

DRAFT

Housatonic Improvement Committee Meeting

Thursday, March 28, 2024 at 6:30 pm

Ramsdell Public Library
1087 Main Street, Housatonic MA

Members present:

Angela Lomanto (chair)
Scott Shortt (vice chair)
Eric Gabriel
Louise Goldsmith
Ben Elliot
Beverly Nourse

Members absent:

N/A

The Committee attempted to get logged into Zoom, but the account had been locked out and they were not able to log in.

Angela read Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18 as well as MGL. c. 30A sec. 20F regarding recording meetings.

Angela made a motion to open the meeting at 6:47, Eric seconded this motion. The meeting was opened with a unanimous yes vote, 6-0.

The first item on the agenda was the approval of minutes.

Angela made a motion to accept the minutes as written from the February 29th meeting, apart from a few typos. Eric seconded this motion. The minutes were accepted with a unanimous 6-0 vote.

Angela announced that there still was a committee vacancy, as a previously interested candidate decided to turn down the opportunity. She also reported on recent activities relevant to the library development, including a survey, asking the Committee to participate before it closes.

The second item was Cook's Garage.

Angela said that the town has requested feedback for the future of Cook's Garage. Ben reported that it is a priority of the HIC, which will help to inform the Select Board. Eric stated that they're still waiting on the water report. Angela suggested trying to hold a charette again, like the Committee did with the school. Ben reminded the Committee that the building was not in as good of shape as the school, so it should be treated differently. Eric stated that he wanted to find out if anyone can even enter the

building in the condition it's in. Scott recommended getting a series of architecturally accurate photos made. Eric stated that options include auctioning off the property. Scott brought up investigating the easement of the property. Angela asked the Committee what they could envision, money aside. The Committee all agreed that it would be a shame to lose the building, and they would like to see the options that could be explored with the zoning. Eric recommended the Berkshire Innovation Center as a possible interested party, and the idea of a river walk trailhead. Angela stated she thinks the idea should be opened to architects, and that Chris and/or Brandy should join a meeting to speak to the zoning restrictions on the site.

The third item was the Housatonic Community Center.

Angela suggested better outdoor lighting to make the building more friendly. Eric stated that he would like to see a commercial kitchen, for the space to be designated as an emergency center and/or cooling center, and to have the entry and bathrooms cleaned up and updated. Eric also said that he would like to see some acknowledgement of the dedication to Veterans, as the building is dedicated to them. Ben stated he would like to see the stage restored. Scott mentioned an efficient gym, and to keep in mind the the library and what it could offer alongside the community center, and what could compliment those programs and not duplicate. Angela said she would write up these thoughts, and the Committee can review at the next meeting and submit them to Karen Smith.

The fourth item on the agenda was Party in the Park.

Angela stated she submitted the necessary paperwork including the calendar listings, and that she will join the Parks and Rec meeting next week to finalize use of the park for that date. She also spoke with Berkshire Mountain Spring Water. The Committee spoke about keeping the banners, but just changing the dates. Eric reported that Housatonic the Beautiful will be the fiscal sponsor. Eric also reported that the sound/music crew was on board, and food and beverage vendors were also still on board for the date and time. Angela reported that the library has committed to attending, as well as Extra Special Teas and the SoCo fundraiser would return as well. Louise will keep a spreadsheet updated with this information. Eric will report back what stage the school project anticipates being in for the event.

The final agenda item was Citizen Speak and Media Time.

Sheila Cleary from the Center for Peace through Culture attended the meeting to report that she wants to plan a storytelling night centered around the Housy School. She also announced a survey regarding programming needs, which is available on the website.

Eric reported on behalf of Housatonic the Beautiful that they are organizing an Earth Day cleanup, which will meet in front of the Ramsdell Library at 8:30 am on Saturday April 20th with coffee in the morning, and a barbecue to follow in the park at noon.

Pat Hollenbeck reported to the Committee that the church next door has a commercial kitchen and space available for rent. He also reported that the Ramsdell is planning to hold outdoor movies this upcoming summer, starting Friday, June 7th. He also stated that the library is hoping to become a

designated shelter space. Pat reported that the library is hoping to hold a repair café in the fall, and he was thinking of including the Housy Dome for certain parts of the program. He asked if the HIC could help facilitate that portion of the event.

No one from the media was present.

Angela proposed the next meeting be on April 11th. The Committee agreed on that date at 6:30PM.

Eric made a motion to adjourn at 7:41, Scott seconded. The Committee voted unanimously to adjourn with a 6-0 vote. The meeting was adjourned at 7:41PM.

Respectfully submitted, Eric Gabriel