

Chelmsford Historic District Commission  
Town of Chelmsford  
50 Billerica Rd. Chelmsford, Ma 01824  
Meeting Minutes  
March 7, 2022  
Approved May 2, 2022

**Members Present:** Brenda Lovering, Debra Belden, Janet Askenburg, Jack Handley, Lisa Grasso, Donna Ready, Deb Taverna

**Members Absent:**

**Others Present:**

Meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by Ms. Lovering.

All documents referenced in these minutes are available for review at the Community Development Office, 50 Billerica Rd., Chelmsford Town Offices Building. This meeting was hand recorded via the Recording Secretary.

**Public Input**

No one came forward at this time.

**Scheduled Business**

**7 North Road – Chelmsford Garden Club – Temporary Signage and Canopy for Fundraising Event**

Ms. Lovering recused herself from this discussion, as she is a member of the Chelmsford Garden Club.

Ms. Belden took control of the meeting at this time.

Chelmsford Garden Club members Carol Cannistaro and Jackie Dowling, explained the Club is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a fundraising event called “Weddings Through the Century”, to be held at the All Saints Church, the Chelmsford Public Garden, the Garrison House and the gazebo at the Congregation Church. The event will be held from May 6-21, 2022, and will include signs, decorated bicycles and balloons. There will be signs at the Chelmsford Public Garden from April 20-May 4, 2022. There will be a fundraising event on May 20 and 21, 2022 where the Public Garden will be temporarily closed off. Tickets will be sold, and there is a potential for a canopy to be installed. There would be 8’x8’ pop-up tents at each entrance for collecting tickets and other related activities. Signs haven’t been designed yet, and details will be emailed to Ms. Lovering. The event will include photo opportunities at the arbor, and a minister will perform vow renewals.

A revised application will be forwarded to the Commission. Fees will be waived for a non-profit organization.

**Motion:** by Mr. Handley to accept the revised application from the Chelmsford Garden Club, and to waive the application fee. Seconded by Ms. Askenburg. Ms. Taverna abstained, all others in favor. **Motion carries, 5-0.**

Ms. Dowling asked the Commission about installing a little library between the two benches at the Chelmsford Public Garden, as a permanent painted wooden structure for a future project. Their goal is to exchange garden themed books. The planning process was described for her.

### **6 Central Square – Santana Barbershop – Street Furniture**

No one was present from Santana's. The issue concerns having chairs on the sidewalk. A letter was sent to the business owner on February 14, 2022. A request to remove the chairs will be sent to the business owner tomorrow, as they are considered unauthorized furniture.

### **Screening Rooftop Mechanical Equipment: - 17 North Road – Metro Financial 10-14 Chelmsford Street – Sweetser Building**

Ms. Taverna reported that there was no response to the original letter that was sent to the property owner. A second letter was sent out last week.

### **1 Billerica Road – Fiske House – Discuss Draft Preservation Restriction - Review Standards of the Chelmsford Historic District Commission Document – Review and Approve Revised Document**

Applicant Fred Faust, for Americal Management Company, requests support for the proposed Preservation Restriction for the Fiske House. The Planning Board has requested that the building should not be altered. The restriction would be attached to the deed for the property.

A draft document was presented to the Commission.

The Historic District Commission would be the enforcement authority under the restriction. The Select Board would need to approve the final document.

Under this draft, only minor alterations to the building would be allowed. A subdivision is required before the building can be sold. The Odd Fellows property has already been subdivided. The back parcel would need its own subdivision which will be discussed at Spring Town Meeting.

Much of the structure and fence is already historic, and in the jurisdiction of this Commission. Lead paint has been removed, bushes moved away from house, some painting and caulking done, and some fence repairs have been started. The building's window shutters are not historic, and would be replaced. The applicant wishes to preserve the building. All plans would be reviewed by the Historic District Commission.

This is not a restrictive covenant, as those have an expiration date. All references to a covenant will be deleted from the document.

Mr. Handley noted that Americal ignored all the Town's attempts to preserve the Oddfellows Building; he also acknowledged that this could have been in part due to the tenant that occupied the building.

Atty. Melissa Robbins advised that this document will provide an easement to allow the historic preservation on this building, with enforcement authority.

Ms. Askenburg recommended that there be a subcommittee of the Commission formed, as this document is not acceptable as presented. The proposed language needs more teeth, and more baseline information is required. She recommended that an administrator be appointed to monitor the restriction, and the enforcement authority should have more control and oversight. There is a potential for interior pieces of the building that should be protected. Atty. Robbins recommended against additional enforcement over what other buildings have had. Mr. Faust cautioned against making the Restriction so tight that the property becomes unsaleable. Ms. Taverna noted that all properties that have a preservation restriction are inspected once every year.

All four subdivided lots on this property will have access from Billerica Rd. and Boston Rd. If the lot is not subdivided, the parking lot would be developed. Currently, the Town has the option to purchase the back parking lot, which will be discussed at Spring Town Meeting. The current asking price for the Fiske House is \$550,000.00. This building is already on the Massachusetts Historic Register.

Atty. Robbins stated that the applicant is looking for approval of the concept of the Preservation Restriction, subject to review with this Commission's sub-committee and Town Counsel, to include final approval by this Commission at the April 4, 2022 meeting. This vote would tell the Planning Board to proceed with the Restriction and the subdivision, pending the previously mentioned reviews.

**Motion:** by Ms. Grasso to approve the concept of a Historic Preservation Restriction for 1 Billerica Rd., aka The Fiske House, pending final language and sub-committee & Town Counsel review. . Seconded by Mr. Handley. **Motion carries, unanimous, 7-0.**

Discussion is continued to the next regular meeting. Ms. Askenburg will organize the sub-committee.

**Motion:** by Ms. Belden to create a sub-committee consisting of Ms. Askenburg, Ms. Lovering, and Mr. Handley for the purpose of revising the draft Historic Preservation Restriction for the Fiske House, and to authorize the sub-committee to send the revised document to Town Counsel for review. Seconded by Ms. Ready. **Motion carries, unanimous, 7-0.**

The Select Board will also sign off on the preservation restriction once the document is final.

### **New Business**

#### **1 Worthen Street – Carson Park – Fire Pit**

Eagle Scout candidate Bryce Stacy explained that his proposed project is to install two more granite benches and a fire pit at Carson Park. He has not reviewed his proposal with the Fire Department yet. Ms. Lovering advised that the Fire Department's website indicates that fire pits are illegal. Mr. Stacy will need a letter from the Fire Department before this is approved. It is anticipated that the Fire Department will most likely send him to the Building Commissioner, and more detailed plans may be needed

Mr. Stacy hopes to complete his project in late May or early June. He would do his own fundraising.

The installation will occur to the left of the white house, between the gazebo. Ms. Lovering suggested a water feature instead of a fire pit if the fire department denies his request.

Al Lecynski advised that the church would maintain the pit area, and there would be gravel under the benches.

Mr. Stacy was asked to return to the Commission's April 4, 2022 meeting with letters from the Fire Department and the Building Commissioner to the Historic District Commission for more discussion and a vote.

### **Massachusetts Historical Commission – Certified Local Government – General Discussion**

Information was provided to the Commission online.

There are few Certified Local Governments in the State, and they provide funding opportunities from the State. The application is cumbersome. The State works with historic districts and commissions. They want the resumes of the people on these commissions. The Historic Commission is in the process of doing this, and asks the Historic District Commission to partner with them. The Historic Commission is doing all the background work.

Ms. Taverna will coordinate between the two groups. The Select Board signs the actual application.

**Motion:** by Ms. Askenburg to support and approve the pursuit of the Certified Local Government for the local government. Seconded by Ms. Grasso. **Motion carries, unanimous, 7-0.**

### **Continued Discussion of the Fiske House**

Ms. Askenburg asked to clarify what is being protected by the Preservation Restriction for the Fiske House. Preservation restrictions can be used to protect landscapes, like stone walls. Will there be preservation of the summer kitchen? Removal of the wing was proposed at one point. The outhouse holes may still be there. There is a potential for a preservation restriction for the undeveloped parking area as well. Ms. Lovering asked the Commissioners to send their questions and concerns to the sub-committee.

### **1 Billerica Road/41-44 Central Square – Parking Lot**

This purchase will be a Town Meeting Article, and no details have been presented. The Select Board has discussed this in Executive Session. The purchase is anticipated to preserve needed parking for the Town Center.

**Motion:** by Ms. Belden to send a letter of support for the purchase of this parking lot, listed as lot 41-44 Central Square to the Select Board and Town Manager. Seconded by Ms. Ready. **Motion carries, unanimous, 7-0.**

### **Review Standards of the Chelmsford Historic District Commission Document – Review and Approve Revised Document**

Previous revisions were summarized for the Commissioners’ information. The document is awaiting Town Counsel review.

**Motion:** by Ms. Belden to approve the revised Review Standards of the Historic District Commission document, as presented, and to authorize the document be sent to Town Counsel for review. Seconded by Ms. Ready **Motion carries, unanimous, 7-0.**

Once formally approved, the document will be sent to the Business Development Director and to the Building Commissioner.

### **Center Village Master Plan Implementation Committee – Update**

Ms. Askenburg reported that at the last meeting, member Nancy Araway proposed a bylaw change to the Overlay District, and requested a vote. No paperwork was provided. The change proposed was when a multi-story building in the district is within 40 feet of a road, the first floor must be commercial, and the rest of the floors can be residential. Another change requested was to delete allowing the Planning Board from changing the bylaw. Ms. Araway’s request for a vote was denied, and will be discussed further at the next meeting on Thursday, March 10, 2022. The consensus is that the Planning Board should be the board proposing these changes, not the Historic District Commission.

### **Unfinished Business - Historic District Commission - Open/Closed Signage**

A sample sign was shown to the Commission.

There is potential for CPA funding to create the signs. The proposal is to make 15 of the signs. These used to be provided to businesses in the district. The sign comes with 2 holes to hang it, and would come with suction cups and a piece of chain. Ms. Askenburg offered to purchase the signs and equipment; Ms. Grasso will pick out the chain and suction cups.

**Motion:** by Ms. Ready to authorize the purchase of 15 “closed/open” signs to include a length of chain and suction cups to be privately funded by Ms. Askenburg, as presented. Seconded by Ms. Grasso. **Motion carries, unanimous, 7-0.**

Ms. Grasso and Ms. Askenburg will coordinate this project.

### **41-44 Central Square – Odd Fellows Project LLC – Update**

Ms. Belden received a call that the front of the building could be changed. The restaurant would be one entrance, and the residence entrance would be a separate door, both in the front of the building. A window would be removed to make the second door. Both doors would match, and would be glass doors.

Ms. Lovering had trouble envisioning how this would work. Full plans have not been received yet. The developer was looking for conceptual approval before spending money on architectural design. There will be glass across the front, as was previously done many years ago.

The change to the back of the building will be presented, as there needs to be a door from the kitchen to the outside. Two windows may need to be moved. Some windows will be special safety glass because of their size. The windows wouldn't look any different than previously approved.

The interior has been mostly demolished. The contractors will be working on the exterior of the building soon. A vinyl banner announcing "opening soon", and Enterprise Bank may want to put up a sign as well.

**Motion:** by Ms. Askenburg to approve the proposed changes to the design of the Oddfellows Building, as presented. Seconded by Ms. Grasso. **Motion carries, unanimous, 7-0.**

### **Correspondence and Telephone Calls**

Ms. Lovering received a call from a sign contractor from Santander Bank. The contractor was advised they would need to come before the Commission with any proposed signage

### **Meeting Minute Approval**

**Motion:** by Ms. Askenburg to approve the Meeting Minutes of November 1, 2021, January 19, 2022, and February 16, 2022, as presented. Seconded by Ms. Ready. **Motion carries, unanimous, 7-0.**

Ms. Taverna is working through obtaining the notes for the meetings from Oct 12, 2020-May 3, 2021. There were no meetings in August or July of 2021.

### **Meeting Schedule**

The next regular meeting of the Commission will be April 4, 2022.

The Sub-Committee will meet on Saturday, March 12, 2022, at 10:00AM, at the Public Library. Ms. Askenburg will coordinate the posting of the sub-committee meeting.

### **Adjournment**

**Motion:** by Ms. Askenburg to adjourn the meeting at 8:44PM. **Motion carries, unanimous, 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Vivian W. Merrill

Supporting documents:

- Draft Historic Preservation for Fiske House
- Eagle Scout presentation
- Review Standards of the Historic District Commission document
- Draft Minutes
- Sample signage