

**Sturbridge Historic Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 19, 2023
Center Office Building**



APPROVED

Present:

Richard Volpe, Chair
Charles Blanchard
Barbara Search
Wally Hersee
Jean Bubon, Town Planner

R. Volpe called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM.

Approval of Minutes

March 16, 2023

Motion: To approve minutes of March 16, 2023 as written.

By: W. Hersee

2nd: C. Blanchard

Vote: 4-0

**Continued review of materials for the Community Wide Historic Preservation Plan-
Sections 5 and 6**

The Commission discussed the materials provided by PAL and made note of comments, questions and proposed edits to the document provided.

Section 5 – Goals and Policies 5.1 What Are the Resources We Want to Protect

In general the Commission thought this section provided only general information from the surveys and public forum and it believes there are many more important things to be protected than were noted in the survey and the Public Forum. The Commission thought that Section 5.1 in particular should include observations of PAL. After working with the Commission and working in the town for this period of time what are their impressions and recommendations on what resources we should be protecting? Were there things not identified in the limited public input that should be incorporated into this section?

The second paragraph references the “Allen Road stone wall system”. It is assumed this was a comment taken from a survey response. The Commission thought this should be more general and broader. While there are stonewalls on Allen Road, there are a number of stonewalls and scenic roads within the town. Would it be more appropriate to just state

something about the number of scenic roads and how the scenic road bylaw in place is a tool to help with the preservation of the numerous stonewalls in town. The Commission also noted having a conversation with PAL at one of the earliest meetings that it was its belief that a list of Scenic Roads was just placed within the bylaw without actually reviewing the roads to be certain we are truly protecting “scenic Roads”. Should more detail on this be included?

The Commission does not agree with paragraph 4 on page 2. While there has not been the level of coverage of town happenings there used to be from the Worcester Telegram, there are many local papers that do cover town events. The Southbridge Evening news is now a weekly paper, but that was a daily until several years back. There are also the Sturbridge Town Common, and Sturbridge Villager that have weekly papers. The Town Common and Sturbridge Villager are distributed free to residents, so they both have wide distribution. The Commission also does not agree that oral histories are the best source of information on the recent past.

Section 5.2 – How Can We Achieve Protection

In general the Commission believes this plan has to start with the premise that those reading the plan will have no background on historic preservation. Each tool noted in this section should begin with an introductory paragraph explaining what the tool is and how it may help with preservation. Several have some information and others leave the reader (including the Commission) with having to look up the term to determine what this is and how it may be adopted and how it is enforced. There should be more substantial information on each of these sections so the reader can gain a better understanding.

The photo in Figure 6-1 on page 4 is captioned “The Fiskdale Upper Mill, 20 Holland Street, has been vacant and unmaintained for many years”. This is actually only the remains of the mill and are actually portions cobbled together at later dates. The Mill itself is no longer intact or in existence other than faint foundation remains. The Commission is not sure this is worthy of protection.

Page 5 - Zoning Amendments – last sentence notes the “collection of shops around the Public House”. There is no collection of shops around the Public House – is PAL referring to Sadie Greens? This should be clarified. Was this section written after a review of the current zoning bylaw and are there specific recommendations as to what sections should be re-written or added, or is this a general statement. PAL should be asked to clarify.

PowerPoint for Public Forum – May 10, 2023 at 6:30

Page 4 – It appears to be the same mill photo used in Figure 6-1. There are better candidates to include in the presentation that this building. Again, this is the remnants of the upper mill. The best representative of a mill still intact and in existence is the lower mill which is still intact and fully leased for a variety of uses.

Next Steps

J. Bubon will provide the notes from the meeting to PAL and Jennifer Doherty and will work with them to find a date that works for the group to meet.

Other Business

The Commission discussed the current Demolition Delay bylaw and wondered if a sub-group of the Commission could research what other communities have for language and if any changes need to be made to the Bylaw.

It was also noted that the Building Inspector's office needs to be aware when they are reviewing demolition permits so that structures of the appropriate age are referred to the Commission for review.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

By: B. Search

2nd: R. Volpe

Vote: All in Favor (4-0)

Meeting adjourned at 2:28 PM