

Calais Historic Preservation Commission October 13th, 2021

Present: David Schutz, Scott Bassage, Tobin Anderson, Susannah Blachly, Larry Bush, Karen Lane

1. Minutes of September Meeting. Approved unanimously.

2. Public Comment: Community Concerns / New Information.

- East Calais General Store: The work will begin this winter.
- That CLG grant has been officially wrapped up.
- (At this point, we're just waiting for the town to be reimbursed.)
- Thanks to Scott Bassage for his hard work on this project!

3. Adamant Historic District Application.

- The Vermont Advisory Council for Historic Preservation will be meeting on October 21st to consider the Adamant application – after which, it will most likely be forwarded to the National Park Service for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
- At the federal level, they are obligated to respond to the application within two months.
- We should make sure we update the town on these approvals as they come in – and that we celebrate them.
- Adamant actually needs one more form before the meeting on the 21st – a form which shows that the nomination has been approved by the town Selectboard.
- *Action item:* Larry will prepare the document; Scott will make sure that the Selectboard signs off on it before the deadline.
- The transcripts of the Adamant oral histories should be available on the town website, but are not yet. (The audio tracks of the interviews themselves are too large to be included.)
- *Action item:* Scott will ask Katie and Barbara about we can get those transcripts up so they can be accessed by interested townspeople.
- By 2023, all five of Calais's hamlets should be registered districts on the National Register!

4. Maple Corner Historic District Application.

- RFP for a certified historian: After our last meeting, David Schutz reached out to another set of consultants – some well beyond the borders of the state. None of them sent in proposal bids for the work. Brian Knight, who did the recent work on the East Calais and Adamant districts, was the only applicant.

- Discussion of Brian Knight: Brian has at this point worked closely with Devin Colman at the VT Division for Historic Preservation on the Adamant application, in particular. He has refined his model over the years. We have a great deal of confidence in his past work.
- *Motion:* That Brian Knight be hired to prepare an application to place Maple Corner on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Approved unanimously.
- A concern: In the past, Brian has included quite a bit of social history in the course of his applications, some of which he has been asked by the state to strip back. The problem is, that's often what the town's citizens – for example, individual homeowners in the district – really want to know about. We need to make sure that Brian feels free to include and expand on these social history finds.
- With the Adamant application, two versions have been prepared: the first is the application proper, a slimmed-down version which will go on to the state Division and the federal government. The second is the bulkier version, including oral histories, which is available on the website.
- As Brian sets out to work on the Maple Corner project, it should be clear to him that we absolutely support his interpolation of period anecdote and social history into the applications – especially given the high level of involvement in this particular project of interested Calaisians with historical resources. These, in fact, are often the parts of the documents that are of most interest and use to the town itself.
- At this point, given the extra time we have waited for proposals, we'll have to rework the application schedule slightly.
- *Action item:* David will revisit the calendar with Brian and will send out a revised calendar.
- Our assumption is that we'll try to have a kick-off session for area residents at the Maple Corner Community Center, as we did in Adamant and East Calais. Dirk will be in charge of arranging the kick-off.
- Steve Gray, Linda Gallagher, and Dirk should meet with Brian Knight to discuss the overall shape of the history and possible resources. Several more of us would like to listen in. (Larry suggests we may have to warn that meeting.)
- The boundaries of the possible Maple Corner historic district: It is already on the *state* register, so it has boundaries already which could well coincide with the district we finally propose.

5. Preparing Our Next CLG Application: A Driving Tour of Calais.

- The application is due on December 16th.
- Tobin and Susannah are spearheading it: a driving/walking architectural tour of the town, synthesizing all of the information that has turned up in the village histories that we've commissioned over the last several years.
- Kate also wants to help (see below).
- A great model is the Norwich Historical Society's site, which includes not only several driving tours (downloadable as podcasts), but also a couple brief comic books for kids, an architectural scavenger hunt, and worksheets for kids (for example, how do you tell the probable age of a New England tombstone from the picture on it?).
- The Norwich site provides us with a sense of what's possible – though it's far more elaborate than what we need.
- Susannah actually has a copy of Norwich's grant application for reference.

- Several possible media formats for our town tour: (1) a booklet / pamphlet with a map; (2) a map with numbers on it that are keyed to audio spiels on an app; (3) an app that includes the map too; (4) a continuous audio podcast that leads the listener from spot to spot (which was Norwich's solution).
- David is going to be talking to a company that's setting up an audio tour for the State House. He'll make some gentle inquiries about format and cost for a project like ours.
- Erlene Leonard actually had a map with historical dots marked out on it. We should find that and see if there's anything there that might be of use.
- We should also see what would be interesting and useful to the local schools, especially for their local history units. We could reach out to the principal of Calais Elementary (Cat Fair).
- There already is a Maple Community Center driving tour brochure from many years ago. Some copies must still be around.
- *Action item:* Tobin will look for a copy of this previous tour.
- The CLG application blanks themselves are available on the VT Division for Historic Preservation's website.
- *Action item:* Tobin and Susannah should have a rough draft of the application before next month's meeting. Probably look into this in early November.

6. New Business.

- Kate Phillips wishes to step down from the commission because its meetings clash with her job at the VHS – but she might be interested in assisting with the driving tour when it becomes our focus. We propose that she, like Susannah last year, take a sabbatical/leave of absence for a year.
- Next meeting: November 10th.