

MHC meeting minutes 9-24-20

Members present: David Brule, Chris Clawson, Ed Gregory, Suzanne LoManto, Jeff Singleton

David Brule called the meeting to order at 11:04. He said the meeting would be only be able to last an hour so urged members to avoid “redundancy” and “raise the fingers” to be called on.

The minutes of the August 27 meeting were approved unanimously.

1. The commission reviewed Jeff’s draft of a letter to the Selectboard, Planning Board, and ZBA about the commission’s “need to know” about impending construction at historical and archaeological sites. Jeff asked if members had seen a proposal from Town Planner Walter Ramsey about the issue. Several members had not seen it and there was confusion about Jeff’s original letter and a revised version that eliminated the word “impending. “

David Brule proposed that the MHC “table the draft until we can all look at it in a timely way and Walter can come to the meeting.” The motion passed unanimously.

2, Posting of primary and secondary source re the naming of Turners Falls on the town website

Jeff stated that he thought the committee had agreed to post primary and secondary sources re Turners Falls name on the website and try to draw Montague residents into a process to discuss them. David Brule asked if the committee agreed with that. Suzanne stated that the current MHC portion of the town website did not have a mission statement and said she need to put agendas and minutes up too. She said his would be time consuming but it was worth doing “to be as transparent as possible.” Ed said the committee had agreed on a mission statement “way back” and agreed to look for it, send to Suzanne.

Jeff notes that he had sent to committee members an introduction defining the MHC mission in the Turners Falls name process and an introduction to the first four documents, along with with the four documents themselves. Sent over a week ago. Suzanne reads her edited versions of the mission statement and the introduction to the documents and said they would be “formatted like a syllabus.”. Chris says “we can pick these to death” but has no problem with the “care content and spirit.” Ed says he needs to go back and read them more before he makes a comment.

David makes motion to accept the content that has been discussed. Jeff second. Chris says the mission statement and introductions should be subject to revision in the future if the committee agrees. Jeff amends the motion to allow revisions in the future after the materials have been posted.

The amended motion passes unanimously.

Suzanne: These will appear on MHC website, “I can upload these documents” probably “next week.” Jeff asks if the motion approved posting the documents themselves. Suzanne and David replied “yes” with no dissent.

3. Discussion of the next postings – Battlefield GrantRresearch

Jeff and David note that they had agreed to create a guide the findings of the battlefield grant project that “culls” the most useful information. Suzanne agreed that the MHC needs to provide the public with a “guide” to the battlefield research that can be incorporated in our end of the website otherwise the public may get “stuck in the weeds.”

Chris asks “what does the battlefield commission research have to do with the naming of the community.” David says the research is pertinent to the name which is currently being debated. Chris says we will need to include all the other “contexts” so there will need to be a “huge spectrum” of information to be included. Ed says that “all that information is on line” and can be accessed through the town website. “ It’s out there now. “ David says Selectboard wanted MHC to research the battle and he does not think we should “sidestep” that. Without a some sort of guide the battlefield research will be “this big gorilla in the room.”

Jeff – Motion – “David and I cull information from the battlefield project to serve as guidance and the committee will have a shot evaluating what we do Members can review it and criticize our draft if they want.” David adds that there should be a rough draft by the next meeting, Ed asks if there be time? Jeff – we can get a start, write a rough draft and bring it to the committee.

5. Next steps and other tasks? Chris says the committee needs define “a fair process.” He says a path to move forward a priority more than debating the history. Suzanne says she has worked with a lot of people in the community and does not think we can come up with a process “until that information is out there,” The process will partly come “from the community.” Jeff argues that the public process should be like the Battlefield Grant forums, Stan Rosenberg’s old municipal conferences and panels of forums. David said this was an “opening round of discussions” on this,

6, Public position of MHC and personal points of view.

Jeff motion “MHC members are not be prohibited from expressing their viewpoints (no gag rule) but we urge them to clearly state that these are their opinions, not the positons of the committee as a whole, and that they respect other viewpoints.”

Chris says he would prefer to keep it informal. Suzanne – I think its important to make sure we clearly state in public what is our opinion and what is that of the MHC. David – Good to make the issue clear and formal.

Vote on motion: Chris no, too restrictive, Ed No, Jeff, Suzanne and David eye. Passes 3-2

Jeff – we can be flexible and not give violators 20 lashes.

7,. Discussion of Selectboard invitation to discuss historic Keith footbridge easement negotiations. David said he was invited to executive session. Explains which bridge and easements w First Light related to construction of the new bridge on 5th st. Jeff -can I go? I have been expressing opinions on this for years. Suzanne – ask Steve if you can to participate. Ed – maybe the entire commission should go to it. Jeff not sure. Probably too late to post it as MHC meeting. No vote taken.

[Note: the town in fact posted the meeting in a timely manner so the MHC was able to legally attend. Minutes to be approved when the First Light negotiations are resolved,]

Meeting adjourned at 12:09