

TOWN OF STOW
GLEASONDALE LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the March 24, 2022 Gleasondale Local Historic District Study Committee Meeting

Members present: Margaret Costello, Catherine Hammill, Jen Gero, Eve Fischer

Members absent: Dorothy Spaulding

Jen Gero called the meeting to order at 2:00PM

*Margaret Costello motioned to approve the minutes of March 3rd, 2022 as amended
Eve Fischer seconded*

Roll Call Vote: Eve Fischer **-Yea**; Catherine Hammill **-Yea**; Margaret Costello **-Yea**;
Jen Gero **-Yea**

Local Historic District v. National Register District/Designation Discussion

Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan provided an overview of the distinction between National Register of Historic Places listing and Massachusetts Local Historic Districts. Malcolm Ragan said that income-generating properties become eligible for federal historic preservation tax credits if included on the National Register, with the property becoming subject to federal review for any proposed changes from that point if tax credits are utilized. Malcolm Ragan said the mill building and the former Methodist church could be eligible for National Register listing.

The Committee noted that a Local Historic District does not prevent any property from also being included on the National Register. Margaret Costello said historic preservation should be applied to the whole neighborhood and said that the Committee should continue to pursue a Local Historic District.

Preliminary Study Report – Updates

Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan reported that funding for consulting services to assist with drafting the required preliminary study report could be allocated from the Town's remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Malcolm Ragan said that ARPA allocations are under the jurisdiction of the Select Board and do not require a Town Meeting vote. The Committee requested that staff submit a warrant article for the upcoming May 14 Annual Town Meeting to cover the costs of consulting services, in case the Select Board is not inclined to allocated ARPA funding for the project. The Committee noted that the preliminary proposal that has been received for the consulting work includes some items that are already complete, and the total dollar amount could potentially be reduced. The Committee decided to submit a warrant article for the full amount proposed and move a different amount at Town Meeting if a lower price quote is received.

*Margaret Costello motioned to authorize staff to draft and submit a warrant article for Annual Town Meeting requesting \$17,000 for consulting services associated with drafting a preliminary study report for a proposed Local Historic District in Gleasondale.
Eve Fischer seconded.*

Roll Call Vote: Eve Fischer **-Yea**; Catherine Hammill **-Yea**; Margaret Costello **-Yea**;
Jen Gero **-Yea**

April Public Forum – Progress Update

Eve Fischer said she and Margaret Costello came across a historic landscape inventory of Stow that covers Gleasondale and mentions previous efforts and arguments for a Local Historic District and/or National Register designations. Eve Fischer said that the document is a good resource to assist the Committee with planning their April public forum.

Eve Fischer said that the task of the committee is to provide positive argument of the potential benefits for a Local Historic District in Gleasondale. Eve Fischer said that with many changes and new people moving to Gleasondale, there is a clear need to move the project forward.

Eve Fischer said that the committee should keep the historical presentation short and make a case that a Local Historic District can help the neighborhood avoid becoming just a pass-through area along Route 62.

Public Input

Gleasondale resident Laurel Cohen said that she was looking forward to discussions of alternatives to a Local Historic District, including National Register districts or individual property listings, and said demolitions delay bylaw would be a better tool for preventing destruction of historic structures. Laurel Cohen said that she would prefer to see APRA funds applied towards the water issues in Gleasondale. Margaret Costello said that no property is prevented from National Register listing by the creation of a Local Historic District.

Workplan Updates

The Committee finalized the time for the public forum at 7pm on April 20th, at the Pompositticut Community Center. Eve Fischer recalled that the meeting would start with a short presentation of the history of the district to make a case for historic preservation. The committee discussed how they might structure the rest of the forum.

Committee members discussed inviting Acton resident Anne Forbes to discuss her experiences both creating and administering a local historic district. Eve Fischer said she has reached out to the Stow Historical Society to spread the word about the Gleasondale Historic District members and the upcoming forum.

Resident Laurel Cohen asked if there will be remote participation allowed at the forum. The committee said that they will do their best to provide a remote participation component. The Committee scheduled their next meeting for 2:30pm on April 7th, to be devoted to planning the public forum.

Eve Fischer said she has been working on a narrative of the early history of the Gleasondale area, and that she will include information starting with early human settlement and move through at least the industrial revolution. Eve Fischer said one message of the forum should be that Gleasondale should be prevented from becoming just a pass-through area along Route 62, and that the Committee could point to the successes of Hudson's downtown as an example of thoughtful and effective historic preservation.

Catherine Hammill said she will invite Anne Forbes to speak about the process of a Local Historic District in Acton. The committee also said they want to provide some clear picture of what they want to regulate with a Local Historic District bylaw, including exterior architectural features that would be exempted from review.

The committee discussed the use of a moderator at the forum. Jen Gero said she would reach out to Town Planner Jesse Steadman to see if he has any suggestions for such a role.

Jen Gero motioned to adjourn

Eve Fischer seconded

Respectfully submitted,
Malcolm Ragan