

TOWN OF AMHERST  
Heritage Commission

May 14, 2020

**APPROVED**

In attendance: Will Ludt – Chair, Conor Frain – Vice-Chair, John Bement, Brenda Perry, Liz Larson (Alternate).

Staff in attendance: Dean Shankle – Town Administrator, Nic Strong – Community Development Director and Kristan Patenaude – minute taker.

Will Ludt called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m., with the following statement. As Chair of the Amherst Heritage Commission, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order.

However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting.

All members of the Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone #312-626-6799.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to- Know law.

**Roll call: Will Ludt, Brenda Perry, Conor Frain, John Bement, and Liz Larson – all present and alone.**

*Lisa Montesanto entered the meeting.*

Liz Larson, newly appointed alternate to the Heritage Commission introduced herself to the group and was warmly welcomed. She explained that she had to attend a work Zoom meeting and excused herself.

*Liz Larson left the meeting.*

**TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:**

The group began a discussion regarding the previously suggested metal detecting policy for the town. Will Ludt stated that the Commission has been trying to get a policy/ordinance passed in town for about 2-3 years. A draft ordinance was presented to the Board of Selectmen about 18 months ago. At that time, the Board stated that an ordinance might be too strict, and asked the

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Commission to explore drafting it as a policy instead. Will Ludt explained that a recent Facebook post noted that someone was metal detecting on Spaulding Field and found an 18<sup>th</sup> century French coin. He questioned if, because the coin was found on public property, it should be turned over to the town. This is not enforceable, as there is currently no policy/ordinance that gives any regulations on metal detecting. He would like this conversation to be brought back before the Board of Selectmen.

In response to a question from Town Administrator Shankle, Will Ludt explained that certain items that are found (graveyards, Native American settlements, etc.) are supposed to be reported to the state, via the Division of Historical Resources (DHR).

John Bement noted that he hopes this recent find doesn't unleash a number of people to dig on public property in town. This is an education issue.

Town Administrator Shankle suggested that the Commission might research what others towns can do and how they handle similar issues.

Will Ludt explained that he reviewed policies from Nashua and Hopkinton when drafting the town's policy. He explained that there is a proper way to excavate for such items and that DHR can provide training to the town for this. He suggested that, if an item is found on public property, the finder could be asked to bring it into the Community Development Office in order to record it.

Kristan Patenaude noted that the minutes reflect the Board of Selectmen last discussed this item with the Heritage Commission at their April 30, 2018, meeting.

Town Administrator Shankle suggested that the Commission look into specific criteria for the Community Development Office to report such a finding, before broaching the subject with the Board of Selectmen again. He explained that stating that metal detecting is prohibited on any public property in town seems overly broad.

John Bement explained that the policy could be more for notification, to get a record of who is metal detecting in town, than to permit anyone to do so.

Conor Frain suggested that there may be a few places in town, places within the Historic District for instance, that metal detecting could be banned from, instead of saying all public properties. This would remove much of the subjectivity involved.

In response to a question from Will Ludt, Town Administrator Shankle explained that ownership of any property found is a question for the state.

Conor Frain noted that the state laws seem to only prohibit metal detecting on a handful of historic sites; beyond those it is silent.

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Will Ludt stated that he would work with Community Development Director, Nic Strong, regarding this possible policy/ordinance.

*Tom Grella entered the meeting.*

**1. Review of Heritage Commission's "Rules of Procedure – 2002"**

Nic Strong explained that she reviewed the Commission's Rules of Procedure to make sure that all statutes are properly quoted. These guidelines should outline the group's rules of business and help members and the public know how meetings are run.

The group reviewed Nic Strong's suggested amendments/additions to the document. The Commission determined to act to approve the changes proposed by Nic Strong to be incorporated into the document and to bring them back for a formal adoption at a future meeting.

**Conor Frain moved to approve the Rules of Procedure as described in the draft document. John Bement seconded.**

**Roll Call vote: Brenda Perry – aye; Conor Frain – aye; John Bement – aye; Lisa Montesanto – aye; and Tom Grella – aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

**2. "Throw Back" Thursday – Amherst Heritage**

Will Ludt explained that there has been a joint effort on behalf of the Amherst Conservation Commission and Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee to create a trail from Amherst Street out towards the Atherton Commons area. Artifacts along the trail included a group of rocks with a border around them. After some research, he believes this could be an old water aqueduct. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were water companies around town that pumped fresh water through their pipes and offered it to the public for a fee. There was a well owned by the Melendy-David families, located at 135 Amherst Street. This is possibly located too far away for the artifact to be considered part of this aqueduct, but it's a possibility. He would like to add this artifact to the town's Historic Resource Survey.

Brenda Perry noted that the old farmhouse off Route 122 had an old structure that was originally a shop to repair farm equipment. The owner initially contacted the Historical Society to move the structure, but never heard back and eventually demolished it. She took extensive photos of the structure before it was removed.

**3. Possible Trip to Lyme Historians; Lyme, NH**

Will Ludt explained that the Heritage Commission has been invited to a meeting of the Lyme Historians, when next possible to do so.

**4. Minutes: 12 March 2020**

The group discussed possible amendments to the minutes of March 12, 2020.

**5. May 2020 Homework Assignment**

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Will Ludt explained that there was a request made by the Amherst Garden Club for groups to contribute to their celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The Heritage Commission contributed \$100.00 to order tri-color flowers, such as those colors worn by the suffragettes.

Brenda Perry noted that the Garden Club will soon be revitalizing the town's community gardens and will be using yellow, purple, and white flowers, representative of the sashes worn by the suffragettes. Signs have been made to explain the reason behind the color choices, and the Heritage Commission will receive mention due to its support.

**Conor Frain moved to approve the meeting minutes for March 12, 2020, as amended [Line 61, to change "he" to "Will Ludt"]. Brenda Perry seconded. Roll call vote: Brenda Perry – aye; Conor Frain – aye; John Bement – aye; Lisa Montesanto – aye; Tom Grella – abstain. 4-0-1; motion carried.**

**6. Chair Topics and Discussion/Roundtable**

Tom Grella suggested that the Commission may be able to hold Zoom meetings with guest speakers. Will Ludt agreed and explained that he would like the Fire Chief to possibly attend a meeting and describe some of the historic items in the museum.

**Conor Frain moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:05pm. John Bement seconded. Roll Call Vote: Brenda Perry – aye; Conor Frain – aye; John Bement – aye; Lisa Montesanto – aye; Tom Grella –aye; Will Ludt – aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: June 11, 2020