

Houston Barn Study Committee
March 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Present: Don H., Jason L., Justin P., Lee W., Louise C.

Absent: Ben W., Celina H., Dave F., Pete H.

Meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m. The February 19, 2021 meeting minutes were approved as written.

Pete has contacted Center Hill Barns from Chichester, NH to give the committee a quote based upon a drawing that outlined the basic needs of the Department of Public Works field maintenance space currently located in the lower level of the barn. He will report back once he has a quote.

Don has taken pictures of the items that are being stored in the barn and will be talking to the respective groups to discuss the need to clean up their area and remove unwanted items in preparation for the barn assessment later this year. The target date to get this accomplished is by the end of April. After that the committee will recruit volunteers to finish cleaning up the inside of the area especially any remaining hay still laying around. Don will also discuss with them if the barn is going to be preserved at a later date then they should start thinking about an alternative storage area. Louise will discuss with Paula and the recreation committee about plans to remove unwanted items and reorganize the items the recreation department uses for events. Some of the items include older office equipment and furniture and it was recommended that we look into giving the items to the State for their surplus auction if other department heads don't need them.

Louise talked to Greg R., buildings & grounds director, to ask if there was any update on a cost estimate for tarping the roof of the barn. He has not heard of any estimates yet but will keep her informed when they come in. It was asked if this money needed to be raised at town meeting. From early conversations had about the roof it is believed that money will come from the building maintenance fund already in the budget. Greg had sent pictures of how many more shingles were on the ground after the high winds a while ago and a video of the water pouring in from cracks in the foundation.

We still have not heard back from the Preservation Alliance Barn Assessment grant. It has been about 2 months since it was sent in for review and the application stated it could take up to 90 days to hear back regarding a decision. Justin mentioned the Canterbury Shaker Village also had applied for a barn assessment grant and they had not heard back either. He informed us that the Preservation Alliance was inundated with grant applications recently so it may take some time to hear back from them.

Louise contacted Josh Heino owner of Old Barn & Home, LLC to give the committee a price to disassemble the barn and remove it from the property. He understands that this was not likely to happen but the committee needed to do their due diligence of getting this estimate as part of their overall presentation to the Select Board. He did walk across the cat walk to get pictures of the cupola and found one of the original posts that had been removed when the cupola was lowered years ago. The post will be placed back in the upper portion of the barn for future reference and marked so it won't

be accidentally tossed out. He was asked if it was possible to sell the barn or portions of the barn so it could be reused somewhere else. He explained that the barn is old but not an antique barn so doesn't hold the same value. It is difficult to find the right person who may want to dismantle the barn for reuse or even a portion of the barn because it is so large in size and a difficult task.

Josh made a posting on his Facebook business page that he was giving an estimate to dismantle the Houston Barn. It mentioned the need of getting a grant in order to save the barn. This post was reposted on the Hopkinton News Facebook page and it received a lot of attention. The way the post was worded it sounded as though the barn may be torn down if grant money was not found. There were 41 comments and all but 1 was in support of preserving the Houston Barn. It also had 90 likes so that is encouraging to think there is support to preserve the barn. A few Select Board members did post to clarify that the plan was to do repairs on the barn to keep it in a stable condition. Louise posted a comment explaining the committee's charge and that the estimate to dismantle the barn was just part of the committee's due diligence of looking at all of the options and the costs associated.

There being no further business to conduct the meeting adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

The next meeting will be April 16, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Louise Carr, Chair