

WEST TISBURY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Date of Meeting: 2.26.2024
Meeting at 5:30 PM

Attending: Sean Conley, Nancy Dole, Charlie Kernick, Carol Sarason

Absent: Mark Mazer, Josh Gothard, Anne Fisher

Also attending: Cynthia Mitchell, Skip Manter, Jen Rand, Jessica Miller, Prudy Burt, Scotty Young, Tucker Hubbel, Susan Wasserman, Woody Bowman

Joint hearing at Town Hall with Select Board began at 5:30 pm. At a previous hearing, on September 25, 2023 the application by the Town to replace the existing wood fence that defines the border of the cemetery with an unpainted pvc fence was denied by the HDC. At that same hearing the HDC gave permission for the existing fence to be restored with a durable, natural species wood fence with the same dimensions and staggered style as presently exists, retaining the granite posts. Following that hearing The Town made a new application to the HDC to demolish most of the existing fence. They would retain the granite posts to define the boundaries of the cemetery. And they would preserve a small portion of the fence at the entrance to the cemetery.

A lengthy discussion ensued. Nancy Dole pointed out that demolition of historic structures was not generally favored by the historic district commissioners, it is largely the protection from demolition that established the local historic district in the first place. Demolition of historic structures and features had not been approved by the WTHDC in the past. A letter from Tara Whiting was read which stated that the HDC had approved demolition of historic structures in the past, and without holding a hearing. Someone attending pointed out that voters had rejected funding the replacement of the fence at Town Meeting. (The voters had approved 75,000 to repair the fence in 2014. After the bids to do the work came in at close to \$100,000 voters at a subsequent town meeting struck down the project.) Skip Manter questioned how the Town could ask voters to spend money on something they did not support in the past. Prudie Burt said she did not think her ancestors in the town would approve wasting money on a fence that wasn't needed: the granite posts would indicate the boundaries of the cemetery and would not require maintenance. She had suggested this solution to the Select Board and they were in agreement. Thus the application to demolish most of the fence, and restore the immediate entrance only.

There was discussion about the length of the existing fence, and whether the term "removal" was preferable or equivalent to the term "demolition". The idea of removing some of the fence (the sections closest to the Ag Hall, up to the telephone pole closer to the entrance), and replacing only the section from the telephone pole on State Road to the entrance was discussed.

Charlie Kernick made a motion to replace the existing fence entirely to the right as you faced the existing cemetery entrance, and entirely to the left of the entrance to the telephone pole in the swale to the left of the entrance. The fence painted white would remain white, the other sections could be natural wood. The remainder of the existing fence along State Road could be removed but the granite posts must remain.

The motion was seconded by Sean Conley and a vote by the HDC members in attendance was called. Charlie Kernick and Sean Conley voted in favor of the motion, Nancy Dole and Carol Sarason voted against it. The motion failed. Jen Rand called for the hearing to be continued to a later date and the date of April 29th was agreed to by all present. There will be a site visit at the cemetery at 5:00 pm before the continued hearing at Town Hall at 5:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Dole, Secretary
Approved on 4-15-24