

SPECIAL HISTORICAL COMMISSION MTG. 2 JUNE 2022 – DRAFT NOTES

“Thursday, June 2, 6:00 pm until 7:00 pm

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86125147556

A meeting of the [Historical Commission](#)

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Members:

- **Edie Field**, Honorary.
- **Ann Tweedy**. 2022.
- **Eva Gibavic**. 2022.
- **Susan Mareneck**, Chair. 2022.
- **Anne Schuyler**. 2024.
- **Sara Robinson**. 2024.
- **Susan Lynton**. 2024.

***** DRAFT Meeting Agenda *****

1. Access to Historical Commission meetings -
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86125147556>

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- **LHC Recommendation to the Selectboard - Discuss the Historical Commission's position on a proposal brought to the Selectboard on 5/24/22 to hold a "community forum to hear diverse ideas regarding future uses of the Field Family Museum Building."**

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1. [Section_8D__Estab--_Powers_of_Local_Historical_Commission.docx](#)
 2. [lhcsun.pdf](#)

2. Preservation Planning for Historical Assets

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- **Preserving Leverett's historic properties - UPDATE on CPC guidance regarding implementation of \$30,000 "conditions assessment and planning" grant for the Field Family Museum.**

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1. [historic_flowchart_for_cpa_projects.pdf](#)
 2. [Sllarrow_Sawmill_assessment_12_July_2021_-_LHC_1.docx](#)

Attending: LHC: Eva Gibavic, Susan Lynton, Susan Mareneck, Anne Schuyler, Ann Tweedy; PUBLIC: Carole DeSanti, Brian Emond, Ann Ferguson, Dawn Ward.

Meeting started at 6:06pm.

Susan Mareneck introduced the discussion by reviewing the question at the Selectboard meeting of 5/24/22 about whether the current “Field Family Museum” aka “Leverett Family Museum”, “Leverett History Museum”, formerly the Leverett Library/Museum, built and given to the town by Elizabeth Judson Field in honor of her father, as “The Bradford M. Field Memorial Library” in 1916, was a “historical” or “town” asset or both. According to Margie McGuiness, Town Administrator, having consulted town counsel this spring when preparing the 2022 Town Meeting warrant, the original deed was restrictive as to the allowed uses, but because the restrictions have not been renewed in 30 years, they are no longer in effect.

Anne Schuyler asked, “Is the fact that it is in a National Register Historic District restrictive?”

Susan Lynton asked, “If an alternate use was designated for the museum, where would the historical collections go? It would be going against its use of many years. The 2022 warrant article was only meant to facilitate the restoration of the building, so why is a public discussion needed? The use has never been questioned. When the LHC did a “Historic Assets Survey” in 2018, 41% of households in town said they ‘wanted to have collections on view’.

Eva Gibavic stated, “The reason for discussion is that there was concern about having the town sell it. It is both a ‘town’ and an ‘historical’ asset. People want to explore other possible uses and to discuss what should happen.”

Anne Schuyler added, “The LHC mission is to identify, preserve, protect and develop Leverett’s historical assets. I think we are talking about ‘communication’ and ‘education’ and in that regard, a listening session to gather and relay information about existing physical restrictions and such might be useful. Maybe a series of steps would be useful, such as –

1. Educational listening session
2. Hiring an expert to consult on possibilities
3. Make choices realistically.

Ann Tweedy stated, “It is important to get opinions and promote dialogue about this ‘town’ and ‘historic’ asset.”

Susan Lynton added, “Where is the recognition that the collection needs a better environment? What to do about the Leverett Historical Society’s collection is an important consideration.”

Eva Gibavic replied, “The collection is not part of the current issue and in any case, nothing will happen until Town Meeting next year. I believe the listening session should happen, but not just under the auspices of the LHC group. The LHC has people on it

who have a conflict of interest. And, we should not wait for the Master Planning process to happen as it will take too long.”

Anne Schuyler asked, “What impact would the Demolition Delay Bylaw” have if the decision were to demolish or dramatically alter (move) the building? Isn’t the LHC mandate to ‘preserve, protect and develop’ our historic assets?”

Ann Ferguson offered, “In the proposal the interested parties have sent to the Selectboard for consideration on 6/7/22, the LHC would be part of a neutral group, not the ‘proposers’. It would be an ‘impartial’ group in consultation with the LHC.”

Susan Mareneck added, “I have never met an ‘impartial’ person.”

Susan Lynton responded, “The ‘conflict of interest’ is speculation, not proven. The LHC is a ‘town authority’ which acts in good faith. In a small town people have to play many roles. Good faith and trust are critical. An example of Tom Hankinson being President of the Friends of Leverett Pond, a non-profit that received a large sum of CPA funds to restore the dam at the Pond, while also serving as a Selectman. Should the SB or the LHC invite folks to serve on an ‘Ad Hoc’ committee? I wonder if the Historic Assets Survey from 2018 might serve as a model for a new survey? We should not use ‘LeverettConnects’ because it is a limited pool of people in town. We should analyze the data from the 2018 survey as well. Often people are able to express more through a written form than in a listening session where they are required to speak publicly.”

Ann Tweedy added, “We (LHC) represent the town as stewards of our historic assets and should be represented in any effort to discuss the future of the former Library/Museum. Additionally, I would like to see more community engagement in use of the building, and specifically reach out to abutters of the Field. We represent the town on decisions like Demolition Delay and how historic buildings/structures/areas, etc. are recorded in MACRIS, but decisions involving future use and/or funding of town assets are ultimately decided by the people at Town Meeting.”

Anne Schuyler added, “It is important to have the Selectboard recommend but the decision-making happen at Town Meeting. The listening sessions could be in-person and online. I do think that in order to elicit the fairest cross-section of opinion the listening sessions should be facilitated by a professional, not a town resident.”

Ann Ferguson responded, “The Selectboard would choose ‘people who are trusted’.”

Carole DeSanti offered, “New Salem has gone through a similar process and their approach to figuring out ownership of the 1794 Meetinghouse might be a useful comparison for Leverett to look at.”

Susan Lynton added, “Important that we look back and gather data from the Historical Assets Survey in 2018 to see the comments. Again, the difference between the approach of a survey and that of a ‘conversation’ elicit different kinds of responses. In a

listening session/focus group people with special interests will come, but maybe not a full range of opinions will be represented or heard unless we hire a professional facilitator to run them or you will just get a few people with strong points of view.”

Susan Mareneck added, “Having been on a faculty in an academic institution for 30 years, I am familiar with the phenomenon that certain people speak consistently on any topic and others almost never speak unless forced to. It’s just human nature.”

Eva Gibavic stated, “We are not the group appointed by the Selectboard.”

Anne Schuyler suggested, “If an ‘Ad Hoc’ committee is appointed by the Selectboard, it should include representatives from the Leverett Historical Commission (LHC), Leverett Historical Society (LHS), abutters to the property, the Congregational Church population, interested citizens and representatives of the Field Family. This group would figure out the format of a ‘community conversation’ but definitely should be facilitated by someone with ‘no-skin-in-the-game’.

The consensus among LHC members was to recommend to the Selectboard that it would be useful to appoint an ‘Ad Hoc’ committee composed as stated by Anne Schuyler above, with a professional facilitator.

Ann Tweedy moved that the meeting be adjourned, Eva Gibavic seconded – the meeting ended at 7:13pm

Draft Notes by Susan Mareneck – 6/5/22