

Camden Historic Resources Committee (HRC) Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 14, 2024
French Conference Room

Members Present: Chris Friden, Chair; Chris Fasoldt, Rhonda Ryznar, Ann Waigand. **Select Board Liaison:** Alison McKellar. **Volunteers:** Mike Skaling and Pat Skaling. **On Zoom:** Danny Salomon, Brian Boyd. **Visitors:** Ken Gross.

Call to order: 11:07 am by Rhonda Ryznar, seconded by Chris Fasoldt.

Review of Minutes: The minutes of our last meeting held on April 9, 2024 were discussed at length. Alison had concerns regarding the dam and Harbor Park discussion as recorded and that we stated in the minutes that the HRC felt out of the loop. She also thought we should make clear what were Ken's statements and what were the committee's statements in the minutes. Friden said our only intention was, and continues to be, fact gathering regarding these issues and that the HRC remains neutral on the issues until all facts are in. We also invited the MRCAC to speak to the committee and they had not gotten back to us. Ken Gross came to the meeting today to give a presentation on the history of Montgomery Dam. **Action:** The committee agreed to amend the minutes from April 9 to clarify any statements of concern.

The Chair's (Chris Friden) Report: Friden and Rhonda terms are ending in June. **Action:** We must turn in our renewal forms by June 8. Danny is officially a member of the committee. Friden doesn't think there has been a vote on Brian's membership.

Jane's Walk: We finished the Chestnut Street Historic District Walking Tour brochure (researched and written by Rhonda Ryznar, with graphic design by Tracy Friden) and decided to launch it on May 4th, a date chosen to celebrate Jane Jacobs, community planner/advocate. All the Maine walking tours were held on this date and were promoted and supported by Maine Preservation. Our tour was attended by at least 50 people so that we divided into two groups for the tour. Rhonda Ryznar, Chris and Tracy Friden led one group and Pat Skaling and Ann Waigand led another group. Attendees expressed a lot of interest in the topics we discussed and in historic preservation efforts in the town.

Upcoming Historic Preservation Meetings: History summit on November 14 and 15 we might attend in Portland, Maine. It is sponsored by Historic New England. We will discuss at the next meeting regarding registration.

Zoom annual meeting of Maine Preservation Society on May 23. There will be an old house forum and some interesting guests. Friden will send a link.

Elm Street School: We had our walk through at Elm Street School. Our role was to facilitate a question and answer session with the Select Board. There is a website showing the plans for the proposed building remodel.

Fasoldt reported he lives at the Knox Mill now and is doing some work there. He said when the mill was first purchased the owner wanted to convert the old boiler room into a residence. Fasoldt thinks there should be a vehicle by which the zoning ordinance pertaining to the B1 area can allow some exceptional buildings to be converted to residential use. It was suggested

that our preservation ordinance might address the issue but this should be a planning board discussion.

Friden announced that the MRCAC will come to our meeting on June 18.

Jennifer Gromada: Secretary of the Camden Public Library Board of Trustees. Here to present the new Camden Public Library statement on Harbor Park. The old statement was issued in 2021, but is now superseded by this new statement. The new statement was prepared in order to provide the Select Board clear quantifiable objectives that the library can apply to and help evaluate any plan that would touch Harbor Park. This statement only covers the library property of Harbor Park and not any other parts of the harbor or dam. It is just about concerns of the library.

Questions: What was the most internally debated issue? Conversations that took place before the statement was written were resolved once the boundary of just library property was inserted as the area of sole concern.

What were the most important aspects of the statement? Keep the park natural, keep the intent of the Olmsted features, preserve the view from the amphitheater, keep the public spaces open to all and ADA compliant, conserve the landscape and native plants.

The park has not been static. Change happens. The statement is not meant to be prescriptive of a plan, it is only meant to assure that future plans reflect and respect the library's objectives for this public space.

How do you think the board of trustees sees the role of the historic resources committee? They haven't thought of this a great deal, but would love to partner with us and other civic organizations to plan together.

How are you sharing this now? It is on the library's website.

Ken Gross: The history of Montgomery Dam

Ken gave a slide presentation on the history of the Montgomery Dam and Harbor Park construction by the Olmsted Brothers. He showed historic photos of before and after the construction of Harbor Park and the dam areas that border the park.

Questions asked about the Montgomery Dam:

When was the dam mentioned as a historic resource in the comprehensive plan? Alison offered that the comprehensive plan was put together by volunteers, and that these designations came about when the Maine Historic Preservation Commission gathered information, as part of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, to identify historic resources. During this effort all the dams were found to be potential historic resources. This designation then triggers the review process for federally funded projects.

What was the purpose of filling the gully? Alison contacted the group who put pictures on Flickr. She was also able to find letters written in 1930 that described the purpose of filling the gully to the right of the dam (also shown in the historic pictures). The dam was privately owned but the work building Harbor Park required modifications to the dam and the filling in of the gully because of constant overflow of water due to leakage and weather events. The water front area at the foot of Harbor Hill was used for boat storage at the time and the park construction called for more space at the public landing for this purpose. The history of how decisions were made is quite interesting.

Danny Salomon: Over April break Danny wanted to tour cities at the forefront of building deconstruction and reuse efforts. He went to Savannah, GA, and Portland, OR. The Savannah reuse program “Re Purpose Savannah” is located outside of the city. Re Purpose Savannah is a women-led effort. No policy driving their work but they do deconstruction and reuse materials and reclaim fallen trees. They target historic buildings that can't be preserved and do an amazing job of cataloging buildings. They do a lot of research and have created a digital archive of materials. They layout their reclaimed materials outdoors and have an indoor facility where they add value by modifying materials. De-nailing is done by volunteers. Volunteer days are once a week. They save windows, bricks, and even solar panels. They've made table tops which can be found in local businesses with write-ups on the materials and where they came from. They've struggled to find funding but haven't penetrated policy yet. They do training in deconstruction. San Antonio has established a deconstruction training program and Re Purpose Savannah went there to train their crew. Their main goal is to train people and hope that for-profit businesses develop.

Is Savannah itself widely aware of the program and people are readily participating? The word is getting out and placing repurposed wood furniture, etc. in businesses helps to advertise the program.

Went to Portland, OR, to visit Sara Badiali. She helped pass the first deconstruction ordinance and wrote a book on it. Kind of a playbook for other cities. They now target demolition of any house built before 1940 to go through the deconstruction process.

Other deconstruction companies or individuals mentioned: Shane Endicott, Meticulous Deconstruction, Lovett Deconstruction, Good Wood, The ReBuilding Center, Reclaim NW, etc. These companies have saved millions of tons of reclaimable materials from the landfill.

Danny's student group from Camden Hills took materials from the Camden boardwalk at the recently repaired public landing and are making tables and chairs for Curtis Island.

Other activities in Camden: House that they deconstructed. Sections are at Yachting Solutions. Made some crates for tools. Made a hockey stick rack. Made a clay wedging table. An ice fishing shack, tables, making benches with studs and broken sticks. Built benches for their outdoor classrooms.

After seeing an example of a historic building archive in a business in Portland Danny wondered if we might consider some shared space in the Elm Street converted school that might also serve as a historic archive.

Action: Could Danny write a brief half page concept of how this kind of effort of deconstruction and reuse could be put in place in Camden and what it might look like? We might insert this effort in our Preservation Ordinance.

Preservation Ordinance: Perhaps by November we can put together a non-binding proposal outlining our intent of a full-blown ordinance. What is the level of support on the Select Board or the public? We have gone through rounds before and been shot down. However, we think there is currently a lot of public support. We need to write questions for a non-binding proposal to put on the ballot that adequately describes the current situation and our desire to support and preserve the town's historic buildings. **Action:** Next meeting we should begin putting together our statement.

Additional reporting by Alison: Middle schoolers initiated a request that signage around town related to town history needed to recognize indigenous people of this area.

Additional agenda items: No update on the St. Thomas Episcopal Church bell tower, Jacobs Avenue, or the National Natural Landmark.

Chris Fasoldt: “Designing the Maine Landscape” by Theresa Mattor and Lucie Teegarden, a book drawn from the research of the Maine Olmsted Alliance, a group of people identifying and researching historic landscapes. We may look to this group if we are searching for an Olmsted expert.

Rhonda made a motion to adjourn, Chris Fasoldt seconded, at 1:22 pm.

Recorded and respectfully submitted by Rhonda Ryznar.