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**Minutes of the Sandwich Historical Commission
March 3, 2021**

SHC Members present via Zoom: Maria Nye, Ellen Carlson, Matt Schimmel, Mary Lynch, Jennifer Madden, Greg Antman, Rich Claytor, Lisa Hassler, Carolyn Crowell, Bill Daley. Julia Blakely
Members of the public present via Zoom: Brendan Brides, Tao Woolfe, Tara Baker

Call to order: Maria Nye called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

1. Review and approval of the minutes: The February minutes were approved as written.

2. Correspondence/Statements/Announcements/Follow up: Lisa received a note from Sara Korjeff who is working on a grant application for which she needs recommendations of properties within the flood zone or near the flood zone. They can be private or public, but should be within one of the three historic districts in town. Please send suggested properties to Lisa.

We all received an email from Leanne Drake requesting that we come to her office to sign the historic preservation deed restriction for the Nye Family of America at 91 Old County Road. They received \$75,000 in Community Preservation funds in 2018 to restore their gristmill/sawmill.

The SHC section of the Annual Town Report has been submitted.

Jennifer reported that the identifications for the photo enlargements at the Sand Hill School are complete and with the designer. She also reports that Leanne Drake will release the RFP for restoring the cast iron fence at the Cedarville Cemetery soon.

Bill received a call from a reporter at the Cape Cod Times regarding buildings that have fallen into disrepair and those that have been restored. He took the reporter and a photographer to a number of properties.

3. Public forum: none

4. Old business: Brendan Brides Building Commissioner for the Town of Sandwich joined the meeting to discuss options for saving historic homes threatened by demolition. He explained that there are no current bylaws in Sandwich that require owners to maintain their properties to a certain level. If the property deteriorates to a certain point, he can declare it an "attractive nuisance" as a public safety issue. When he this occurs plaques are put up indicating to first responders that they should not enter the home. He can also require a fence be put around the property to keep people out. Mr. Brides does not have the authority to issue a "stay out" order.

If a property owner deliberately modifies their property in order to accelerate deterioration (such as cutting a hole in the roof) Mr. Brides would consider that demolition without a permit and he can require repair. If a property owner pulls a building permit and they remove parts of the house, then leave it exposed to the elements, he views this is a violation of the permit which is good for 180 days. In this situation, he can speak to the owner, but it can be tricky to determine whether this was done in order to accelerate deterioration, or whether they just ran out of money. He can talk to the property owner and advocate for finishing the work, but can't force them to do so.



SHC members and Mr. Brides discussed ideas for preventing people from buying a property with the intention of demolition. He suggested imposing conditions that would require owners who wish to demolish a home design the new home in the same footprint as the previous one. This could be written into zoning and might be more effective than a Demolition by Neglect bylaw. The SHDC could write conditions that would require that the owners build a replica of the existing house. An overlay district on the historic districts could specify a ratio to ensure compatible size and scale. The Sandwich Conservation Commission recently added restrictions on beach cottages; if old ones are demolished the structures that replace them can only increase in size by 50%.

Some owners of historic properties who wish to demolish argue that the house must be replaced because it is not up to code. Mr. Brides stated that homes built prior to the establishment of Massachusetts building codes in the 1960s are not required to be brought up to code if they meet the definition of "historic house." The building inspector has leeway here. It may be possible for the SHDC to require that engineers with historic property experience be hired to look at a home, but the idea would need to be vetted with the attorney that represents the SHDC; members are interested in inviting this attorney to a future meeting. Another town in Massachusetts has a rule that any property owner who is interested in demolition must first put their house on the market for 12 months at the assessed value before a demolition permit will be approved.

Bill Daley presented three historic house markers which were unanimously approved:

- 14 Dewey Avenue: James Horan 1859
- 141 Main Street: Reverend Asahel Cobb 1834
- 20 Church Street: Thomas McDermott, c. 1850

Bill also reported that former SHC member Don Bayley is staying on as our webmaster, but he is closing his host site, so we need to move our website to a new host.

Bill also mentioned that he has applied for a \$2,890 grant from the Visitor Services Board. If funded in full, this grant would support:

- \$200 annual fee to host the SHC website at GoDaddy.
- \$500 annual fee for the PocketSights app to host a self-guided historic walking tour.
- \$1,200 to provide a monthly stipend of \$100 to our webmaster Don Bayley.
- \$990 to replace 11 historic house markers which have not weathered well.

Tara Baker joined the meeting representing the Cape Cod chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The group has volunteers and funding and is interested in projects that they might get involved with in Sandwich. They often do historical projects, but they do not need to be American Revolution related. Maximum grant is \$500-\$1,000, but they can fundraise for additional funds. The SHC members will discuss possible projects at the April meeting.

Ellen and Julia presented more of their research regarding how other communities protect their historic properties. Some provide financial incentives for homeowners to restore their property. An example is the Arlington Preservation Fund; perhaps someone from their organization would be willing to speak

with us at a future meeting. Some organizations acquire historic properties and flip them, such as WHALE in New Bedford. Should these efforts be local or regional? Ellen and Julia are putting together a spreadsheet with all of this information.

Rich Claytor reported that the regional commission overturned the local HDC approval of the demolition of 18 State Street, stating that they need to follow their own guidelines regarding demolitions. Hopefully the owner can be convinced to do something differently. One of the regional commissioners did a site visit and said he wasn't previously aware of Jarvesville district and he was very impressed. There was a lot of interest in attending the SHC's Zoom meeting. Rich will suggest this to the town. There was agreement that we need some relationship building with the SHDC. Maria will reach out to the chair.

5. New business: none

6. Public forum: none

7. Other business not anticipated by the chair: none

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Y. Madden