

TOWN OF NEWPORT
Heritage Commission Meeting
Municipal Building - Newport, NH 03773
Minutes of December 29, 2020 6:30 pm

Remote Access:

Zoom.com - Meeting ID: 893 6300 6330 **Passcode:** 850142
+1 (253) 215-8782 US (audio only, long-distance fees may apply)

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: *via zoom:* Jacqueline Cote, Chairman; Virginia Irwin, Vice Chairman; Herbert Tellor, BOS Representative Alternate

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Brian Kelly, Alternate; Ken Vigue, John Hooper II, BOS Representative

COMMUNITY MEMBERS: none

VIDEOGRAPHER: John Lunn, NCTV

STAFF PRESENT: Christina Donovan, Zoning Administrator

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Donovan called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. She stated that the Heritage Commission needed to elect officers for the fiscal year ending in 2021 and asked for a nomination for the position of Chairman.

Due to the fact that participating members attended the meeting via zoom, votes were by roll call vote.

BOARD ORGANIZATION:

Mrs. Irwin made a motion *to elect Mrs. Jaqueline Cote to the position of Chairman*. It was seconded by Mr. Tellor. There were no other nominations. Ms. Donovan called for a roll call vote. ***The motion passed 3-0-0.***

Chairman Cote took over the meeting.

Chairman Cote asked for a nomination for the position of Vice Chairman. Chairman Cote made a motion *to elect Mrs. Virginia Irwin to the position of Vice Chairman*. It was seconded by Mr. Tellor. There were no other nominations. Chairman Cote called for a roll call vote. ***The motion passed 3-0-0.***

MINUTES: December 9, 2019, April 8, 2019

Due to the lack of a quorum of Commission members attending the April 8, 2019 meeting, the minutes were tabled.

The December 9, 2019 of the Heritage Commission was Informational only. The minutes would be filed with the other Heritage Commission minutes.

NEW BUSINESS/PUBLIC HEARING:

19 Depot Street-Acquisition of this property as a charitable donation. This structure falls under the State and Federal Historic Property lists. Ms. Donovan: Town of Newport Acquiring 19 Depot Street

Chairman Cote addressed the Heritage Commissioners and explained that the Town had been approached by Bar Harbor Bank in Newport. The bank would like to gift the Depot building and the lot it was on to the Town of Newport. They were told Town Manager Rieseberg (and the BOS) was interested in acquiring the building. The Town has been looking into having a regional dispatch center (to

include Claremont). If this was done, the two communities would share the one million dollars it would cost to outfit the building for this use. It would be a significant cost savings for both communities. Chairman Cote said that she approved the acquisition and use of the Depot as long as the outside of the building was not altered

Ms. Donovan stated it had been brought to the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board and the Selectboard had motions with their non-binding recommendations. The two Boards had been told that the Selectmen had three options: to sell it, lease it, or keep it for Newport's use.

In discussion of the acquisition of the Depot building and lot the Heritage Commission members comments were:

- The outside of the building is not to be altered in any way (it was on the national register and it was prohibited).
- The inside had been altered since its use as a railroad depot, the last use being a day care.

Chairman Cote did not have a problem with the proposal; it will be a good use of the building. The bank had approached the Newport Historical Society (NHS). They had been asked if the Society was interested in the building. The NHS had declined the gift, deciding they would not be able to care for two buildings.

Mrs. Irwin stated she had attended the first BOS public hearing and spoke in favor of it.

- The quality of a community is often judged by the nature of its buildings. It is a very historic building; the outside is in good shape. It would be a shame to lose the character of the building; they would hate to see Newport lose it.
- The character of some of the historic brick buildings on Main Street were being restored to make the community more appealing. Mrs Irwin stated she would hate to see Newport lose it (Depot).
- Some people are worried about lost taxes by the acquisition; between taxes and upkeep of the building it is pennies on the tax rate. Newport could never replicate the Depot.

For these reasons, Mrs. Irwin was in favor of the Town acquiring the Depot property to protect it. It would be a wise move on their (BOS) part. The exterior of the Priscilla Building which currently houses the police station had been preserved by the Town. Mrs Irwin and the other Heritage Commission members were interested in what the Conservation Commission stated.

Ms. Donovan stated the Conservation Commission discussed it extensively. They had many questions of Town Manager Rieseberg and stated they did not want the exterior touched.

From the October 21, 2019 Conservation Commission minutes:

Commissioners had the following questions and comments:

1. *Has anyone gone through the building (by the Town) to inspect its structural soundness and integrity?* They were told yes.

It is very important to keep the integrity and historical value of the Depot building. Town Manager Rieseberg agreed and stated it was the Town's intent. He explained their concept.

2. *Will there be antennas? Will there be any mounted on the Depot building?* They were told none were planned; existing antennas on surrounding buildings as well as fiber optic cables would be used.
3. *The dispatch system needed to be updated years ago. What does the future look like?* Town Manager Rieseberg explained the request for proposal (RFP) document and evaluation needs that would be done in Newport and Claremont. He explained the vision of a regional dispatch center which would cover those two communities as well as smaller ones in the area. The cost of the study would be shared by Newport and Claremont.
- ❖ *A Conservation Commission recommendation would include to accept the Depot and to utilize it for Newport's benefit.* There was a general discussion on the costs and benefits of using the Depot building.
- ❖ *A Conservation Commission recommendation would include that the building not be sold.*
- ❖ *A Conservation Commission recommendation would be to keep the integrity of the building.*
4. *Might the building be used to house town records?* Town Manager Rieseberg stated it was a possibility.

The Commissioners stated that the use of the building as a dispatch is good. Its location is ideal. The quality of the building is excellent. The police department's current capacity is at its maximum now.

Mr. Dennis made the following motion: ***that the Town accept the gift of the Depot building and lot from the Bar Harbor Bank with the following recommendations to the Selectboard:***

- 1) ***The building is preserved and its historic integrity kept.***
- 2) ***There will be no external antennas mounted on the Depot building***
- 3) ***The property/building will not be sold, it will be kept and utilized for the benefit of the Town***

Mr. Connell seconded the motion. In discussion, it was stated that the Conservation Commission was giving their blessing to accept the gift of the Depot building. The Commission's non-binding recommendations were listed for consideration by the Selectboard. ***The motion passed 4-0-0.***

The Heritage Commission members continued a general discussion of the building, its use, historical value and contamination testing on the site (contaminants in the ground, potential contaminants in the building). Mr. Tellor confirmed this testing was being done.

Mr. Tellor stated that the purposes being investigated by the BOS were: a dispatch center, a business incubator leased out by the Town or sold by the Town to an investor. Some townspeople had concerns of the tax impact and maintenance of the building (which is minimal). As a lifelong resident in the Town Mr. Tellor would hate to see it changed or modified. It (Depot) adds to the character of the Town. The other Commission members agreed with Mr. Tellor.

Mrs. Irwin stated the Heritage Commission is not an official Board needed for the statute (NH RSA 41:14-a). She asked what the appropriate parliamentary procedure was for the Heritage Commission. Chairman Cote stated she believed from similar requests in the past there usually is a motion and a vote to approve the proposed use. The Commission's recommends, it doesn't make the final decision.

After being acknowledged, Mrs. Stetson stated that the Conservation Commission made a non-binding motion with recommendations to the Board of Selectmen. In their motion the Heritage Commission should list what their recommendations were (do not alter the outside, etc.). The Selectboard still had the option of leasing, selling or keeping and using the building for Town use.

Mr. Tellor said that the Heritage Commission submitted their recommendations (directions) and the BOS would use them in deciding what to do with the building.

Mrs. Irwin made a motion ***that the Heritage Commission approve the acceptance of the gift of the Newport Depot building from Bar Harbor Bank and Trust to the Town of Newport to be used as appropriate That the Board of Selectmen decides and that it is in keeping with the requirements of the historic register designation (Nothing can be done to the outside of the building).*** It was seconded by Mr. Tellor. Chairman Cote called for a roll call vote. ***The motion passed 3-0-0.***

CONTINUED BUSINESS: none

There being no other business to come before the Commission, ***the Heritage Commission unanimously adjourned by roll call vote at 6:22 p.m.***

Respectfully submitted,

Maura Stetson
Scribe

Approved on February XX, 2021