

Heritage Farm Commission Meeting

Special Meeting Monday

July 19, 2021

1:00pm

RECEIVED
AUG 02 2021
Town Clerk of Bolton

Attendees:

Bolton Heritage Farm Commission [BHFC]: Arlene Fiano, chair; Beth Harney, vice chair; Rhea Klein, Cara Wraight, Ann Maulucci

Town of Bolton: John Butrymovich, Facilities Director; James Rupert, Building Official et al, Patrice Carson, Consulting Director of Community Development

Consultants: Sara Nelson, Nelson Edwards Architects [NE]; Tom Elmore, Historic Landscape Architect from Elmore Design Collaborative;

The Special Meeting via Zoom of the Bolton Heritage Farm Commission was called to order by chair Arlene Fiano at 1:02 PM. The meeting was turned over to Sara Nelson as presenter. Sara explained that the purpose of the meeting was to update the first phase of the Master Plan Study that will examine how the buildings and grounds at the Bolton Heritage Farm are best utilized.

Sara began her power point presentation with a review of the project intent and study sequence, noting that the design team's goal was to create improvements to the property that would allow increased public use of the barn, the farmhouse, and the overall site. Her team will synthesize any prior studies done at the farm with needs for future, more intensive uses, and create a road map for the town to follow. The Master Plan will recommend an implementation plan including phasing work in stages, which will be done after the plan is complete

Sara then turned the discussion over to Beth Harney for a review of the Phase I work completed by the commission to identify operational costs and needs at the farm and identify similar venues that could be explored for programming ideas for the Heritage Farm. Beth explained that the research to date has been all internet based, and that no venues were formally interviewed or visited by the commission. She highlighted several common elements that were identified as critical to any improvements at the farm, as they would be expected or enhance the opportunities for public use.

- **Electricity infrastructure** – this will be required for any fire suppression systems, but also for indoor and outdoor lighting options.
- **Wi-Fi connectivity** – needed for music, presentation equipment, cell phone and general uses.
- **Handicapped accessible restroom facilities**, and a place to stage porta-potties or a restroom trailer on site.
- **Potable water and water sources** for clean-up capability
- **Sufficient preparation and cleanup space**, including surfaces for caterers and place for trash storage and removal.

- Storage capability for FFE – tables/ chairs/ benches/ trash receptacles, etc.

Sara reminded the commission that she had a list of questions for any suggested interviews of these similar venues, and Rhea asked her to circulate the list again. Sara and Tom added 2 additional venues to the list, both in the southern portion of the state. One venue, Parmalee Farm, was the beneficiary of a master plan study in which Tom participated in 2012 – 2015. This was a former turkey farm that is now owned by the Town of Killingworth and leased to the local Historical Society for their offices. Under this lease, the town takes care of exterior maintenance, and the Society is responsible for operational costs of the interior, including utilities. The Society performed the interior renovations for their use, with funding from the town and volunteer labor from the community. The facility now has an event barn and separate toilet building, both built new and allowing the venue to host weddings and other events.

Sara interviewed the operators of Parmalee Farm, who would also be very willing to speak with us as we develop our plans. They identified several building items that were either significant to the current operations or would have been good to have when they built the facility. For example, they would like to have installed floor drains in the restrooms to facilitate cleaning. There was further discussion of the venue and its amenities.

PAST has completed their portion of Phase I research, including mapping of the archeological preserve and the ground penetrating radar [GPR] study. Sara included an overlay of the area now designated as the preserve, which includes a significant section of the hill and hayfields to the north and east of the barn. In addition, GPR identified an area to the west of the house where unusual underground structures appear within the top 2' of the soil that cannot be placed to any former buildings or structures known to have been on the site. We have been asked not to disturb this area until it can be further researched. PAST will not be producing a final report, just the mapping of the preserve previously mentioned, and potentially a proposal to investigate the mystery area.

The meeting moved onto a preliminary look at the design components of a future master plan. Keeping in mind the desire to preserve the views from the house, barn and town hall, and the need to be ecologically and historically sensitive to the existing site, the following items were discussed:

- There were utility sheds previously sited at the lower end of the grass strip to the northwest of the barn which could potentially be the location of the separate toilet building.
- The interior loft space at the barn (on grade to the north and west, above grade to the east) has a gross size of 42' X 45'. Strictly calculating by SF of occupancy allowed by code, the space can accommodate 183.9 people maximum. That informs the plumbing calculations, depending on use as either restaurant or dancehall, to approximately 3-5 stalls per male and per female.
- There are significant access/ egress issues to work through, such as traveling distances to exits and multiple grades to consider, but one plan calls for rebuilding the staircase at the rear of the loft area to allow for egress onto the concrete pad on the east side.
- In future, a deck area could be constructed to the east to allow for outdoor space on grade with the loft, and covered service areas below for catering, etc.
- Tom indicated that it would be preferable to reduce the size of the gravel area at the house and barn, and potentially utilize parking at the town hall, particularly with the proposed expansion in lieu of additional onsite parking. This would require a walking path from Town Hall to the farm, which would meander across the Pistritto field. Tom cautioned against creating large parking

areas for only a few special use events, which can be accommodated offsite. Arlene suggested we take a look at expanding the lower church parking area to expand closer parking capabilities.

- Sara suggested we try to mow a path now between Town Hall and the farm to see what it would feel like – with the current rain conditions the fields are quite wet, but it would be an option once they dry out. Arlene also suggested that the consultants should see the farm on a heavy use day. The summer cross country race series every Wednesday evening in July hosts 2-300 people and they find creative places to park. Both consultants agreed to another site visit.
- Arlene reminded the team that we would like to see what small steps we can take to make sure the farm is available for greater public use in the near term. Sara agreed this is part of the final plan and that making the more modern additions to the barn usable will be easier although they are less interesting.
- When asked for his input, Jim reminded us that as code officer he cannot be part of the design plan but can only review what is submitted. However, he clarified that if any of the building is to be open for public use, a code compliant fire alarm system must be installed throughout the structure.
- Sara indicated that no work has been done on the design plan for the house, as we have not identified exactly what uses would be preferable. More to come.

The design team needs to update the timeline of the process as each phase has taken longer to complete than originally planned. The commission has agreed to confirm their programming ideas by the end of August, and Sara and Tom are now planning to work on the Phase II design tasks in September.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Harney, vice chair, BHFC