

Northbridge Historical Commission Mtg.

9/8/15

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Present: Ken Warchal, Paula McCowan, Wendy Timmons, Mary Barlow, Lenny Smith, Karen Talley, Dan O'Neill.

NORTHBRIDGE TOWN CLERK
BETTY A. GEORGE

Guest : Jennifer Smith Assistant Park Superintendent Blackstone Valley Park.

Ken W opened the meeting at 7:15PM with final adjustments to plans for the Trolley Tour event on September 26th 2015. He mentioned that further financial backing has come in from corporate sponsors. Gaudette Insurance, Omni and Unibank have each contributed \$500. TR has given \$300. These amounts are much more than we need to fund the event..

Wendy T has arranged for a handicapped accessible trolley. Alternatives has agreed to supply us with a technical person to help set up the projector, etc in their Singh Theater right before the event. Christine, who replaced Tom Saupe, is now the event contact w/Alternatives. The Commission would like to have the regular theater seats in the hall be rolled out for our use, instead of the folding chairs.

The group next went over timing and stops for the trolley. We discussed adding a stop in New Village. It was decided, however to turn this topic into a walking tour for the future. The biggest negative in this section's history occurred when Whitin Machine Works moved south and the town didn't obtain restoration funding for this area. The history of the village is significant. The tours are planned within a calendar year. Tasks for Commission members the day of the event were then discussed/assigned. Ken W then added that the 1st and 3rd tours are full; the second could hold more people. A reservation problem has occurred b/c the woman taking them over the phone isn't available on weekends, so gets transcribed info from applicants on Mondays. Next time, we will plan an alternate approach.

The Commission then moved on to discuss updates on various topics. The large sign being made to replace the old Revolutionary War soldier's monument is still being worked on. Wendy T will continue to facilitate this project. A rededication of the monument, life stories of the soldiers and viewing of the graves of some of these soldiers is planned for later this year. Wendy T said that if the new sign isn't ready, she will mount the old one temporarily so as not to be without it.

The new bridge opposite the town hall was then mentioned. Ken W told the contractors that we were pleased with the final product. He has received many positive comments from the public. The construction workers were able to keep the stone wall along the roadside leading to the bridge when they had originally said they needed to remove it.

Our guest speaker was next on the agenda.

Jennifer Smith's National Park Service title is Management Assistant..however she is not clerical support: she runs the Blackstone Valley Park's day-to-day operations. She started at the small park in New Bedford (whaling) as a volunteer, then p/t, then full time. She later transferred to the Roger Williams

park in RI full time. This new job is an added responsibility for her. These 3 parks are clustered as one district for the park service to oversee.

She briefly mentioned the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor. She said that this is a whole different animal. The corridor has access to many disciplines of assistance to start projects in the 25 Blackstone Valley communities, but then backs off after beginning one to let the locals take charge and finish it. It is now the link to the Blackstone Valley Park for all non-member communities. Usually, Corridors are time-limited and have a sunset. This one has been active for decades and was recently financially renewed. It has a great track record of accomplishments.

She then mentioned that the BV Park, newly created, is created in perpetuity.. forever.. no time limit. The four centers of operation (Whitinsville, Hopedale, Slatersville RI and Cumberland RI) are called nodes. The future staffing will occur at these nodes. What really matters, however, are the boundaries. This means the areas in the park that are locally designated as local historic districts and meet the Interior Dept standards for such entities. If there is no designated part of a node that has restrictions on reuse/construction/rennovations, etc by the time funding becomes available (probably 2 years from now) then a boundary hasn't been set up, and funding goes to nodes who do have such districts. All historic districts in our area have to be approved by town meeting. Some people with buildings in the proposed Whitinsville Historic District say they will oppose it at the town meeting. The Commission will propose it at town meeting when it seems propitious in the future. Jennifer advised us to start small, then, over time, as other owners see the benefit of the District we can propose additions to the district that the town the votes on. Growth through example. The Park will supply free advice and expertise re: any historic renovation or other need in the Districts, but not funding. Non-historic buildings that exist within a new Historic District will not be forced to remove siding, or change in any way up front. However, future modifications on those properties will be allowed only according to the District standards for preservation. IE the District will give the owner a list of approved materials and they would likely have to use only those approved for their projects. Jennifer and her supervisor will gladly meet with the Boards of Selectmen in each town included to promote the districts and park and build bridges for future successes.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45PM.