

Fairhaven Historical Commission

Minutes

July 10, 2025

Present at town hall were: Eleanor Chew, Beth Luey, Rick Martin, Michael Kelly, Michael Silva, Nate Bekemeier, Natalie Mello. Alyssa Botelho joined in on ZOOM.

Chair, Michael Kelly called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.. After taking attendance, he explained the reason for the emergency meeting adding there would be no public comment and after our discussion we would be adjourning.

1. Discussion of Recent Incidents Against Members: Mike K, explained the two recent incidents of harassment by a member of the community against members of the Historical Commission. The first took place at the Washington St. Firehouse on July 28, 2025 while performing their duties as town volunteers which caused distress to people. He felt we should send a letter to the Select Board requesting action.

The second incident occurred on July 4, 2025 at Fort Phoenix between himself and the Fairhaven Militia Commander. Mike shared that he went to the fort to open it for the celebration there and was helped by two militia members who folded the flag placing it on one of their tables for later. The commander called asking about the flag, becoming verbally abusive when Mike tried to tell him where the flag was. An argument ensued and when Mike returned to the fort the flag had been found.

Beth shared there are things we can do. We can go to court and get a Harassment Prevention Order, but we should not have to do that as this is a Select Board issue.

Mike responded by sharing other past issues with the same person. He also said the SB said could not do anything as this was a one-off situation with this individual. Mike shared other issues in the past. People get hurt when nothing is done in situations like this as this is a dangerous situation and needs to be addressed.

Beth said there was nothing we could do as we don't know the cause or reason for this, and we should focus on the behaviors.

Eleanor said that as a new member this saddened her and she hoped the SB would take this seriously as we need protection as do others coming onto other boards need to know they are protected. She suggested we needed to write a stern letter to the SB with an expectation of response.

Mike said he had sent a personal letter to the SB, but not one from the commission. He read the letter from the Lt. Commander of the Fairhaven Village Militia regarding the July 4th incident with Nate thanking him for his response.

Natalie said the SB had not met since they received Mike's letter, but that George was looking into it and was providing individual SB members with information. She suggested that for now we call the police if we feel threatened and that we turn on our phones to document the interaction.

Beth suggested that a group using town facilities must sign an agreement with the SB and could they add a part about proper behavior of members and that there could be negative consequences if negative behaviors occur. Mike said he felt that this individual should be banned from properties we manage. He said the SB was concerned about violation someone's civil rights but what about our civil rights?

Mike said the buildings are owned by the town, that we manage them and people are guests on town property. Natalie asked if a person or the group should be banned with the response that it depended on the situation and the response from the group afterwards. Nate clarified that the person in both situations was a town resident, the first incident was not from someone outside of town. Rick said the individual needs to man up and accept responsibility for his actions.

Nate replied that it was sad that we needed to spend so much time on this. Mike said decent people need to say enough is enough. Beth said that when free speech becomes a behavior it is no longer free speech, with Mike replying that free speech does not mean there are no consequences. He asked Natalie if meeting with the SB would help and she said it couldn't hurt. Eleanor asked what our goal was and what our specific ask would be to the SB.

A motion was made that the chair be empowered to write a letter to the Select Board expressing our concern and outlining concerns for our request and adding a request they consider asking those who use town property to sign a Code of Conduct. Eleanor amended the motion that we request a meeting with them. The amendment was accepted and the motion passed. (B. Luey/ N. Bekemeier). Mike said he would send the letter to us with Eleanor suggesting the letter go out through Alyssa with responses to her to avoid chain deliberation. Mike said it was refreshing to have you on the board, Eleanor as you know Robert's Rules of Order and procedures and I am still learning. Alyssa said she was here to support us.

2. Discussion of Applicants for the Open Position:

Mike shared the three names of people interested in joining the Historical Commission saying Pat Carr, Alex Kuechler and Ben Hevey had applied to the SB. Mike said people know Pat from his other board work. Alex is a member of the Protecting Society and has helped at the fire house. He would be a great addition. Ben Hevey is a History Teacher at the high school, and it would be a great way to get the youth involved as well as the schools. Mike S. said a history teacher would be well suited for the position. He also said Pat has a love for town history.

Motion made to recommend to the Select Board that we prefer Ben Hevey and that Mike K. share this with the Select Board. Motion passed (E. Chew/ B. Luey)

Motion made to adjourn. Motion passed. (B. Luey/ N. Bekemeier)

Respectfully submitted.

Eleanor Chew, Clerk

Good Afternoon Mrs. Mello,

My name is Matthew McDonald. I am the Lieutenant Commander and Sergeant at Arms of the Fairhaven Village Militia. I'd like to formally apologize for the actions that were taken by another group member. The actions taken were totally unprofessional and inappropriate for how we would like our group to be perceived as an integral part of preserving the town's history and integrity. We do not want one person's actions to define the group.

I would like to take it upon myself to build a better relationship with the Historical Commission and the Fairhaven Village Militia. I have many great ideas for historical events that can take place at Fort Phoenix next year and years to come to celebrate our nation's 250th birthday. I am in talks with Ms. Botelho on working together to put these events on in the future. These events would be great for both our group and the town of Fairhaven. I have been a standing member of the Fairhaven Village Militia for thirteen years and I have seen and understand what the group means to our town and how it helps educate the general public.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet and discuss how we can work together moving forward. Again, I am deeply sorry for the actions that took place on July 4th. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this matter.

Best Regards,

Matthew McDonald