

BOARD/COMMITTEE: Steele Farm Committee

MEETING DATE: January 9th, 2025

TIME: 7:06 pm

PLACE: Boxborough Historical Society Museum, 575 Middle Road, Boxborough, MA

ATTENDEES: Christopher Hydak (Chair), Fred Waugh, Melissa MacGillvray, Catie Coyne, Joe Ferguson

Non-Board Member Attendees: David McKiernan (Select Board Liaison), John Fallon, Owen Neville

1. Approve minutes of November 14th, 2024

Fred motioned to approve minutes, Melissa seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Finance

Christopher reached out to finance committee liaison for status update for updates on farmhouse funds and revolving fund. Need to discuss further with town director of finance. Revolving fund is currently at \$4900.

3. Farm Maintenance

a. Christmas Tree Maintenance

Some vines are growing on trees, and stumps need to be removed. Probably too cold currently to address these issues; revisit in March.

b. Other

Fred and Melissa discussed continuing to remove vines and low-hanging branches in the pine grove. Fred and/or Owen may start burning some of the brush piles, will alert the full committee before doing so.

David brought up the potential of signing a long-term contract with Max Porten for haying the Steele Farm fields. It appears the town is handling this contract, since it likely will involve other Town properties in addition to Steele Farm. David wanted to make sure that someone is following through on this issue. Owen will get a draft contract prepared early next week.

4. Building Maintenance

a. Ice House Painting

Too cold to paint now, need to wait till spring. Also need DPW to pick up trash by ice house. Discussion of needing to lock the door; hasp is currently missing.

b. Steele Farm House Phase III Status

Windows have been ordered; there is an approximately 10-20 week wait time. Kitchen window is custom and has not yet been ordered. The basement window (below the kitchen) is not included. Contractor will remove trim that is causing gutters to leak and will ensure that there is no longer a gap between roof and gutters. Contractor will also replace rotten molding.

c. Other

Melissa brought up the need to improve the area on the south side of the barn (left side when facing the main doors). No consensus on the long-term plan for this area, but there is some simple clean-up of debris and brush that can be done. Revisit in early spring.

5. Old Business

a. Barn Organization

The Town has asked to store the menorah in the barn. It will be stored upstairs in the Rec Committee area.

There is some trash to be removed, which could be combined with the trash outside the Ice House for removal by the town. Fred will contact the school to see whether they want remaining theatre props; remainder will be considered trash. Melissa will call DPW to remove trash.

Discussed need for groups using the barn for events to clean up afterwards.

b. Capital Plan

Christopher put an engineering analysis of the driveway and parking area on the capital plan. Christopher also contacted the Trustees to learn how they have handled similar properties. David noted that this work has been pushed to 2027.

c. Handbook

No significant updates.

d. Camping policy

Joe is concerned about insurance and liability issues—the committee should check with the town lawyer before updating the Steele Farm camping policy.

e. Garbage cans

No update.

f. Winterfest - Jan 25th from 1-4 pm

Owen discussed pallets that have been dumped for Winterfest bonfire. They are too far up the hill and should be moved downhill near the rocks. Owen also suggested that no pallets should be added to the fire after about 3 pm. Christopher will reach out to Rec Committee to discuss.

Christopher discussed opening up barn and displaying farm items, as was done for 30th anniversary event.

6. New business

a. Schedule next Workday

As discussed earlier, Christmas tree work, clean-up of the area south of the barn, and ice house painting are all postponed until warmer weather, possibly March.

b. Steele Farm - Hidden Treasures - May

The Freedom's Way National Heritage Association (<https://freedomsway.org/about/>) is the local coordinator for the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area, which encompasses 45 communities in Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire, including Boxborough (<https://freedomsway.org/area-map/>). Each spring, typically in May, the Association organizes a "hidden treasures" event that showcases unique natural, cultural, and historical resources of the Area.

John noted that the Boxborough Historical Society has sponsored a hidden treasure every year. Past treasures have included Schoolhouse No. 2, town cemetery, and the esker; they have drawn crowds of 70-80 people. John suggested that Steele Farm be entered this year. The Historical Society is offering to handle the necessary paperwork.

Christopher motioned to make Steele Farm a 2025 Freedom's Way National Heritage Area hidden treasure, Joe seconded. Passed unanimously. Need to decide on exact dates in a month or two. Christopher proposed talking to contractor first to estimate status of farmhouse renovations in May.

- c. John discussed changes to the Action Unlimited that will impact the ability of the Steele Farm Committee to get announcements into print. For the last year and a half, the Action Unlimited has printed news for Boxborough only. However, going forward it will be shared with Maynard and Acton.
- d. Melissa discussed breaking down and removing concrete structure near the barn door entrance. She will contact DPW to see whether they can complete this task.
- e. Christopher motioned to reimburse Melissa no more than \$140 for wreaths hung on the barn doors. Fred seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Next meeting date

February 6, 2025 at the museum.

8. Adjournment

Catie motioned to adjourn, Fred seconded. Motion passed. Meeting ended 8:34 pm.