

Calais Historic Preservation Commission

December 13th, 2023

APPROVED

Present: David Schutz, Larry Bush, Tobin Anderson, Jarrod Weiss.

Minutes of the November 8th Meeting. Unanimously approved.

Calais History Tour.

- The script is almost all written. It now needs to be condensed.
- A particular challenge is dealing with the discussion of architectural features that are best shown visually, rather than described verbally.
- Tobin and Susannah are editing the document. We will then circulate it to the Commission for input.
- Tobin will fill in a request for an update from Devin Coleman.

Future of Adamant Village.

- Meeting this morning (Dec. 13th), arranged by Andy Christiansen. Andy was in the state legislature, the son of farmers. He got involved at the Adamant Music School early in his life, and he's now the informal (or perhaps even formal) historian of the institution. Andy has taken on this discussion of the future of the village.
- Andy reached out to Gus Seelig, Executive Director of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, a state body that receives money that they distribute for housing projects. (They took the lead on Memorial Hall, for example.) Gus sent two representatives to the meeting.
- Ben Doyle, who is head of the Preservation Trust of Vermont, was also present.
- The president of the Music School Board, Martin Heikel was also present by Zoom (lives in the New York area).
- Since the music school owns most of the property – 190 acres – their future is tied with whatever else happens in the hamlet.
- The discussion boiled down to a question of how the three organizations can coordinate a solution to this plight.
- The first step is to be a tour of the Adamant district in the next few weeks. Karen Freeman (from the VHCB) is arranging a time and date. This will familiarize everyone with the situation.
- The dilemma is in part the financial health and well-being of the music school itself. They have no debt, but they do have a challenge ahead because the music school is not as robust as it once was. They have a major marketing campaign to undertake to try to build back their student body.

- Martin Heikel (board of music school) was very willing to investigate the possibilities of community involvement and interface. Previously they relied heavily on the Suchamels to fund the whole thing.
- Ben Doyle says that the Preservation Trust is enjoying a lot of money that Sen. Leahy brought to Vermont, so they're starting a new initiative for villages below a certain population (2500 people?) to get funding to build community trusts – to revive general stores, etc. Whatever is in these towns' best interests. They will choose 20 communities throughout Vermont in the coming year to build community trusts. Will Adamant qualify?
- Complicated that Adamant actually crosses official town lines. Larry says that the East Montpelier contingent is not yet particularly engaged.
- Larry asks: Could the entire town of Calais qualify for this?
- The leaders of these organizations have been won over by Adamant. It was a really positive meeting.
- The meeting/site tour might be as soon as next week. That's the next step.

Public Comment and New Business.

- No Dam news.
- The Friends of the Town Hall are looking into energy efficiency grants to renovate upstairs at the Town Hall. (It currently it has no insulation and no heating.) Scott Bassage is leading that charge.
- Recruiting new members for our commission. Devin says historic preservation commissions should have a minimum number of members. We don't. Who could we recruit?
 - Apparently, many of the CLG communities are struggling to make quorums.
 - Tobin suggests Donna Fitch. Tobin will invite her.
 - Jarrod suggests Chris Marshall. Jarrod will invite him to our next meeting.
 - We haven't put out a call on Front Porch Forum.
 - Larry will provide an example of how the Conservation Commission posts.
 - David may out a call.
- **Next meeting:** 7:00 pm, January 10th, 2024.