

Houston Barn Committee

Jan. 30, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Present: Dave Feller, Pete Holmes, Don Houston, Celina Hurley, Jason LaCombe, Justin Perkins, Lee Wilder, Ben Wilson, Louise Carr

Heather Mitchell, Hopkinton Historical Society Director was invited but was not able to attend.

Meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. at the Houston Barn. The committee was meeting for the first time and did introductions. Don explained that Dan Blanchette, DPW Director, approached him about the barn being in desperate need of a new roof as it has been leaking for some time. Dan estimated the cost to be \$80,000, but was concerned about spending that amount of money without a long-term commitment to preserve it. Don and Louise discussed the issue and approached the Select Board to form a committee to explore a number of scenarios including the costs associated with removing the barn, which would necessitate a replacement facility for DPW's grounds maintenance operations and also finding or building storage capacity for the Recreation Dept. and others who use the first level. Costs to stabilize the barn for its current uses and potential future uses will also be gathered as well as any funding sources to do so.

We took a tour of the barn and Don H. explained how the barn was once operated and other points of interest. The overall opinion of the committee is that the barn is in much better condition than they had expected. It was noted that the barn needs a good cleaning to remove remnants of hay and other debris. The various groups that are storing items in the barn will need to clean up their areas and dispose of anything that is not needed. The committee is willing to get together once the weather gets warmer to assist with this project. Louise will contact the fire/police departments to see if they are still performing training exercises in the barn. If not, their temporary structures will be removed. When the time comes, we would like to request through Dept. of Public Works a 40-yard dumpster to make the process easier. After the barn has been photographed inside and documented for historical reference, the remaining stanchions and stanchion supports should be removed to open up the space. Any items that have historical value from the farming days will be preserved and displayed at a later date in the barn.

Ben W. discussed the timeline for the LCHIP and the Moose Plate grants. If we receive the Preservation Alliance Barn Assessment grant and the study is completed this year, it will allow us to move forward with the steps necessary to prepare for the letter of intent for a LCHIP grant in the 2022 round of grant funding. This would be a matching grant for up to \$200,000. The Moose Plate grant if accepted will award \$10,000 toward barn restoration. There may be other sources that can be explored for more grant moneys. The Select Board approved \$60,000 to go into the 2021 budget CIP line item for the barn repairs. If the same funding level happened next year, it would leave the need to raise an additional \$70,000 in

order to get the maximum matching grant funds. Ben, Louise and Celina will work on the details for grants and fundraising. This money could be used toward repairs needed to stabilize the barn for future use.

While we wait to hear from the Preservation Alliance Barn Assessment grant, we will concentrate on evaluating options for a replacement DPW Building and Grounds Department building in the event the decision is made to remove the barn. They use the current ground floor location as their spring/summer/fall operation center and to store year-round their equipment used to maintain the playing fields and parks. The recreation department uses the right side of the upper level for seasonal storage. The left side of the barn is used by different sports groups to store their equipment. The committee will discuss the storage needs with these organizations in light of both scenarios, i.e., if the barn is torn down or if the current storage areas become venue space in the future.

In addition, Santa will need a new home as well as other miscellaneous items that are being stored in the barn. Costs for substitute storage will be determined. These estimates will be presented to the Select Board to compare with the costs of preserving the Houston barn.

The committee voted Louise Carr to be the Chair of the committee. It was also decided to meet once a month via Zoom until warmer weather. Louise will ask Neal to set up a zoom account and will send the information to the committee. Materials containing prior engineering studies and background information were handed out for the committee's review.

The next meeting is to be determined.

Meeting adjourned 10:15 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Louise Carr, Chair