

**Town of Litchfield, NH
Heritage Commission Meeting
Fire Station - Community Room
September 17, 2026**

Date Approved: ____/____/2026

In Attendance:

Members Marion Colby, Chair; Karl Franck, Vice-Chair; Gail Barringer; Steven Calawa; Cory Flindt (alternate); and Dianne Plansky (Selectmen's Representative)

Also in

Attendance: None

Absent: None

A. Call to Order:

- a. 6:00 p.m. – Chair Marion Colby called the meeting to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
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B. Rollcall

- a. Marion Colby, Chair
b. Karl Franck, Vice-Chair
c. Gail Barringer, Member
d. Steven Calawa, Member
e. Dianne Plansky, Selectmen's Representative
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Cory Flindt entered the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

C. Approve Minutes from the July 16, 2026, Meeting:

Motion: (S. Calawa/ M. Colby) Motion to approve the July 16, 2026, meeting minutes.

Discussion: None

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried.

D. Request for Additional Items / Other Business:

- a. Add a thank you to George Lavash and Jody Fraser for the graveyard cleanup.
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E. Public Input 6:03 p.m.:

- a. No one came forward.

Closed at 6:04 p.m.

Ms. Colby invited residents to attend Heritage Commission meetings, which are held on the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 p.m.

F. Old Business:

- a. 250th Celebration Final Report:

The Commission reviewed the final activities associated with the 250th anniversary celebration.

Dr. Calawa reported on the Historical Society's activities and stated that the events were very successful and well attended. Visitors toured the Muster Field and graveyard, and the reading of the Declaration of Independence was well received. The opening ceremonies held in front of the old fire station and the new Historical Society exhibits also received positive feedback.

Ms. Colby said the Historical Society remained open on additional Saturdays through Labor Day to give residents and visitors opportunities to view the exhibits. Ms. Barringer noted that the Historical Society continues to offer visiting hours, which are posted on Facebook.

The Commission also discussed the 250th celebration at Darrah Pond. Chairman Nicola Beauregard is preparing a final report to present to the Selectmen. The event included a sound stage with live entertainment, food trucks, a beer garden, children's activities, a pie contest, and a chili cook-off. Members agreed that the event was very successful and well attended.

The Commission noted the unveiling of the Passaconaway-related artwork by Heidi Miller and Adam Tirrell. The event included discussion of Native American history, the Powwow, and efforts to obtain a historic marker recognizing Passaconaway.

The Commission noted that the next major community event will be the Fall Festival on October 3 at Darrah Pond, organized by the Spirit of Litchfield.

Ms. Barringer mentioned that the Passaconaway painting is currently displayed in the Historical Society foyer, along with a collage and informational display prepared by John Croes, featuring research on the Native American history of the area.

b. Historical Society School Field Trips:

Members discussed restoring school field trips to the Historical Society. Ms. Plansky recalled that students had previously visited the museum as part of their education concerning Litchfield's history.

Ms. Plansky reported speaking with Superintendent O'Connell about bringing students back to the Historical Society and said he was receptive to the idea. The Commission discussed sending an email to Mr. O'Connell and copying the appropriate School Administrators, including GMS Principal Dan Mitchell.

Members discussed the existing pathway that allows students to walk to the Historical Society without traveling along the roadway. Members thanked the Conservation Commission for clearing the pathway and making it accessible.

The Commission agreed to send an email to the appropriate school representatives. Members will coordinate possible dates and follow up with the school. Ms. Barringer discussed scheduling visits in the spring and noted that school permission slips would likely be required. Because students would walk to the Historical Society, transportation would not be necessary, and students would not incur any cost.

Members expressed support for restoring the program and noted the educational value of exposing students to Litchfield's history.

c. Conservation Commission Assistance:

Ms. Colby recognized the Conservation Commission's significant assistance during the 250th anniversary activities.

The Conservation Commission installed posts with QR codes in the Old Town Center. The QR-code project, developed with assistance from the Historical Society's intern, provides information about the locations and footprints of historic buildings that once stood in the area.

The Conservation Commission also cleared the Muster Field, removed bittersweet and other vegetation, and provided physical labor to help the Historical Society prepare its rooms and move exhibits. The Heritage Commission expressed appreciation for the time and effort the Conservation Commission contributed.

Members commented that the Old Town Center has improved significantly and now provides an attractive representation of the Town's historic character.

d. **Powwow – Final Report:**

Ms. Colby reviewed the final report on the Native American Powwow, held during the first weekend in August.

Although no Powwow representative was present, Commission members attended the event and reported that it was highly successful. The Native American Council was pleased with the turnout, venue, and overall response.

The event included Native American dancing, drumming, vendors, and other activities. Ms. Plansky reported that attendance exceeded 1,000 guests on Saturday, with significant attendance continuing on Sunday.

The Native American Council is considering another event next year, potentially on a different weekend, using Darrah Pond and the adjoining field.

The Commission reviewed the overall 250th anniversary programming, beginning with Redcoats and Rebels in June and concluding with the Powwow. Members agreed that the events were successful and fulfilled the vision established when the initial 250th anniversary committee was formed under the Heritage Commission. The Commission thanked everyone involved for their work.

e. **Gravestone Preservation Project:**

The Commission discussed the ongoing gravestone preservation project initiated as part of the 250th anniversary activities.

Ms. Colby mentioned that a member of the Historical Society with prior experience cleaning historic gravestones volunteered to begin work at the graveyard behind the old Presbyterian Church. She has worked on the cemetery for several months and has conducted workshops to teach others appropriate preservation techniques.

The project includes documenting the work, recording inscriptions, identifying structural cracks and breaks in older stones, updating cemetery maps, and carefully cleaning and preserving the grave markers. A poster describing the project is displayed at the Historical Society.

The long-term plan is to complete work at the cemetery behind the old Presbyterian Church and then potentially move to Pinecrest and Hillcrest cemeteries. The Commission thanked Darcy Donahue for her substantial efforts and for teaching others how to participate in the preservation work.

Dr. Calawa discussed the differences between the churchyard cemetery and the more modern cemeteries, which contain living descendants and privately owned family plots. He noted that permission from property owners may be necessary before work can be performed on some graves.

The Commission discussed working with Ms. Donahue to draft a letter to property owners and allow them to approve or decline preservation work on their family plots. Members recognized that the project would take considerable time because volunteers perform the work while balancing other responsibilities. The Commission noted that Ms. Donahue accomplished significant work before the 250th anniversary celebration and expressed its appreciation.

f. **Cemetery Grounds Maintenance:**

The Commission thanked Jody Fraser of the Cemetery Trustees and George Lavash of the Conservation Commission for their work at the graveyard behind the old Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Fraser and Mr. Lavash spent several days clearing brush, rubble, bittersweet, hedges, brambles, and other vegetation that had encroached on the cemetery. Their work improved the cemetery's appearance and revealed gravestones previously obscured by vegetation.

The Commission recognized that the work remains ongoing and expressed its appreciation for the substantial time and physical effort contributed by those involved.

Members also discussed existing apple trees in the rear portion of the cemetery and confirmed that the trees would remain while clearing work continued toward the fence.

The Commission commented favorably on the overall appearance of the Old Town Center, including the cemetery, Historical Society exhibits, muster grounds, and surrounding areas. Members noted that the combined efforts of the Heritage Commission, Historical Society, Conservation Commission, Cemetery Trustees, and volunteers have significantly improved the historic center of Town.

g. **Passaconaway Historic Marker:**

The Commission continued its discussion concerning the proposed Passaconaway historic marker.

The Commission prepared the paperwork for submission to the State; however, it must first secure an acceptable location and obtain the necessary property-owner approval.

The Commission previously identified a potential location, but the property owners subsequently withdrew their approval. The Commission also considered a second location, but those property owners declined to host the marker because of the high traffic volume in the area.

The Commission identified a third potential location on private property owned by individuals who may be willing to host the marker. The Commission agreed to send a letter to the property owners requesting a meeting to discuss potential locations on the property.

The Commission also discussed the setback requirements for a historic marker. John Croes is researching the State's requirements. Members discussed whether a marker would be subject to the same setback requirements as a structure and noted that a 25-foot setback from the centerline of Route 3A was believed to apply to certain circumstances. In contrast, structures may require a 50-foot setback. The Commission will confirm the applicable requirements before proceeding.

If the private-property location cannot accommodate the marker, the Commission discussed using Town-owned property at Moore's Falls, which falls within the Passaconaway land area. Members acknowledged that the area currently experiences significant commercial activity and may not be the ideal location. However, they indicated that a Town location would be preferable to placing the marker in another community.

The Commission emphasized its desire to keep the Passaconaway marker within Litchfield and discussed the importance of recognizing the Town's longstanding connection to Passaconaway and Native American history.

Once an acceptable location and property-owner approval are secured, John Croes can submit the application to the State for approval. Ms. Colby noted that the State supports the concept and expressed hope that the project can proceed once the location is resolved.

The Commission agreed to continue pursuing the private-property location and revisit the matter when additional information is available.

H. Other Business:
a. No other business

I. Adjournment:

Motion: (S. Calawa/ G. Barringer) Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:24 p.m.

Discussion: None

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,
Matthew Sullivan
Heritage Commission Recording Secretary