

**TOWN OF WESTPORT
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING**

Kennedy Administration Building
Community Meeting Room
5387 Mary Lake Road
Waunakee, WI 53597

MINUTES – August 6, 2015 at 6:00p.m.

Members present: Ray Mejia, Nancy Schlimgen, and Joe Pichette

Members absent: Ron Bowen

Public attendance: Rebecca Bernstein, Consulting

Janette Hermansen, Liason with Schumacher Farm

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

April 2nd minutes were held for approval at the next meeting when Ron could be present, as he was at that meeting. The July 9th minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Ella Wheeler Wilcox Site Plans:

In the afternoon prior to this meeting, Tom Wilson hosted a meeting with County staff along with HPC members: Ray and Nancy and historic resource consultant, Rebecca regarding preliminary concept plans for the EWW site. County staff: Darren Marsh, Parks Director, Mike Rupiper, of Solid Waste Management and Jeremy Blousek, Division Manager for Water Resource Engineering, presented a “DRAFT” of a concept map, which was reviewed and discussed by the commission as Rebecca relayed key aspects portrayed earlier that day to those in attendance.

Land is not going to return to agricultural production. It is proposed to be a conservation park divided into different wildlife habitats: prairie and wetland areas especially for grassland and wetland birds that would allow for hunting. The public access will be adjacent to the roadside in finishing off the existing parking area and include interpretation of The EWW homestead leading to a walking path. Incorporated into the plan, the path follows to some extent waterway swales (with upper and lower ponds) still to be re-contoured in grading and stabilizing the site. This was necessary after extracting 2-7 feet of clay, which increased the slope in some areas of the hillside as viewed by Rebecca and Nancy who had walked the site earlier in the week. The top of the hillside is edged with a cool season buffer which was

included to limit herbicide drift from farm fields and as a firebreak in managing the future prairies. MATC recently sold the upper fields viewed on the horizon which then will keep that field in Ag production.

HPC members wondered if the designed path could be extended beyond the waterway designated into the upper plateau of the hillside to offer a better site perspective from this more hilltop vantage point? Rebecca will request this in a subsequent letter to the county. Tom Wilson offered that Westport could mow such a walkway in the future.

The Parks staff's concept of prairie restoration included grasses, however, they did not know to what extent the more expensive prairie wildflowers or forbs would be available. The HPC wondered if we needed a fall seed collection event or to create a friends group or have Rebecca look into organizing a friend's group or partnering with other established groups pitching us as "Recipients of Seed!?"

In interpreting the history of the land at this EWW site, it was suggested that it be mentioned that this site has been altered. Noting also that erosion upslope had likely filled in the wetlands that existed at that time and the foundation itself over time. Questions as to when the first survey occurred that would of shown elevations or what crops might have been farmed or sold in the EWW farm at the time arose. Also mentioned that there may have been a preference for the farmette to be near water.

According to the County staff, The HPC can focus on site planning on the public access portion of the site. This area is approximately 500 feet extending in along the roadway. Ray said maybe a compact site is more to our advantage in interpreting the EWW homestead. According to Darren, when the grading of the hillside is finished later this year with using any large equipment, then the parking area could be filled in and finished off with a raised turf line of cool season grass. Moving the Historical marker would happen as the parking lot gets finished off, later in the process.

The county staff was interested in knowing if it was the intention in interpreting the site to expose the foundation of the homestead and if so which ditches or trenches used in the archaeological dig should be left? At present the site remains as it was for that event. Further discussion of this aspect of verifying the foundation ensues during the meeting. Regardless, the homestead foundation could be cleared of weeds at present. In fact, the town was asked to manage weeds like cutting ragweed and prickly ash, which Tom Wilson, on behalf of the Town, seemed agreeable to doing as soon as possible.

Concerning the EWW foundation, Joe asked if ground penetrating radar would be useful? Rebecca mentions that after a fire and 100 years of farming that rubble had potentially pushed in the footings of the foundation. She reminds the Commission that Phil Salkin did a *Section 106 Study* required for public funds to be cleared for historic properties prior to the clay excavation. From this report and from his involvement with the dig last May, the NE Corner may be located, but maybe not all 4 posts, to offer a skeletal look at the foundation as a basis for shelter design. The Town Hall display, which she created pictures the EWW homestead from which some sense of the dimensions can be made. Nancy mention that GPS coordinates

could then possibly be established or useful reference points. Rebecca will send email to Phil Salkin to check on existing site surveys and research radar questions.

Joe noted that our site discussions may infringe or overlap into Parks Commission work, and that a partnership with them, (especially through Dave O'Malley formerly of the HPC, now on that Commission would likely be helpful in the future). He noted our HPC interest is in conveying the Ella Wheeler Wilcox's historic aspects calling awareness to her as an historical figure.

The timeline for this project was at least a year in the making according to Darren. County staff cautioned us that they were still working out the budget for this project given the collaboration at the site and that they had to "manage expectations" in presenting this "draft" concept map.

Informal Interviews:

Joe is still interested in reaching out to Ackers.

Janette said that they are starting to do some further interviews at Schumacher Farm. She mention that the McKellars who live in the ranch house adjacent to County property was one of the families selected to be interviewed.

Old Military Road:

Copies of Peter Bloch's description of the Old Military Road were handed out with a map of it's route. However, the e-mailed map had layers of different map views, which Ray was going to check on through his HPC emails. Joe and others noted that part of the trail may be within the anticipated Bishop's Bay development or near the county bike trail extensions, where further signage may be relevant.

Historic Silo Prservation:

According to Ray, this is in regards to taking silo features in the landscape into consideration in developing properties. It may be possible to conduct a drive-through inventory. But how to categorize them is an issue so that we can preserve a few of these features. This can be done in regards to T. Wall properties, presently planned for development or other properties, with permission.

NEW BUSINESS

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Janette is interested in being on the HPC. Ray supports her participation given her historical experience with Schumacher Farm and her lifelong history living n Westport.

NEXT MEETING

Next month's meeting will be Thursday, September 3rd, 2015 at 6:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:40 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Nancy Schlingen