

Minutes of the Patton Homestead Directors – Nov. 17, 2015

*Attending: Carin Kale, Georgina Keefe-Feldman, Bill Burrige, John McWane, Rich Barbato & Patrick Reffett.
Also in attendance: Peter Britton and Marc Johnson*

The Minutes from the Oct. 20th and Nov. 3rd meetings were approved as amended. Rich abstained from both votes as he had not been present.

Carin called the meeting to order @ 4:05 and reported that Peter Britton was in attendance to present a plan he has been working on for the Patton Homestead. Carin suggested allowing Peter to have the floor first and all agreed.

Peter Britton Presentation

- Peter reported that he has had a different vision for the Homestead for some time. He has spoken to various people in the hospitality community and thinks making the stables into a rustic wedding center and building an Inn on part of the gift property would be good for the Town and good for the long-term future of the Homestead proper. Peter hired Siemasko and Verbridge to produce some visuals so the Patton Board of Incorporators could envision what he has in mind.
- Peter B. presented a plan that called for the Town selling off 2 ½ acres to a private developer. The land near the stables and swimming pool would include a new building housing 20-24 units as part of an Inn. A parking lot would be constructed and the stables would be upgraded to a rustic event center. The pool would be part of this new arrangement.

Peter said the revamped area would meet three needs:

1. A place for wedding and other guests to stay overnight. There is no lodging in the area.
2. Barn weddings are very popular now
3. There is a lot of competition for dates among various wedding venues – here is a unique and not overly costly alternative.

Why do this? Britton offered the following statements:

- His plan would provide stable funding to the Homestead – relieving the Town and the nonprofit of major facilities and fundraising headaches.
- The Town will get substantial real estate and hotel taxes indefinitely. He estimated \$150,000 in hotel taxes annually alone.
- The Inn could help oversee Homestead use, such as events, and might help with historic preservation of the house and Archives as well. Both would be considered assets but not part of the Inn operation.
- The Homestead house would always be available to the community.

- Britton thinks turning to an entity that has a proven track-record of historic preservation and a successful business model is a smarter move for the Town.

Various Directors asked questions and/or brought up concerns.

- Georgina Keefe-Feldman commented that there is no provision for another property sale in the existing agreement with Joanne Patton, without major penalties. The family would have the right of first refusal and any sale would require 50% of the profits go to charity.
- Patrick agreed that nothing could happen without buy-in from the Patton family. Also, all kinds of zoning issues would need to be dealt with.
- Britton reported that the plan he presented would condominiumize the two properties and allow for mixed use.
- Britton countered that the Pattons might buy-in if the Homestead was to be permanently sustained.
- Georgina asked Peter about the proposed driveway behind the stables that would lead to the parking lot. Is it completely on the gift property? The answer was “yes.”
- Marc Johnson stated that the Great Estate law is too restrictive and has not been used the way it was intended.
- Marc asked about financing. Why sell a portion of property? He suggested, along with others, the idea of a long-term lease. Peter B. stated that banks do not give loans for such projects, so financing would be impossible. Marc J. said perhaps the Town could finance a long-term lease. Patrick suggested the Town might consider a 99 year lease.
- All agreed they wanted time to study Britton’s report. Carin thanked Peter on behalf of the Board and said we would have him back. John added that, even though the plan was well-received the Homestead Board would still focus on preparing options to present to the BOS, along with recommendations.
- Marc J. said he would give Scott Maddern a copy of the Britton plan.

Rich Barbato Update

- Rich had the opportunity to discuss the Patton Homestead project briefly with Cong. Tsongas and Cong. Moulton. Rich is on Cong. Moulton’s Special Veterans Advisory Comm. Moulton could be an influential ally when the time is right.
- Rich also said Homebase, Mass. Fallen Heroes and Gold Star Families are always looking for venues for outdoor and team-building programs. Marc added that an enhanced deck/patio might be built for short money for this community. How about a bike shed? There are lots of trails that can be used as well.
- Rich also corrected the common notion that the No. Shore is not home to many veterans. He told the group that there are a lot of vets in the area; Lowell alone has 7,000. Mass. is the only state with Veteran’s Affairs as part of state government?
- Rich was thanked for his update and told that his important contacts are in the “on-deck” circle.

Carin Kale Update – Facilities Grant and CPC Funding

- No Facilities Grant info available; it has not started yet to the best of her knowledge. Patrick added that Mass. Development will need 90 to 100 days to complete the study once the contracted people begin. John asked Patrick if we can expedite the matter since it is long overdue, or should we go elsewhere. John and Carin stated that the CPC wants validated numbers from a reliable source. Carin stated that we are in danger of not being able to apply for other funds in a timely manner because of this delay.
- John added that the CPC eligibility application is due Nov. 30th. We will need a project description and an ask figure – probably \$250,000. Marc added that describing how the building will be used will be important.
- Patrick reported that the CPC funds are very competitive. Carin said that is why the facilities report is so needed. We know we will need to be ADA accessible and that the bathrooms, roof and windows need upgrades. Jan. 16th is the date for the full application.
- Patrick wondered if we could use some of Peter B's estimates.
- Apparently we do not need a letter from the Historic District Commission because the Homestead is not in the district, but it is a good thing to have. Perhaps they would send a memo to Tom Catalano validating that the Homestead is a historic property. Bill will take care of securing this letter of support. He will send a draft to John for review as well.
- A vote was taken in support of Bill and John producing a letter of support from the Hist. Dist. Comm. All were in favor.

Georgina Keefe-Feldman Update

- Georgina presented several documents for signature to Carin (President) and Bill (Treasurer) including several tax forms and the Charity Registration form.
- All nonprofits need to file a phone number and an email address. We have already used Carin's home number and will do so on the current forms. What we don't have is an email address. After discussion it was decided that the preference would be: pattonhomesteadinc@gmail.com Georgina will see if it is available and confirm with Atty. Eric Reustle that it is now OK to use the "Inc." after the name. G K-F will lock it in if so. Once we know it is available and we have tested it, she will contact Maureen in Town Hall and ask her to add it to the Town website, next to our Minutes.

John McWane Update

- Now that the CP Berry deal has been completed, John had many questions. He wondered about the process of spending any of \$250,000 earmarked for the Homestead. Are we authorized to spend any of it? For example, we would like to have visual concepts plans to show to the BOS. How do we pay for that? Does that all go through Michael Lombardo? There was general agreement that we should invite M. Lombardo to a future meeting to discuss these issues.

- John also wondered about Peter Nichols' (Homestead caretaker) role going forward. As renovations take place John stated he thought someone would still need to be on the premises. There was general agreement.
- It is also unclear to us and the general public who can and cannot go on the property. Right now Peter N. watches over the grounds and keeps passersby off the property, but should he? There was general agreement that this has to be addressed and that Peter Nichols would probably welcome a discussion of his duties and responsibilities.

The next meeting is set for Tuesday, Dec. 29th @ 4 PM – Library.

Carin adjourned the Meeting @ 6:10 PM.

Georgina Keefe-Feldman
12/17/15