

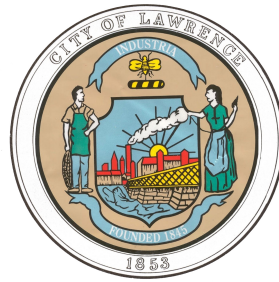
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Jonas Stundza

LAWRENCE MASSACHUSETTS

Administrative Assistant
Jorge O. Martinez

Land Use Planner
Daniel McCarthy

“Preserve the Past for the Future”

MINUTES TO THE MEETING

Due to the COVID-19 Outbreak and the policy changes made by Governor Baker and Mayor Rivera, this meeting of the Lawrence Historical Commission was done remotely.

Upon a Roll Call the following members were present:

Members Present:

Jonas Stundza
David Meehan
Kate Hernandez
Lunara Devers

Also Present:

Daniel McCarthy, Land Use Planner
Jorge O. Martinez, Minute Taker

Upon a motion made by Mr. Meehan and seconded by Ms. Hernandez, the commission unanimously decided to open the public meeting.

BOARD BUSINESS

Mr. Martinez indicated that the only matters on the agenda are the pedestals being installed in the North Common and the Eel Lift on the Historical Dam.

Ms. Hernandez then indicated that she would like to take the eel lift matter out of order in order to hear it first.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Hernandez and seconded by Mr. Meehan, the members of the commission voted unanimously to hear the eel lift matter first.

Mr. Meehan had stated that he had done some research and that an extensive study had been done. He then stated that as a result of the old gate press replacement on the top of the dam, the flow of the water is disturbed. He then stated that there is already a ladder in existence on the south side of the dam, which is very hard to see which a good thing is. He then stated that as a result the eels are gathering on the north side of the dam and are just getting stuck on it. He then stated that the plan is to install an elevator on the north side.

Mr. McCarthy then stated that Jill Griffiths of Gomez and Sullivan was present to address the members of the commission.

Mr. Meehan then stated that there has been a conversation with the Massachusetts Historical commission (Mass Historic) where Mass Historic suggested that the lift be bolted to the abutment side rather than onto the dam itself. He then asked if Central River Power has followed the recommendation of securing the ladder to the North Side abutment and not the facade of the dam.

Mr. McCarthy then stated that the data that was mentioned on that study is incorrect. He then stated that Ms. Griffiths can elaborate more on that.

Ms. Griffiths then stated that she was before the members of the commission on behalf of Gomez and Sullivan. She stated that the design has incorporated the comments of Mass Historic, but the comments are slightly different that changing the location of the bolts, like Mr. Meehan had mentioned. She then stated that the dam face is very similar to the face of the adjacent abutment, in that they are both made of historic granite. She then stated that Mass Historic had attended the MEPA hearing and they asked about the specifics and also about the desire of using adhesive anchors that required an 11/16th size hole to be drilled into the granite. She then stated that once they expressed their concerns about the design, the team went back and changed the attachments to taper bolts which only call for a 5/8th hole, which are similar to the holes that were already in place due to the lifting pins. She then stated that adhesive will not be required and the bolts can be easily removed if need be.

Ms. Griffiths then stated that at the request of Mass Historic, a decommissioning plan, operation plan and maintenance plan were drafted.

Mr. Meehan then stated that he was glad that the abutment is made of the same material. He then asked if the abutment is where the lift would be secured. Ms. Griffiths stated that Mr. Meehan was correct.

Mr. Meehan then asked Ms. Griffiths if she could elaborate on a statement that she made earlier regarding eels congregating towards leakage. She then referred to the image that was being displayed to show the members of the commission what she and Mr. Meehan were talking about.

Mr. Stunda then stated that he would like to make a recommendation that if the ladder were to be decommissioned, grout would not be used, but rather plugs made of granite be placed in. He stated that a plug would acquire a patina, which would match.

Mr. McCarthy then stated that the grout that is being called for was suggested by the state. He added that the material is used to fix granite. Ms. Griffiths then that she can check with the reviewer and see if they are comfortable with that change. She then stated that there is a document that mentions the grout specifically.

Mr. Stundza then asked if the grout would be similar to some sort of concrete substance. Ms. Griffiths then stated that she would have to check on the make-up of the substance. She stated that she does not exactly know what the substance would be, but she stated that she assumes that it is some sort of cement mixture that is poured into the hole. She stated that there is also sealant that you can put over the top of the mixture. She then stated that she would look into it further.

Mr. Stundza then stated that he has seen in Europe that damaged buildings were repaired using plugs that were buffed down to be flush with the buildings. He stated that you cannot even tell that the repairs had been done. He stated that it would be something that would be a bit more permanent and although more work initially.

Ms. Griffiths then stated that she would look into that. She then stated that the holes made will only be a half of an inch in diameter. She then stated that standing from the bridge, it is going to be impossible to see the holes. She then stated that she would defer to Mass Historic. She then stated that it may be logistically difficult to drill a four inch deep hole in granite that will only be an inch in diameter.

Mr. Stundza then asked if there was currently a natural flowing ladder that exists that the eels utilize. He then asked if the eel lift will be manned by a human. Ms. Griffiths then stated that there are several facilities that could be used to transfer the eels. The first in 2012 being a ladder that they can passively climb up and a fish lift that lifts them up to the top of the dam. She stated that this is primarily used for other species of fish, but eels can use it as well. She then stated that the ladder is tucked in an alcove, which you cannot see. She then stated that this is the main method that the eel are currently using to get over the dam which they can use to get over the top of the dam and further downriver. She also stated that there is a mechanical method that lifts the various species of fish to the top of the dam as well.

Ms. Griffiths then stated that she does not believe that there is a fish ladder on the other end of the dam. Mr. McCarthy stated that she was correct.

Mr. Stundza then asked if the natural flowing ladder would still be available to the eel, especially if a malfunction were to happen at the mechanical lift. Ms. Griffiths then stated that it would be. She then stated that the dam operators will visit the holding tank daily to release the eel using a net. She stated that other methods will be put in place that can be used in the event of a power failure or malfunction.

Mr. Stundza then asked how many eels go up the dam in any given year. Ms. Griffiths then stated that roughly a quarter million. She then stated that these numbers are from two years ago.

Mr. Meehan then asked how far up the river they go. Ms. Griffiths then stated that she has looked into the tributaries and worked on a study of the Concord River and stated that the eels travel three or four barriers upriver in that case and well up the Merrimack.

Ms. Griffiths then stated that eels are very resourceful and they can climb up wet surfaces and even the vertical faces of the dam. She then stated that it is not the most efficient way which is why they are considering other methods. She stated that they are found quite high up in most watersheds and tributaries.

Mr. Meehan then asked if there was a similar system in Lowell that is used. Ms. Griffiths then stated that she is not too familiar, but she knows that there are various fish passage facilities. She stated that there are temporary ramps that have been used for years now. She stated that it is essentially a wooden board into a five gallon bucket that is collected and emptied every day. She then stated that this became a problem in this particular project because they would have to walk from the downstream state park ramp along the rocks under the bridge where many homeless set up camp. She stated that this became a safety concern. She stated that this is why the group wants to establish something permanent.

Mr. Stundza then stated that he would like to thank Ms. Griffiths for bringing this matter before the attention of the commission. Ms. Griffiths stated that she appreciates the compliments. She then stated that it is not detailed in the official permitting process to correspond with the local historical commission, but she is glad that the commission is interested in the project and she is glad that she can share information with the commission and she will keep in mind that the commission would like to see these types of proposals.

Ms. Hernandez then stated that the plans refer to some work that was done in 2007 and 2012 saying that it was similar. She then asked if the eel ladder from 2012 was on the south side of the dam. Ms. Griffiths stated that this is correct. She then stated that the 2012 project was the one that she referenced and the 2007 project was installing the crest gates along the entire length of the spillway which is nearly the same type of project. She then stated that they both involve impacting the dam. She then stated that the 2012 project impacts the dam less because it is tucked away in an alcove that did not physically touch the dam.

Ms. Hernandez then asked how this proposal compares to the 2012 installment. She stated that the 2012 installment was not attached to the historical granite stone. She also stated that it was much larger and involved a much larger volume of concrete being poured into the waterway, but it was kind of tucked away in this alcove. She stated that the north side ladder is physically attached to the abutment and is much more visible. She then stated that this project is a much smaller volume and much smaller amount of concrete being poured into the waterway. She then added that the impact is much more reversible and can be easily removed. Ms. Griffiths added that there is only a cubic yard of concrete at the base. She added that it could be easily removed without the need of a jackhammer.

Mr. Stundza then asked how secure the eels would be. He added that eels are popular in the international market. He then stated that eels are being pirated out of the US. He wanted to know what would be done to stop people from scooping up these eels right out of the lift. Ms. Griffiths stated that the old temporary ramp that was in place was accessible to anybody. She stated that the new dam would have a new chain link fence around the base of the hopper and the holding tank which will be locked at all times. She then stated that the daily checking of the tank would also prevent eels from accumulating. She then stated that there can be some sort of cover over the holding tank that would make it difficult for people to access as well.

Mr. Meehan then asked if the grassy area would be changed as a result of the construction. Ms. Griffiths stated that the only difference will be right on the corner of the dam near the abutment. She stated that the holding tank would be in this location. She then stated that an electrical line will also be dug out from the blacksmith shop to the holding tank. She stated that this was shown in the submittal to the Massachusetts Historical Commission and this commission in October.

She stated that potential routes for the electrical supply lines were shown and one is a buried cable using the most direct route from the corner of the shop to the platform which would be installed in a trench. She stated that the trench will have to be dug open and then filled back in and grass would have to be reseeded. She then stated that the electrical line will have to be attached to an overhead beam where it will go along the retaining wall along the river. She then stated that these would be the only effects in the greasy area, but they would be temporary. She then stated that there will not be any buildings or trucks staged in that area.

Mr. Meehan then stated that he believes that burying the cable would be better from a safety standpoint. Ms. Griffiths stated that this method is preferred, but there are alternative plans if need be.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Meehan and seconded by Ms. Hernandez, the commission voted unanimously to accept the plans as presented.

Pedestals Installed by DPW in the North Common.

Mr. Stundza stated that a letter had been sent to Jessica Vilas Novas who he presumed had been in charge of the project. Mr. Stundza then asked if there was a response to that letter. Mr. Martinez stated that he had spoken with Ms. Vilas Novas and it was discovered that the project was done in conjunction with the Mayor's Office as well as the Department of Public Works (DPW). He then stated that she mentioned that if there were any concerns, the Mayor's Office would be the best body to relay them to. Mr. Martinez then stated that he contacted Ms. Vilas Novas and asked if she would like to attend tonight, but she declined.

Mr. Meehan then asked how Ms. Vilas Novas was singled out as being the appropriate contact. Mr. Martinez then stated that Mr. Stundza was the individual who brought the matter to his attention. He stated that Mr. Stundza had done some research and decided that she would be the best contact. He stated that he then addressed a letter to Ms. Vilas Novas at the request of Mr. Stundza.

Mr. Stundza then stated that he had tried to get in contact with Mr. Pena and due to his busy schedule he was not able to speak with Mr. Stundza. He stated that he attempted to speak with Mr. Felix Garcia and it was discovered that DPW had assisted in the installation of the pedestals. He then stated that it was discovered that Ms. Vilas Novas was in charge of the project.

Mr. Meehan then asked what the next step would be. He wants to know who was in charge of the project as well as what the project is.

Mr. Stundza stated that this is the problem. He wants to know where the money is coming from. He stated that the use of the DPW crew and time means city funds were used. He added that state and federal money are being used. He asked Mr. McCarthy what the proper legality was. He stated that a cease and desist order was issued.

Mr. McCarthy then asked what Jessica Vilas Novas said exactly. Mr. Martinez stated that she said that the Mayor's Office or DPW would be the best contact.

Mr. Meehan then stated that the Mayor's Office would be the best possible contact simply to find out what is going on.

Ms. Hernandez then stated that there are about 25 pedestals placed diagonally in the common leading up to the church. She stated that there is one in there front of the common in front of the chairs that symbolize the number of people who have dies from COVID-19 as well as a pedestal that contains some sort of application. She then stated that the utilization of the pedestals is as a memorial.

Mr. Stundza then stated that he heard that the pedestals will be used to touch on the city's treasured history. He stated that the city should not have free reign to alter historical locations. He stated that it would be possible to move the location of the pedestals to O'Neil Park instead of the North Common.

Mr. Meehan then stated that if the project were to be some sort of historical piece, then the city would have contacted either Lawrence History Center or the commission itself. He then asked if the Lawrence History Center knew anything about the project. It was stated that they do not.

Mr. Stundza then stated that a representative of the Lawrence Historical Center went to the Common and saw the project and discovered that they had no idea about the project. He then stated that the library has done student work which resembled an art exhibit. He then stated that the problem with that is they did not revert to any sort of institution therefore the project was riddled with common mistakes made by the children. He stated that if there is no guidance or oversight this might lead to incorrect information being displayed in the common which would not be historically accurate.

He then stated that when it comes to this issue there are a lot of smoke and mirrors.

Mr. Meehan stated that there are two issues, the first being the truth to history and the second being the fact that something has been instructed in the common that is not allowed. He then stated that the post of lights are on the common which are needed, but you also have asphalt and these pedestals which make it seem more like a street than anything else.

He then stated that these things are not warranted in the deed. He stated that these types of installations disturb the original intent of passive recreation and passive pleasure in the common. He then stated that the historical accuracy needs to be double-checked as well.

Ms. Hernandez then stated that the first pedestal near the chairs makes more sense because it is a memorial and memorials are allowed in the common. She stated that this makes sense in terms of the deed, but once the corner is turned and the full amount of pedestals is seen the concern is raised that the amount of pedestals that were installed is just too much. Mr. Meehan and Mr. Stundza then stated that this installation is temporary and that it will be gone by the time that the first snow falls.

Mr. Meehan then stated that the structures do look strong, but he wanted to know what the bigger picture was. He wanted to know if it was something that was to be moved around the city. Mr. Stundza then stated that these pedestals are cemented in. He stated that as a unit, this is an installation.

Ms. Hernandez then asked if Mr. Meehan and Ms. Devers had seen the pedestals, they both stated that they have. Ms. Devers then stated that she has seen them and that she is also concerned with the information that is going to be placed on them and whatever else might come next. She stated that it would be interesting to get information that is accurate. She then stated that 25 pedestals is a very high number.

Mr. Meehan then stated that the information is one thing, but the amount of structures being put into the common is worrying because it is changing the appearance of the common from a

common to more of a mall. He then stated that it takes away from the original intent of the common. He added that there is a lot of cement and iron and light fixtures which add another row of metal to the common as well as the pedestals which adds another row of metal. He stated that the common is becoming claustrophobic.

Mr. Stundza then stated that it is becoming more of a mall than a common. He then stated that the intent of the common is not what it is currently being used as.

Ms. Hernandez then stated that the commissions should perhaps consider sending a letter to the Mayor's Office asking what the project is and what is being installed. She then stated that the commission has been sent to multiple departments.

Mr. Stundza then stated that the first problem is that something that is not allowed on the common according to the deed has been installed without approval or notification of the commission. He then stated that it is irrelevant what is going in, the structure itself should not be installed according to the deed. He then stated that the removal should be done promptly and it should be moved to the O'Neill which has no restrictions and ample space for such installations.

Mr. Meehan stated that removing them from the common and putting them on the periphery of the sidewalk would get them out of the greenspace and still keep the information on a location near the common. He stated that having them in the center makes no sense, but having them on the exterior may be better. He stated that this issue could have been addressed beforehand.

Ms. Hernandez then stated that the commission has spoken with DPW and been told that work on historical sites or in historical districts need to come before the commission. She then stated that a report needed to be done regardless and this should have triggered the idea that a project of this nature would need to go before the commission.

Mr. Stundza then stated that this situation is very similar to the one with the mural in the public library. He then stated that Ms. Vilas Novas should have been well aware of the process. He stated that all three have avoided their responsibilities.

Mr. Meehan then stated that the letter will be worked on collectively. He then stated that the issue is not the art, but that something is being installed in the common which is not allowed.

Mr. Stundza then stated that the commission should list in the letter that the pedestals should be removed and moved to the exterior of the common along the peripheries of the street or at O'Neill Park. He stated that he may not want to give options either.

Ms. Devers then stated that this conversation should have been had earlier and the common does look cluttered. She then stated that she does like having information displayed in the common for people who may be coming to visit, but she wants that information to be correct. She stated that it would be very embarrassing if someone were to come and view information that was wrong.

Ms. Hernandez then stated that perhaps the commission does not make recommendations or demands for removal, but maybe they make a more reasonable request. She stated that it is worth a conversation.

Mr. Meehan then stated that conflict would lead to a negative result. Mr. Stundza then stated that perhaps the letter that is sent can lead to some sort of discussion that states that the letter the installation is structural and that this matter needs to be discussed because it is against the deed.

Mr. Stundza then stated that it also alters the make-up of the common. Mr. Meehan then stated that the deed was drawn up to protect the greenspace and up until this point it has been working. He then gave a few examples over the course of history to show how the deed has preserved the greenspace.

Mr. Stundza then stated that the federal government has invested six million dollars into the common partially because of the restrictions that the deed has imposed. He then stated that during a walk in the common he had pointed out the curbstones around the Jackson Street side and how they were in disrepair. He stated that as a result of his comment the federal government appropriated more funds to fix this issue. He then stated that he was told to make sure this never happens again. He stated that this was done because of the common's significance.

Mr. Meehan then asked if Groundwork Lawrence knew about the project. Mr. Stundza then stated that the commission has to accept change, to which Mr. Stundza stated that the project is against the deed. He stated that they do not care and are strictly concerned about financial gain. He stated that this group wanted to install lights in the common that the commission later denied as well.

Mr. Stundza then stated that he wants the letter to be sent immediately without a vote.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Meehan and seconded by Ms. Hernandez, the members of the commission decided unanimously to send a letter to the Mayor's Office regarding the pedestals in the common.

Mr. Meehan then indicated that he would like to send a letter to the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council (GLCAC) regarding a building on the corner of Essex Street and Amesbury Street which they are developing and restoring. He stated that although this building is outside of any historic district he would like to applaud the group for their efforts in rejuvenating the building thus rejuvenating the city as a whole. He stated that this letter may even add some credibility to the commission as well.

Mr. Meehan then stated that the address of the building is 370 Essex Street. He then stated that the building looks like a monolith of clad and green metal.

Mr. McCarthy then stated the project is two separate buildings. He then stated that 39 units of housing will be constructed on the upper floors and four or five commercial units will be on the first floors. He stated that the project will be nice and all the permitting has been done. He then stated that the GLCAC would like to hear from the commission.

Conversation ensued regarding the location of the building and whether or not the location of Essex Street where the building is located. It was then discovered that the building is not within one of the various historical districts within the city. He then stated that this project is being done in a high profile area and this project is going to make a positive impact within the city.

The other members of the commission agreed with Mr. Meehan's sentiments.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Meehan and seconded by Ms. Hernandez, the members of the commission voted unanimously to send a letter to GLCAC stating that they are in favor of their project at 370 Essex Street.

Mr. Martinez then stated that a possible meeting would be Monday, December 7th.

He then stated that he will send the meeting minutes from last meeting and this meeting in a subsequent email.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Meehan and seconded by Ms. Hernandez, the members of the commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.