

FREEDOM HERITAGE COMMISSION
Minutes – Draft
January 9, 2025

Present: Brandy Buttrick (Vice-Chair), Karrie Buttrick (Secretary), Sue Hoople (M) and Alan Fall (BOS Rep). Mark McKinley was absent. A quorum was established. Also present was Jason Earle, a Preservation Construction Consultant. Sarah Tabor and Arlene Knight were also present at the meeting, both have submitted their volunteer application to join the Heritage Commission and are awaiting their appointment.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm at the Freedom Town Hall. The minutes of November 20, 2024, meeting were reviewed. Alan made a motion to accept the minutes, and it was seconded by Brandy. All were in favor.

Agenda:

Update on the Masonic Hall Remediation and Town Office Building Renovations:

Alan reports that since our last meeting the Selectboard has received from Annette Dey the final set of the proposed truss reinforcement drawings for the Masonic Building. The remediation work has been posted for bids and the bid period closes on January 21, 2025. Alan also explained to our new members that Annette was recommended based on the remediation work that she did on the Grafton Meeting House in Grafton, NH which was seriously damaged by a fire.

Sarah asked if the plan is to move the staff into the Masonic Building while the Town Office Building is being renovated. Alan explained that to answer that question, that we need to go back to the Horizons structural report on the Masonic Building that basically condemned the structure. It was after the visit in May 2024 with Andrew Cushing from the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance and Jason Earle that Alan agreed the Masonic Building needed to be looked at by someone with Annette's background. The Selectmen are looking at using the Masonic Building to house the Town's staff during the Town Office renovation if the remediation work addresses the structural issues in a cost-effective manner. The other option would be to house the staff in portable office trailers during Town Office renovations. The Selectmen believe that if money can be put into a town-owned building instead of renting portable office trailers for the same cost, it would benefit the town to put the money into the Masonic Building. Alan hopes to have the cost estimate to remediate the structural issue in a warrant article for the Town Meeting in March. If the article passes, the work on the Masonic Building could begin thereafter. Beth Miller has been hired as the architect for the Town Office Building, as well as the Masonic Building, and will start the architectural planning for the Town Office Building later this year. Beth is planning a site visit on January 13, 2025, for the Masonic building.

The commission members discussed and agreed that an information meeting on the proposed work for both the Masonic Building and the Town Office building should be shared with the town residents. Members of Friends of Schoolhouse Hill could give a public presentation informing residents about this issue. The proposed dates are February 15, 2025, at 2:00pm at the Town Hall, with February 22, 2025, at 2:00pm as a snow make-up date.

Jason shared photos of the historic stone baptismal structure that is located behind the Masonic Building. Jason spent some time that day cleaning out debris around the baptismal so that Beth Miller could make it part of the Historic Building Assessment Report on the Masonic Building. Jason mentioned that he has done research on this type of baptismal and has not found anything close to what is there and believes the baptismal needs to be documented as a part of the building's history. Attached is the photo page.

Research Projects:

Karrie said that she has reviewed past information in the Heritage Commission files and the Inventory Books in the Freedom Historical Society's Resource Room. The goal is to finish the work started on the history of the houses on Elm Street. With new members, Sue has offered to lead a visit to the Registry of Deeds and familiarize those interested in learning how to read a deed; Karrie will work with Sue on setting up a date. Jason also mentioned that the Effingham Library will be doing a deed research presentation in the near future and Effingham Historical Society will be doing a follow-up to that presentation with more of a hands-on presentation. Jason said that he would get the information to the Commission members once he has it.

Other Business:

Karrie said that the Heritage Commission webpage on the Town's website has been updated.

Karrie will also be emailing to all Commission members a copy of the Individual Volunteer Time Log to Commission members. Our total volunteer hours are reported at the end of the year and submitted in the Annual Town Report.

With no future business, the meeting ended at 6:55pm.

Next meeting on Thursday, April 10, 2025, at 6:00pm.