

Lyme Heritage Commission

Minutes - September 2, 2021

Offices of the Lyme Historians at 15 Main Street

PRESENT: Tim Cook, Ray Clark, Laurie Wadsworth, Adair Mulligan

ABSENT: Ben Kilham

PUBLIC: Liz Ryan Cole, Rich Brown

Vice-chair Adair Mulligan called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

1. East Thetford Bridge – it was noted that the Heritage Commission has been working on this issue since 2014, including both the successful project to list the bridge on the National Register of Historic Places and the effort to provide safe bicycle and pedestrian access across the refurbished bridge. Alternatives seem to be to add a narrow lane on the south side of the bridge or to devote one lane of the bridge to bike/ped use with a “smart” traffic light controlling one-way-at-a-time vehicular use. Ray noted that Jay Barrett was going to provide a sketch for an added lane similar to what the state added to the historic Piermont-Bradford bridge. Liz observed that Vermonters are deeply concerned about the proposed lack of bike/ped access and the social and economic impacts of a long closure, including to local businesses like Cedar Circle Farm. She has contacted both VT and NH state legislators.

Ray, Tim, and Adair agreed that there is strong public interest in providing bike/ped access across the bridge, if the reaction to a recent listserv posting is any indicator, and that the best course of action is to seek a meeting with the select board. We will invite Russ Hirschler, Executive Director of the Upper Valley Trails Alliance and a River Road resident, to join the meeting. Adair will consult Russ on whether a trail counter could be employed to judge the amount of bike/ped traffic. There is a sense that such use has greatly increased over the last decade. The two states’ Congressional delegation may be interested in supporting such an addition to the bridge, especially in light of the large new infrastructure bill working its way through Congress. The bridge also joins the VT and NH routes of the federally and state-designated Connecticut River Scenic Byway, which is focused on heritage tourism, recreation, and multi-modal transportation. Adair will contact Rep. Kuster’s environmental staffer.

2. Loch Lyme Lodge barn – Liz and Rich explained that they have brought in a timber framers association to examine the c. 1880-90s barn and advise on their plans. The barn is not in its original location (current site of the croquet area). Currently, there is water flowing under the barn and the moisture has attracted powder post beetles. The plan is to move the barn 200’ straight back from the current site onto a full foundation on a drier location. The barn will rise no higher above the ground than it does now. It will be insulated and architect Tim Ott is advising on how to allow the barn exterior to display the same dimensions. More windows will be added that will be in keeping with the existing ones. The Planning Board and Zoning Board have both approved the project. The Commission expressed support for protecting the barn in this way and welcomed a chance to look at the elevation drawings. Ray then left the meeting for a previous engagement and Laurie Wadsworth arrived.
3. Minutes of the previous meeting (February, 2020, before the pandemic) – approved

4. Baker Hill Road culvert – Adair reported that rehabilitation work is proceeding and several members of the Commission were able to participate in a site visit.
5. Status of Lyme Common Committee – Laurie reported that work ended during the pandemic and a report was sent in that addresses only utility lines but not trees, fencing, signage, or other issues. Agreed that we should seek a copy of the report and discuss again at the next meeting.
6. Project to document historic houses – Adair has pursued this task, to photograph historic house interiors (as they come on the market and/or with owner permission), and has photographed 18 Baker Hill Road, 2 Acorn Hill Road, and the Maddock house on Franklin Hill Road. There is a possible opportunity to document another Lyme Center house soon. Materials have been added to the Heritage Commission files.
7. Possible historic house consultation – The owners of Fred Phillips' former home at the end of Storrs Hill Lane have applied to the ZBA to demolish the 1785 structure and build a new one. No action taken.
8. Commission membership – Chair John Mudge has stepped down. According to our rules of procedure, the Commission's membership will be 3-7; it now stands at 4. Agreed to put a message on the Lyme listserv to invite interest in joining the Commission. Unless conditions warrant more frequent meetings, we expect to meet quarterly rather than monthly.