

Norfolk Historical Commission Meeting
Minutes of September 7, 2017

Betsy Pyne called the meeting to order; additional members in attendance included Marcia Johnston, Betsey Whitney, Barbara Bartholomew, Gail Sullivan, and Geri Tasker. Associate members included Thelma Ravinski and Sam Zeigler. Guests included Grange Members: Samantha Benton, Dennis Schworer, Cindy Ladue, Kevin Roche, and Donna Jones.

Minutes: The Minutes from the July meeting were reviewed and discussed; these were approved unanimously.

Financial Report: Sandra was unable to attend this meeting and will give a report at our next meeting.

Grange Landscaping Discussion:

Betsy stated that everyone who would like to speak will have a chance to do so, but one at a time as recognized by the chair. Side conversations should be avoided.

Betsy acknowledged Dennis and thanked him for his donation of labor and materials.

Betsy read 3.1a of the Grange Preservation Restriction Agreement relating to Exterior Restrictions in accordance with Conditional Rights Requiring Approval by Grantee.

She noted the following suggestions related to the Grange Landscaping Plan

- a. The landscaping plan should have as its goal to show off the building in its best light and highlight its dignity and not the landscaper. The landscaping should not be prominent.
- b. The landscaping should not look like residential landscaping designed in 2000 or 2017.
- c. It should make a restrained statement of landscaping that would suggest Norfolk as a rural, agricultural community and not include many and expensive plantings.
- d. The landscaping should be very simple.
- e. A landscaping plan should address all sides of the building or minimally the front and both long sides.

Betsey W. stated that in 2007 the preservation agreement was put in place when a grant of \$335,000 was awarded for restoration. The CPC funding was given and gladly received, but along with those funds came the Preservation Restriction in order to insure that the historical significance of the building and property would be maintained.

Dennis stated that he took full responsibility for the landscaping project; however, the Grange members knew about the Preservation Restriction.

Barbara asked if the Grange has any rights relating to the Preservation Restriction making reference to Section 5 Grantor's Rights Not Requiring Further Approval by Grantee.

Betsey W. stated that the agreement does say that the inside is all theirs; however, the outside must be maintained as per the restrictions. Her concern is that the wall does not represent the time frame of the building, and she displayed photos of walls more appropriate to the time frame of the building's construction.

Dennis talked about his designs; the landscaping conversation began about two years ago, and a year ago they planned to plant two dogwood trees in front of Grange in honor of H. Olive Day. They have already planted one dogwood at the school. They wanted to soften the look of the landscaping and the placement of the Dogwoods is designed to enhance not block the front of the building. They discussed that stone edgings in traditional NE walls or retainers are round and informal. They wanted a low profile with curves, and random field stones do not curve. The flat stones in question have not been quarried, but have been above ground; they used low profile fieldstone retainers 8" high for the curves. The curved fieldstone border is intended to be low profile indicative of a planting area; the curves have been done in a symmetrical way to break up an uninteresting space. He is also proposing a perennial garden in front of low growing plants. They would like a hydrangea plant between the two trees, but not the traditional Cape Cod type. The project is about enhancing the foreground of the building.

Betsey W. is concerned that in 1863, stones were not perfectly cut and walls not curved.

Dennis pointed out that there are lots of straight lines, and the area needs to be softened.

Betsy P. would like the design to be as simple as possible.

Barbara stated that from an historical perspective there was never a landscaping plan at the Grange; even when it was listed on the National Register, and that there were shrubbery plantings around the building.

Samantha described the informal garden Dennis is trying to create as designed to look very natural. She recalls a conversation from the previous meeting about landscaping.

Marcia stated that this building should be treated differently because it's an old building.

Thelma described the gardens in front of the building during her 18 years as a member of the Grange and stated that the new plantings do make the building look beautiful.

Dennis stated that they want to enhance the building for the members, the people who rent, and for the public. He does natural landscaping and doesn't do formal, symmetrical was never his intention; he likes a loose and informal style. It doesn't look scrappy and messy because it's not formal. There are things that he can do to make it look looser and less tightly fitted to create a more casual finish.

Sam wishes the stone work was more traditional, but the idea of establishing gardens is great.

Barbara said that the wall will not really be seen once the plantings are in.

Betsy P. would like to see grass along the sides of the building; Tom Benedetti said we need three estimates from three landscaping firms and apply for a CPC grant for funding. Kevin will get the three estimates.

Geri pointed out that we're now talking about two projects, perhaps we should come to some agreement about the front landscape that is already underway and then apply for CPC funds to complete the rest. She stated that she would have preferred a more traditional looking wall more in line with the time frame of the building. Since the stones used are natural and not cut to fit, they are more acceptable.

Grange members have also discussed a proposal in the future to plant trees along the school road; perhaps sugar maples and lilac hedge groves.

Betsy suggests they proceed with the pre-existing beds against the building, clean up and finish the wall work that was started.

Motion: Betsey W moved to approve a partial front landscaping plan for the three foundation beds in front of the Grange building, the large semi-circular area between the street and the driveway as sketched in the attached plan. We approve the low retaining curved wall around the foundation plantings and in the front section; work includes finishing the stone wall, improving the grass and partial planting of the beds behind the wall. Marcia seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Betsy P. asked the Grange to have a plan of future proposals for additional landscaping on the grounds and around the building. The plan should include a list of all of the plants they plan to use.

Geri commended the Grange for wanting to make improvements, but we would have appreciated being contacted ahead of time. It is required by the restriction that we approve such projects and moving forward we need to work together. The Grange has a responsibility to follow the guidelines of this restriction, and it is NHC's responsibility to see that the terms of the restriction are upheld.

Kevin said he will have some estimates by our next meeting on 10/17.

Gail moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m. The motion was seconded and approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Geraldine A. Tasker
Recording Secretary