

**Westfield Historical Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes- March 15, 2021**



**Attendees:** Cindy Gaylord (Chairperson), Carly Bannish, Cindy Bronson, Crystal Hollister, Mike Ingraham, Ellen McEwan, Debbie Opperman.

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Public Participation:**

1. Bruce Cortis has been working on inventorying the Old Burying Ground for the past few months, trying to fix inaccuracies and duplicates. There is a 1939 inventory list and also the journal of Dr. James Holland from the 1800's that are being used to fill in gaps, as well as information on find-a-grave.com When the document is done it will be a fully searchable PDF document housed at the Athenaeum. He will need assistance soon and will reach back out to the WHC when he is ready. He and Bob Brown are also looking into companies that use ground penetrating radar to help identify locations of stones that may be underground. Dennis Piccard has experience with grants to help defray the costs of this type of work.

2. Dennis Picard was invited to speak about options for moving the One Room SchoolHouse-he has extensive experience with living history museums and school houses. He recommended we apply for a grant through the Country Schools of America Association (SCAA) should we choose to move, restore or renovate the school house. His recommendation was that before we move forward, the commission should decide what the purpose of this schoolhouse will serve? What is the mission of this project? Answering these questions will help us to determine if the schoolhouse should be moved and what type of restoration or rebuilding will truly be necessary.

If the decision to move the school house were selected, the move would require some disassembly (definitely removal of roof and chimney), if not total disassembly and reconstruction. Westfield G & E would likely have to raise the electric lines in the path from its current site to the new location and State police would need to help with transportation. It will likely cost in the tens of thousands to move. Building a replica might be a more cost effective option.

If the school house is going to be used as a field trip destination to support the school curriculum, there are grants available for teachers to develop curriculum to be used at the site. It also could provide an opportunity to partner with Westfield State University to develop internship opportunities for students to run the programming with the visiting students.

3. Kathleen Roj Hillmann noticed that at Women's Temperance Park there is a fountain in disrepair. She would like assistance identifying steps to restore and repair the fountain. Cindy G directed her to Scott Pathway at the Parks Department as all work in the parks needs to be cleared through them. It was also suggested that she bring a copy of the postcard found at the Athenaeum that shows the original ornate

top that is missing since it is possible that the fountain's missing pieces have been saved in the DPW barn and could be useful in it's restoration.

**Secretary's report:** A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the February meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

**Treasurer's report:** Carly Bannish reported that there have been no changes in the Historical Gift Fund (\$7716.55). The General Fund is currently at \$2745.09. Stipends were paid out to commissioners.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

1. A plaque was donated by Dan Call with a letter opener and bookmark. These plaques were given to former members of the commission, now one will be housed at the Athenaeum.
2. Plaque for Old Burying Ground (OBG): The mock up has been made. It will depict the cemetery map with 12 particular stones featured around the edge. The initial quote is for \$2165 not including installation or tax. Cindy G will also be looking into the Sign Shop in Westfield to compare prices.
3. Virtual Tours: Carly is still working on the Immigrant Tour. Photos will be taken in the spring. So far there have been 2000 hits on the virtual tours!
4. Bullens Field/ moving forward with the application for the Registry of Historic Sites: no news.
5. Wheeler Stone update: Cindy B tracked down the grave and some additional information about the whereabouts of the Wheeler family. It was family lore that the family lived in Westfield. Cindy did find a grave for Daniel Wheeler in Cummington. His parents, Sam (who was from Westfield) and Ruby (from Connecticut) lived in the area for about 20 years before moving to a family farm in Westfield, New York. It is possible that the other graves in question are there rather than our Westfield.
6. The Canal: The CPA application for the Canal to get on the National Registry is moving forward. This would provide funding to pay for an archeological survey. All of the other towns are allocating \$10,000 to help with this project. The Connecticut section of the canal is already on the registry.

#### **New Business**

1. YMCA has applied for a grant to help repair the slate roof. They asked for a deed restriction of 30 years instead of in perpetuity. Deb made a motion to grant this exemption to them. Carly seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Lambson applied for a grant for restoration as well. The hydraulic elevator will remain intact, and there will be no above ground lines to preserve the aesthetics of the period. Ellen made a motion to accept the deed restriction. Mike seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
3. New Virtual Historic Tours: Mike Ingraham, Cindy G, Carly Bannish, and Fred Gore will be going to City Hall to take photo/video of the historic features of City Hall to be made into a Civics Tour of City Hall. The purpose is to connect to the new 8th grade Civics and Government curriculum and the 8th and 9th grade civics project requirement at our schools, as well as to inform the community of the history of the building itself.
4. Historic markers: There is interest in historic signage on homes throughout the town. Cindy G suggested utilizing the commission website to allow people to order an historic marker for their home (providing the home is at least 100 years old). This would allow us to ensure that the

markers are consistent and in keeping with the themes already used within the city. The cost to the residents would be approximately \$95 for a 10x18 sign with black background and gold lettering which would be in the same style as the signs in the Gaslight District. The commission will put up applications for any interested residents. The commission will assist residents who apply to determine their homes's age using the assessor's database. Cindy G will reach out to Peter Currier at the Westfield Evening News to advertise.

**Next meetings:** April 19th, 2021 -6pm on Zoom. May 17th (6pm if on Zoom, 7pm if in person at City Hall)

**Adjourn:** At 7:29 Ellen made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Debbie seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted, Crystal Hollister, WHC Commissioner