

MINUTES OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES & PUBLIC PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE
AND HAVERHILL HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

November 5, 2020 - 6:00 p.m.

Attendees: NRPP Members present were Councilor Sullivan, Chairperson & Councilors LePage and Bevilacqua. Also in attendance was Council President Barrett. Members of the Haverhill Historic Commission in attendance were Peter Carbone, Chairperson, and participating remotely were Commissioners Tom Wylie, Ron Peacetree, and Dan Speers.

Others in attendance in person or remotely: Diane Itasaka, David Dustin, Elaine Barker, Jan Williams, Ben Roy, Carol Nedeau, Dale Leone, David Jellison, Dermot Luddy, Juhn Cuneo, John Lee Grant, Judy Matthews, Mary Jane Cuneo, Michaela Gunning, Suzie O'Bomsawin, Alexandra Itasaka, and Andrew Herlihy, Community Development & Planning office.

- 1) The following item was on the agenda: Second Meeting to discuss the Hannah Duston Monument in Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) Park.

The Chair introduced the Councilors and Commissioners participating in the second joint meeting of the NRPP and Haverhill Historical Commission and thanked the citizens for participating in person or remotely. The Chair explained that the discussion tonight would turn to the Councilors and Commissioners thoughts and recommendations about the future of the Hannah Duston statue currently located at G.A.R. Park. The Chair pointed out that this was the second of two meetings for this purpose, and that the focus of this first meeting was to hear from the citizens. Tonight's meeting was to be a discussion amongst the Councilors and Commissioners, with the end result being one or more recommendation from the NRPP Sub-Committee to the full Council and to the Mayor, the Mayor being the ultimate authority to spend any city funds to make any changes to the monument's look or its location.

Diane Itasaka President of Dustin Duston Garrison House, spoke and said moving Hannah to the Duston Garrison House is not an option, citing safety concerns and other concerns she did not wish to state publicly. She suggested leaving statue in G.A.R. Park and expand to include Abenaki (Native American) narrative and make it an educational experience.

David A. Dustin, Secretary Dustin Duston Family Association formed in 1905 which established Duston Garrison House in 1945 to acquire, preserve, and restore the Garrison House in Haverhill. He suggested keeping it in G.A.R. park as an emblem of the complex history of a frontier community during the colonial period.

Elaine Barker was allowed to reiterate her remarks made at the first meeting.

Suzie O'Bomsawin, an ancestor of the Abenaki Nation spoke about how hard it is to listen to the narrative of the past, and said we can do better. She recommended removal of the statue.

Ben Roy spoke again and said the statue represents a symbol of hate and white supremacy, historical context at time it was erected. Only way to address the harm done is by actually doing

something about the statue not just put signs around it explaining it is a symbol of hate and white supremacy/

Dale Leone said he did not appreciate the biased Dustin family narrative perspective. Stop pushing hero narrative. Choose progressivism.

Michaela Gunning spoke and felt the proponents of keeping Hannah were utterly dismissive of the opposing point of view. She noted that how we move forward as a community and how we address this issue here and in the classroom in the future is important and that it must be sensitive to the Native Americans living today.

Marie Soraghan spoke and said keep it at its' current location, and that removal alone will result in no direct benefit to indigenous people. She said our local controversy is part of the national effort to change our nation's history. This is part of Haverhill's history not necessarily that we honor her.

Commissioner Carbone read a lengthy statement reviewing many of the comments and suggestions made by members of the Council, Commission and citizens. He urged not to whitewash our future. Hannah's fate rests with the politicians. And we should act in unison. In unity there is strength.

Commissioner Peacetree recommended having Kimberley Connors do a more comprehensive research paper on the subject once she can get back into research centers closed currently due to COVID. Then once we have the report we will have information we need to make a decision based on facts not falsehoods.

Commissioner Speers recommended moving the statue to a more appropriate place like the Garrison House and to make the space where Hannah is now a square of hope that reflects the destiny of Haverhill that everyone can share in and relate to representing the future of Haverhill no matter what race or nationality.

Commissioner Wylie recommended we relocate the statue to Hannah Dustin Park or Buttonwoods Museum with a pro-Native American narrative added to put the statue in proper historical context.

Councilor Bevilacqua thanked all the speakers for coming during these difficult times. He said he has been speaking with citizens of all ages and backgrounds, seniors, school age children about this issue. And he appreciated their input. He said it is a difficult story, but that we should not move the statue. He stated he has no objection to setting aside land at G.A.R. park allowing Abenaki or Native American groups to erect a memorial telling the Native American side of the story.

Councilor LePage thanked everyone for participating. He explained this has been a learning experience. He said he could both sympathize and empathize with the Native Americans and the Dustin family over the loss of loved ones. He expressed hope for some form of compromise.

President Barrett said she supports the Abenaki having their own monument. She supports changing narrative on bottom of Duston statue. She noted the vast majority of calls or emails received by her were in support of keeping the statue in G.A.R. Park.

Chairperson Sullivan then spoke and noted this is a complicated issue and speaks to the history of violence in the United States which started in our area because we were the first point of landing. He said he does not support the statue's removal. Need to find consensus where does Hannah belong in the history of Haverhill and how do we explain her today in 2020 with a whole new perspective as opposed to propaganda of the late 1800's. He said the hope tonight is to propose ideas to move forward to full City Council and Mayor. He noted it is going to cost money to do any of this. He would support leaving statue where is with improvements made to the base of the statue along with a Native American Memorial to better explain the story. Or if relocated then put in appropriate setting where it can become a teachable lesson to prevent future acts of violence.

Councilor Bevilacqua made a motion to recommend to full city council that the statue stay where it is in G.A.R. Park, and the city should provide the Abenaki an opportunity to erect their own Memorial, with the city to provide land and site work in G.A. R. Park. If not, then recommend Buttonwoods as the next best location. President Barrett and Jan Williams from Buttonwoods explained that the Museum is not an option as the Board of Directors had previously voted unanimously not to allow the relocation to Buttonwoods property.

Commissioner Wylie suggested Hannah Dustin Park across from HHS or the stone marker on Rte. 110 as alternative sights should Hannah be relocated.

Chair noted that from a procedural standpoint the role of NRPP Sub-Committee was to come up with a recommendation. He clarified that it doesn't meant our recommendation will be adopted by full Council or the Mayor as they may have their own ideas. Chair explained that in order to move forward a recommendation voted on by the three subcommittee members needed to be made such as Councilor Bevilacqua's previous motion.

The motion by Councilor Bevilacqua was seconded by Councilor LePage, and the roll call vote was taken and the item passed 2-1, Councilor LePage voting against the motion.

Commissioner Carbone asked that the record show no formal vote was taken by HHC during this meeting and they would make their own formal recommendation at a future meeting of the HHC.

Councilor Bevilacqua made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor LePage and the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas J. Sullivan

Thomas J. Sullivan, Chairperson

April 23, 2021