

## Historical Commission Meeting Minutes – Draft

DATE: January 5, 2026

TIME: 5:00 P.M.

PLACE: Wheeler Homestead

MEMBERS PRESENT: Gary Leveille, Malcolm Fick, James Mercer, Carrie Chen, Marilyn Bisiewicz

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Abby Schroeder

OTHERS PRESENT: Don Howe, HDC Chair; Eric Bruun, Dawn Jardine, Laura Mars, Lauren Clark

1. Chairperson Fick called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.
2. Approval of Minutes
  - *Mr. Mercer moved to approve the draft minutes of the November 3, 2025 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Leveille. All voted to approve.*
  - *Mr. Mercer moved to approve the draft minutes of the November 18, 2025 meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bisiewicz. All voted to approve.*
3. Old Business
  - Updates on various projects reported on:
    - i. CPA Update – Mr. Mercer reported that the CPC would meet January 13 to decide on this year’s funding. He stated that there are several important historical projects. He said there may not be funds available for the Ramsdell project this year.
    - ii. Searles High School Building – Mr. Bruun asked what the Commission is tracking regarding the Housatonic and Searles Schools. It was explained that the Commission had a role in recommending and approving both school projects and that we continue to monitor progress.
    - iii. Trolley Shelter – Mr. Fick explained that the CPA funding for the Trolley Shelter Sign was no longer available. He said that if the Commission were to approve \$2,000 from its 2026 budget for the sign, the Historic District Commission agreed to pay for the remaining cost of \$1,750 from its budget. *Mr. Mercer moved to appropriate \$2,000 from the Historical Commission 2026 funds for the Trolley Shelter Sign. Ms. Chen seconded the motion. All voted to approve.*
    - iv. *Great Barrington Here and Gone* – Mr. Fick reported that distribution of the book is proceeding slowly, as to be expected at this time of year.
    - v. *Smartphone Walking Tour* – Mr. Fick said there was work to be done updating the tour to a new version of the underlying software.
    - vi. *Ramsdell Library Collection* – Mr. Fick presented a draft letter expressing opposition to the Library Trustee request for \$1.5 million from the CPC.

A general discussion took place regarding the specifics of the library’s plan and the position that the Commission should take regarding the CPC request. Representatives of the Library Trustees, including Trustees Laura Mars and Lauren Clark and Library

Director Dawn Jardine, participated in the discussion. It was confirmed that the plan for the Library does not include room for the Historical Commission archives. The current plan includes conversion of the Historical Commission space to a Community Center and it was again stated that the MBLC funding rules prohibit grant funds for being used for any space that is not within the control of the Library.

Mr. Howe suggested that there might be a way to continue to house the archives on the 2nd floor if a Library employee was hired to manage the archives. Mr. Fick suggested that this might be a start for a compromise, but the Library Representatives did not embrace the approach.

Following a discussion of the draft CPC letter, Mr. Bruun suggested that the letter should focus more on the preference that the issue be debated in a public forum, which the CPC is not. Mr. Mercer suggested that the letter should be simplified and be more positive.

Mr. Fick said that he would draft another letter and circulate it to Mr. Bruun and Mr. Mercer for review.

- Historic District Commission Update – Mr. Howe reported that the initial payment has been made for the inventory projects. Work is now underway.
- 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration – Mr. Leveille reported that a Knox Trail celebration event will take place January 10. The event will begin at the Wheeler Farmstead, proceed to Town Hall, and end at the Mahaiwe Theater, where plaques will be presented to the Towns that were part of Knox Trail.

Mr. Brunn pointed out that this is also the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Little Big Horn and that the WPA burial records indicate that a participant in Little Big Horn is buried in a Town cemetery. Members were supportive but questioned how we could sensitively celebrate this event. Mr. Fick said he would explore this further.

- Budget Status – Mr. Fick said that the Town Manager is looking for level funding for 2026 unless a compelling argument can be made for additional funding. After the 2025 budget request was reduced to a third of the 2024 budget, The Commission suggested that Mr. Fick request a restoration to the 2024 funding level in order to continue the support of historical archives that reside with the Historical Society. Mr. Howe offered to coordinate such a request with the Historical District Commission request.

#### 4. New Business – None

5. Other Member Issues – None.
6. Citizen’s Speak – None.
7. Next Meeting Date – Monday, March 2, 2026, at 5:00 pm at a site to be determined.
8. Adjourn – Without objection, Mr. Fick adjourned the meeting at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Malcolm Fick  
Chair

DRAFT