employees and members of boards and commissions.

Hayward explained instances of how the letter applies to members of all of the commissions and that promoting or endorsing any town business publicly is only appropriate once it has been posted on an agenda made available to the public.

There were no questions or inquiries by any members.

- b. Conflict of Interest Law Training, 2017-2018-Link emailed out on December 28th, 2016- Certification of completion is to be filed in the Conservation Office by April 7, 2017.

Hayward reminded members to take their conflict of interest training and to get the certificate in to the Conservation Office by April 7, 2017.

- c. Russo brought along some of his Form B's from the significant monuments in Mt. Auburn Cemetery. Over the last several years, he has completed 225 Form B's for submission to the Mass. Historic Commission. He has three more monuments he needs to complete. He will have to deliver the forms by hand to Mass. Historic because when combined they are too large to ship. He will deliver them to Mass. Historic on 22 pound paper and also deliver electronic copies to Mt. Auburn Cemetery for their records.
- d. Susan Jenness the Conservation Office Assistant announced that Chris Hayward who is also the Tree Warden for Warden received the distinguished Seth Swift 2017 Tree Warden of the Year Award out of 351 other communities across Massachusetts. Hayward was nominated by Louise Civetti, a resident of Watertown and also a fellow colleague of Haywards, and then vetted by his Tree Warden colleagues. Hayward will also be honored when a tree is planted in town in his name in the spring time as a permanent record of being the recipient of this prestigious honor.
- e. Common Street Cemetery Vandalism-Hayward read the letter written to the Historical Commission by the vandal who damaged the outer door of a tomb he tampered with. The author of the letter also volunteered to help the commission with some projects to make up for his wrong. Hayward intends for him to meet with members of the Historical Society that were involved in the unfolding of this story so that the deeper meaning of what transpired can be better understood.

- f. Resignation of Shary Berg who was working on registering the town cemeteries as a result of health issues. Hayward is in the process of speaking to another candidate who may be able to pick up where Berg left off with registering the town cemeteries on the National Register.

Russo suggested if there was a difference in cost as Berg was not able to complete the project, there may be a way to use some of the Historical Plaque money. A brief discussion was held on how funding for such projects take place.

Hayward will report back to the HC as more information becomes available.

- g. There has been no replacement for the vacancy left by Jones when he retired from the commission last month.

Meeting adjourned.