

MINUTES
Northfield Historical Commission
January 27, 2022

Present: Stacy Bond, Don Campbell, Joe Graveline (arrived at 3:18), Barbara "Bee" Jacque, Mary King, Mary Mayshark-Stavely and Joan Stoia. Misha Storm, Rich Holschuh, guests.

1. Call to order and Citizen Input

The meeting was called to order at 1:08 by Bee Jacque, Chair.

Joe Graveline made a motion to approve minutes from the last meeting, October 28, 2021, Joan Stoia seconded, unanimously approval given.

2. Battlefield Grant

Joe Graveline spoke about a letter of support he has written which emphasizes the importance of including Beers Plain and the role of Great Fires Council in the next round of the NPS Battlefield Grant being submitted by the Town of Montague. The concern is losing the opportunity to study this area to development pressures if Northfield is not included in the grant. The grant deadline is early March.

Don moved to accept the letter of support with minor changes to what Joe had written. Joan seconded. It passed unanimously.

3. W. Mass Commission Legislation

Legislation pertinent to the creation of the Commission – Joe will send docket number and Bee will distribute to the group. Discussion tabled for future meeting.

4. First Light Relicensing

As a local Historical Commission, the question is what should we do in the upcoming relicensing process. Joe spoke of an action item list pending from local tribal members.

5. King Philip's Hill and Gravel Pit (Conservation Commission)

Joe Graveline reported on his attendance at a recent Conservation Commission meeting re: a project to expand/restart use of the Mitchell gravel pit on Old Bernardston Rd., which abuts King Philip's Hill, land owned by the Town of Northfield. Joe said the parcel is proposed to be developed in 4 blocks, about 2 acres each; approximately 17 acres in 4 parcels. He was told ("given a guarantee") the pits would be at least 300 feet away from King Philip's Hill. There is a Request For Determination (RFD) which is the first step in the Conservation Commission process. Only Conservation Commission members will walk on the property as part of their site visit. Geologically and historically, this area is very important.

This project will have to go to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to be approved and abutters (including the Town) would be notified. We (the Historical Commission and as citizens) can speak to concerns and conditions. It was noted that opening new gravel pits is not covered in the Northfield town bylaws. Because of the brook connecting to the Connecticut River, there is a question of whether EPA, Army Corps of Engineers, MassDEP would be involved and trigger Section 106.

6. Dickinson Library

Misha Storm, Director, Northfield Dickinson Memorial Library, joined the meeting. She gave an update about an entry about the Library in the NAGPRA (Native American Graves and Repatriation Act) database. In responding to an inquiry from a reporter from New England Public Media, Misha discovered the Library was still listed as having human remains and she was working to find documentation as to how the remains had been handled. The human skeleton was from a find in 1923 and was on display at the library until 1977 when they were given to UMass. In 1993, the remains were repatriated to Historic Deerfield for burial minus 11 elements of the skeleton. Those elements are still unaccounted for and additional documentation is being sought from UMass. The goal is to ensure the elements are properly handled and find their home.

Bee said she and Joe will help by going through files in Town Hall as needed. Joe said John (or Jim) Peters Jr., former Executive Director of The Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs wrote a letter in 2007 saying they were moving forward with plans for the remains but that in 2012 some remains were still at UMass. Conversation ensued about the difficult history of storing and tracking UMass "inventory" for so many years, especially of small bone fragments.

Bee asked if the Historical Commission could help by sending a formal letter of inquiry or whether we should contact Marge Bruchac for assistance. Rich offered to help organize how to resolve this situation. Joe remarked that this will be a wonderful model for how to make a paper trail to resolve issues with historic collections.

Bee also noted the need to determine next steps for the collection(s) at the library and that they should not leave the Library building to be studied/handled in a UMass class/lab as proposed by UMass professor. Joe highlighted the uniqueness of the birthing stone (Winnepesaukee Tribe) and suggested bringing in tribal women to see the stones. Bee suggested the Historical Commission help by convening a group to look at the collection, capture/video the group in process, and determine where they belong. Rich agreed and suggested that his Atowi associate Melody take a look at them.

7. 350th Northfield Anniversary Celebration Update

Mary King mentioned some of the many things already planned: walking tours highlighting the architectural aspects of several houses on the main street of this historic town, the history of many buildings written up in booklets, musical events including C.S. Lewis Center offering a concert of the sacred music actually composed there, Shape Note singing at First Parish, music of the 60s and 70s to acknowledge the years when the Brotherhood of the Spirit commune was on Main Street. Calvin Swan's home area off Gulf Road, and the anti-slavery Methodist community that lived there are being considered as important to commemorate too. Mary has spoken with Rich about leading a walk on King Philip's Hill.

Joan Stoia reported about the 350th Anniversary Newsletter: February 19 or 20th will be the kick off date to point people to the website. Steve and she are in charge of advertising which will bring additional funding for Anniversary activities. For example, a radio Northfield History Minute, "Did you know that...." (then list interesting Northfield history facts) as a way to advertise events. Also there will, hopefully, be 20 utility pole banners throughout

town of famous people and events in the town's history. She asked our Historical Commission for suggestions to help identify people who should be on the banners and said women are especially needed. Mary Mayshark suggested asking Rich for suggestions of Native People for the banners.

Bee pointed out that King Philip's Hill should be a focus during the celebrations so people will know about it. Also, there is a lot of history connected with the underground railroad (for instance, Don noted, a black band around a chimney was a designation and the area near Lorita Lane was important..

The next meeting of the Historical Commission may be Thursday, February 24 at 1:00pm.

Joe made a motion to adjourn, Don seconded it, with unanimous approval.

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm

Notes taken and written by Mary Mayshark Stavelly.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary K. King". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Mary King, Secretary