

Rockingham Historical Commission (CLG) Meeting
Wednesday, December 10, 2014 at 6:30pm
3rd Floor Conference Room, Town Hall

MEETING MINUTES

Present: John Leppman, *Chair*
Gary Fox
Francis Walsh, *Development Director*
Christy Hotaling, *CLG Coordinator*

Agenda:

1. CLG Grant Overview
2. Historical Cultural Tours
3. Other Business
4. Commission 2015 Objectives

Meeting called to order at 6:40 pm.

Minutes of March 20, 2014 meeting are unanimously approved.

1. CLG Grant Overview

- CH discusses the Commission's four projects for the upcoming year; all of which will be funded through the annual CLG Grant. There are two events scheduled for the Speakers Program. The first is a Vermont Humanities Council sponsored event with photographer and author Paul Wainwright, titled "Colonial Meeting Houses of New England." This event will be held on Saturday, May 2, 2015 in the Lower Theater of Town Hall, with an optional trip to the Rockingham Meeting House to follow the presentation. The second event is another Vermont Humanities Council event that the Commission is cosponsoring with the Rockingham Free Public Library. The speaker will be Howard Coffin on "Vermont's Involvement in the Civil War." The time and location for this event have not yet been scheduled.
- The Commission will also be hosting a Historic Homes Workshop Series. CH would like to host Peter Yost, of Brattleboro's *BuildingGreen*, to lead a workshop on how to make your historic home energy efficient. FW knows Peter and feels that this would be a good workshop for our community, especially for those who have purchased historic homes/buildings and are now realizing the maintenance this entails. FW also recommends builder/restorations Chris Parker for his experience with older structures, perhaps he could lead another workshop focusing on skills people can relate to and use. GF recommends collaborating with the Rockingham Conservation Commission on their Home Energy Challenge.

- CH introduces the Rockingham Meeting House & Vicinity History Curriculum for grades 3-4. The thought is that a short lesson plan specifically related to the history of our local Meeting House would dovetail nicely with the Vermont History Curriculum; providing a hands on approach to teaching local history. JL recommends looking at the VT Historical Society curriculums for grade schools.
- CH introduces reinstating the Rockingham Old House Awards again. FW and JL agree that we should make sure that the award categories include commercial buildings, especially with all of the work going on around town.

2. Historic Cultural Tours (Gary Fox)

- GF discusses recent interest in promoting our historic downtown. Over the past 10-20 years there has been some discussion about updating and creating more historic walking tours of Bellows Falls. There has also been interest from the Roads Scholar groups for guided historic tours. GF would like to gather volunteers in order to provide this service. The Commission discusses and concludes that with positive support GF will work on gathering volunteers and we will keep the project on our radar.

3. Other Business

- CH discusses maintenance repairs at the Meeting House. There will be two projects completed in Spring 2015. The first is the replacement of 250ft of clapboards along with a rotted kickboard and threshold on the south façade. The other project will entail the repair and preservation of window sills and heads. FW explains that water infiltration at the sills and heads is causing rot and the potential disturbance of the glass window panes. The recommended action for this may require the installation of lead coated copper caps.
- CH mentions that she would like to look into designing a low-cost website for the Meeting House, in order to enhance the visitor experience. JL mentions that perhaps this could include a downloadable tour, etc. JL also mentions that the tidiness of the docents this summer could be improved upon in the upcoming season. FW mentions the possibility of having the docents split their time between the Meeting House and the understaffed Waypoint Center; perhaps it would make sense not to be open all week with so few visitors at the beginning of the week? GF agrees that this would make more sense.
- FW updates the Commission on plans for the Stable Building. The Selectboard voted to have it torn down. FW and the Town Manager have discussed it and would like to keep the main part of the building intact, strip it down, tear down the attached sheds, pour a slab and rebuild the attachments. The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation is okay with this plan. The demo and rebuild plans must be Okayed by the Design Review Board first.

- JL asks if there is any other news pertaining to historic buildings in town? FW reports that the Methodist Church will be transferred to BFADC in lieu of being torn down. JL mentions that this was the 1st church in the village and highly visible.

4. Commission 2015 Objectives

- FW begins the discussion of our Commission objectives for 2015. Most importantly we need recommendations for 3 new members by March Town Meeting. We need reasonable people with a passion for preservation and history. Preferably a member with experience in education (to connect to future generations) and one with a background in building/architecture to advise the Commission with preservation and architecture knowledge in relation to Meeting House maintenance and National Register of Historic Places Nominations. Most importantly we need a connection with the Design Review Board. We should invite a member of the board to join the Commission. The connection is clear; the reason people are investing in this town is because of the importance placed on the preservation of these old homes and buildings; therefore we need to be up to date and active in these efforts. Perhaps we should have Ellen Howard come in to speak with us once in a while to keep us up to date. The Commission will advertise, review, interview and recommend candidates to the Selectboard. JL clarifies that we have three months to locate three people to fill these roles. FW also discusses the need for the Commission to focus more on the town's survey inventory of historic resources.

Meeting adjourns at 8:00pm.

Meeting notes submitted by Christy Hotaling, CLG Coordinator.