



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Historical Commission
Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Elise Loukas, Chairperson
David Russo, Vice Chairperson
Thomas Melone, Member
Susan Steele, Member
Marilynne K. Roach, Member
Joseph Panto, Member
Matthew Walter, Member

Minutes: Thursday, December 10, 2020 Remote meeting 7:00 p.m.

Historical Commission Members Present: Elise Loukas, Chair, Marilynne Roach, Matthew Walter, David Russo, Joseph Panto, Susan Steele

Member(s) Absent: Thomas Melone

Public Present: Bob Bloomberg, Elodia Thomas, Joyce Kelly, Cynthia Westerman, Joe Levendusky, Margie Wayne, and Michael Albano

Staff Present: Gideon Schreiber and Larry Field, Senior Planners

Loukas opened the meeting.

1. **Minutes-** No minutes were available for review.
2. **Discussion-** Shick House - Watertown Historical Society letter and neighbor letter

The Commission discussed letters from the Historical Society of Watertown and from Joseph Levendusky regarding the Shick House, 183 Grove Street. The building, dating from the 1850's, is in the Italianate style and was long associated with the Shick family and the Watertown Dairy. It has been vacant for many years. The letters brought to the Commission's attention that the Proprietors of the Mt. Auburn Cemetery may dispose of the property in the near future. The Commission limited discussion to the property's history.

3. **Discussion-** Common Street Cemetery and Old Burying Ground National Register Nomination update

Joyce Kelly of the Historical Society of Watertown reported that on December 2 the Society provided more information to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) on the

Common Street Cemetery and Old Burying Ground. The MHC requested further detail in a July 2020 letter.

4. Discussion-Community Preservation Committee updates

Elodia Thomas, Chair of the Community Preservation Committee, said she expects that applications will open in the first quarter of 2021, and hopefully in February.

5. Discussion- Demolition Delay Ordinance

Loukas noted that there is a “working group” of three members who are thinking about potential changes to the demolition delay ordinance: herself, Steele and Walter. Loukas said she wants to schedule the next meeting shortly and will draft notes from the last meeting. Schreiber said that Field, a recently-added staff member, was available to assist the working group.

Walter said he would like the Commission to address twin issues with the current ordinance. On the one hand, a large percentage of the cases involve structures without historic value that are before the Commission solely because of the 50-year benchmark. On the other hand, when a structure with historic value does come before the Commission and votes a one-year delay, the owner is seldomly interested in considering options to preserve the building.

Other members generally agreed with that assessment. While agreeing on a conceptual level, Russo said he was concerned that Town Council members might agree on a plan to restrict the Commission’s jurisdiction but would not be interested in adding enforcement powers to address structures with historic value. Panto also expressed concern about losing authority unless that was tied to stronger enforcement. Steele said she wanted the ordinance to focus more on the historic fabric of neighborhoods.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.