

**Town of Fitzwilliam
Historic District Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 30, 2019**

Members Present: John Fitzwilliam, Chairman; Ken Beckwith, Vice Chairman; Bill Davis and Marcia Camden, Members.

Others Present: Carol Beckwith and Gary Taylor, Common Committee Members; Dan Sutton, Historical Society; Robyn Bates, Board of Selectmen Representative; and Laurie Hayward, Land Use Administrative Assistant (LUA).

Call to Order: The Chairman opened meeting at 4:00.

Discussion: Common Committee

The Chair of the Historic District Commission read an opening statement regarding the “electrical brouhaha” about the Fitzwilliam common. He said that there has been some concern expressed about the size of the enclosure that protects the electrical connections to the common. He explained that Eversource did the installation of electricity on the Fitzwilliam common and it was Eversource that sited the equipment and the Chair assumes that the Eversource employees knew what they were doing and noted that it was likely wise to have the electricity enclosed in a structure inside the fence. He also noted the design of the enclosure showed that some care was taken in the design and the construction which includes a roof that is salt-box style and has cedar shingles.

The Chair went on to explain that there was a time issue. The electricity and the box enclosing it were needed by Memorial Day. He also stated that the volunteers who worked on the project to meet the deadline should be appreciated for the effort to quickly and at no cost to the town get electricity to the common. He is saddened that this effort has become an issue for those involved.

The Common Committee concerns regarding the electrical installation. Carol Beckwith spoke as a member of the Common Committee. She expressed her concern that the Common Committee was not consulted. She did note that they appreciated the efforts of volunteers, specifically Dan Baker and Charley Kenison, Select Board Members, and Gene Cuomo who is a town employee.

Mrs. Beckwith explained that she feels there should have been consultation with both the Common Committee and the Historic District Commission before work was done on the

common. The Chair suggested that Rich Pompeo might be approached to look at the installation and he might be willing to put doors on and finish the project. Carol Beckwith said they would need to talk to him to make sure they can agree on the details of the installation.

Mrs. Beckwith stated that no one objects to the box. It is the siting and the lack of advance consultation that they are unhappy about. She feels that placing the electrical box and building the protective enclosure in the center of the common was the big error.

Gary Taylor spoke. He offered his appreciation for those who worked to get electricity to the common. Taylor gave his opinion that the Historic District Commission should direct the volunteers to leave the box on the common and simply paint it white until they can get expert recommendations for best approaches. Bates pointed out that the volunteers are just that and that they cannot be directed to do anything they do not wish to do. She suggested that they try instead to fix hard feelings and see if they can smooth this over and perhaps work together.

The Common Committee suggestion that the electrical installation be placed on hold until they can get the National Historic Register involved. Taylor agrees with Mrs. Beckwith that their committee should have been consulted; but Taylor feels that they should not move on any changes before they have input from the National Historic Register. Taylor would like to have National Historic Register make recommendations for the best way to handle the issue of the location and method of protecting the electrical connections on the common. He suggests for now that they simply have the volunteers put the roof back on and finish the box putting the doors on for now.

There was further discussion about how best to move forward with a plan for improvements to the common. Fitzwilliam suggested checking with Old Sturbridge Village for suggestions. Taylor disagreed, stating that he wants the National Historic Register to take this on. Davis suggested that if they wanted speed the process up, waiting for the U.S. Government to take a project in Fitzwilliam on might take a while.

The Common Committee concerns regarding the moving, repair, reinstalling, and painting of the fountain on the common. Mrs. Beckwith stated that the Common Committee wants to move on now and address the fountain and have it refurbished. She explained that the fountain needs to be moved to Brattleboro. She stated that she does currently have a \$1,000 donation to pay for part of this project.

Ken Beckwith asked about the concern that Gene Cuomo, a town employee, might not work on the common projects. Bates said that it is her understanding that Gene will help with the moving of the fountain. Bates reminded members that Gene is the Road Agent and is responsible for the roads. Bates suggested that the Common Committee make an effort to improve the situation by mending hurt feelings on all sides.

Sutton told those present that the Historical Society has tentatively approved paying for the move; but he doesn't have a figure on their contribution at this point.

Mrs. Beckwith showed the color they are considering for the fountain. She explained this is a color restoration and it is known that the original fountain color was a deep green. The color chosen for the restored fountain is a very dark green, the original color. **Mr. Beckwith made a motion that the Hunter Green color be approved for the painting of the fountain; the Chair seconded the motion and it was voted that the fountain be painted Hunter Green.**

Mrs. Beckwith asked if Commission members would want the Commons Committee to come to them for any additional approvals for the fountain. The Chair answered "no". Mrs. Beckwith asked if Commission members would want the Commons Committee to be there when the fountain was moved. Commission members did not require that anyone from their body must necessarily be there.

Sutton said he had to leave the meeting. He stated that he feels this is an important project and everything should be done to support it.

Sutton left the meeting at this point.

Mrs. Beckwith stated that the Common Committee may have to drop the plan for a new sign and just go with refurbishing the fountain. Bates agreed to follow up with fellow selectmen at the next Select Board Meeting.

The Common Committee wants to have the fencing around the common painted. Mrs. Beckwith told the Commission Members that, with the antiques show coming up, she also wants to have the fence around the common repainted. Taylor agreed, noting that he feels the fence painting is more important than other projects. Taylor suggests that a big crew of volunteers be brought in with the intent to do the project in one day. Bates spoke, explaining that the volunteers who worked to get the common ready for Memorial Day will not be involved going forward. Davis explained that it probably is more than one day's worth of work.

Mrs. Beckwith asked if the Historic District Commission would give permission for the fence paint job. The Chair stated the he doesn't know if repairs to the town common fence requires a vote. Davis suggested that they vote anyway.

Davis moved that the repair and restoration of the fence on the common be approved by the Historical District Commission; Fitzwilliam seconded the motion and it was voted unanimously.

Davis stated that he feels there are two issues and he feels that the Historic District Commission should take this on. Mrs. Beckwith feels that there need to be some rules developed. She mentioned three issues: the tree, the pole, and the electrical installation.

Bates again pointed out that it would be preferable if fences were mended and volunteers brought back. Bates additionally told the Committee that \$5,000 has been allotted for the projects on the common before contributions.

Mrs. Beckwith asked Mr. Beckwith to speak with Mr. Greer, who is an electrician, regarding the electrical and about how best to move and then re-connect it to things like the fountain.

Bates said she will take recommendations back to the Selectmen, including that they ask Cuomo to finish the electrical work on the common and make sure that it is brought to the various areas that need electric.

Davis said that his sense is that both the Historic District Commission and the Common Committee feel badly about the way this dispute about the Fitzwilliam common has blown up.

There being no further business, **Beckwith moved that the meeting be adjourned; Fitzwilliam seconded and it was voted unanimously that the meeting be adjourned** at 5:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Hayward
Land Use Administrative Assistant