

Town of Natick

Town Seal Review Committee

Approved meeting minutes for January 18, 2023, 8:15 PM

via Zoom

Members present: Mia Kheyfetz, Chair; Lincoln Annibali, Vice Chair; Simone Poliandri; Niki Lefebvre; Josh Ostroff, Clerk. Associate Members present: Saul Beaumont; Virginia Mayo. Also present: Sebastian Ebarb, Frank Foss; Patti Sciarra; Jay Poropatich

Mia called the meeting to order at 8:16, noting that a quorum was present and further noting the requirements for virtual meetings as provided under MGL as amended by the emergency regulations in effect, followed by a roll call.

Public comment

None

Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes for November 7, November 10, December 13 and December 20 were approved on a motion by Simone, seconded by Todd and unanimously voted by roll call.

Second round designs

Sebastian shared a presentation (incorporated for reference). To the first design, the response that it spoke more to Broadmoor than to Natick. He showed an updated, digitized version. For the second design, it has been updated to include the date and a circle to frame it. For the third design, it has been streamlined, the type standardized, with a version including the incorporation date. Finally, the last design of the gazebo includes “flow lines” and has been made more modern and formal.

Lincoln was pleased to see the designs. He thinks the most viable is the third, of the bridge; it has the elements we are seeking with flowing water and movement and change; the historic symbolism and the significance of the water to Indigenous history. The stars are another symbolic element. He is still a little caught on the font of the third design.

Simone echoed Lincoln’s thanks. He likes the improvements in the first the most, primarily with the dates including for its graphic qualities. He likes it equally with the leaf design. The bridge and gazebo designs do not include Native elements. Simone offered further detailed comments on all four designs.

Todd thanked Sebastian. He would have a hard time choosing between the bird and the leaves. The bird design is timeless. He does not have a strong feeling about the dates. He continues to love the leaves. This design lends itself well to color. He prefers it with the circle, although in practice that may not matter as an embossed seal. The bridge design is appealing as a design, but as an image of a man-made object it may be less suitable. He recognizes it as a long-time resident, but it may not connote Natick to others. He does not also favor the gazebo as a man-made structure.

Saul thanked Sebastian. He is looking for something that speaks to Natick. The first two could be anywhere. He had a question about the perspective of the riverbank in the bridge design. The gazebo does not remind him of Natick. He does not like the dark sky in the bridge, but that design is his preference.

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Niki is very excited about these images. For the bridge design, because there has been a ridge there since the 1650s that helps establish an image of Natick as a settled and connected community. She wants to look more into the southern bank since that is part of the earthen dam. The first design was not a favorite, but it is stunning. Loves the leaves the variety of interpretation that they support.

Virginia likes all of the designs, but the bird design is not evocative of Natick. An Oak would be more significant alone. The bridge is the closest to a landmark in Natick. She is critical of the position of the name of Natick and wants the dates to be noted as the founding dates and the incorporation date. The gazebo does not represent our early history. She would like to see John Eliot be on the seal, and the Oak Tree.

Josh...

Mia questioned if it was a bluebird, or if it could be a hawk? She was not clear if the landscape was water or hills. She feels strongly that we should lose the 1651 because the design was timeless. The leaves – she still really likes them for the qualities and the way we can talk about it. Simple, clean. She really likes the bridge and wants to understand what Indigenous people may have made. Some clarity is needed about its relationship to the dam. She still does not like the gazebo.

Todd added that one of the things he likes about the first design is the hills, and noted the generally understood association between Natick and hills. Niki commented that the place of hills theory has been debunked.

Sebastian responded. The optical alignment of the leaves is still something he wants to work on. The gazebo is intended to look a little like a lighthouse and represents a center and a gathering place. To the comments that one or more does not represent Natick: almost any seal, stripped of his language, could represent any place.

To comments about Native erasure, he notes that the bridge has been there for a long time; the existence of Natick as a town is seen by some as Native erasure. It is not a place where many natives live at all. The water is a timeless and energetic element. It was not practical to show trees in the background. The stars are everlasting and speak to timelessness. The embankment may change, and there is some artistic license. There will always be an embankment no matter what changes. We should think about how much we want it to change. The bird is intentionally amorphous.

Virginia spoke to her desire to incorporate an oak tree, and to include trees on the bridge design.

After further discussion, Niki moved to advance the bird, leaves and bridge images, seconded by Josh and unanimously voted by roll call. Saul and Virginia were also in support.

Niki referred to the survey and questioned whether people had support for 1781 or 1651. Lincoln noted that 370 respondents favored the incorporation date, and 270 favored the mission date. To another question, more people voted to remove 1781 than to remove 1651.

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Sebastian asked about dates. Lincoln suggested we advance the bird image with both dates, and the leaves and bridge with dates. Josh suggested replacing 1651 with "Inc." and that the leaves and bridge with 1781 were OK.

Sebastian added that issues about dates, typeface etc. could be resolved after we settled on a design. That was generally accepted by the committee.

Lincoln made a case for including 1651. There was further discussion. Niki moved to advance the version of the bird with both dates, the leaves without the circle, and the bridge with the date for purposes of the public forum. Todd seconded and the motion was unanimously voted by roll call.

Sebastian then shared some versions with color as representative.



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Sebastian noted that there will be minor changes; he will send files to Mia that can be used to promote the forum. Niki stated that we need to provide some context so that participants have that. We will likely record a Zoom with Mia and Sebastian.

We agreed to have the open house on February 5 at the library, and February 12 as a backup at Kennedy.

In response to a question from Simone, Mia outlined how we would use the time after the forum to refine the design and develop our report and recommendation to Town Meeting.

Town Logo

Mia noted that she had met with Josh, Jay and Jamie and the town logo was on hold. There was discussion about follow up with people we have invited in the past, and the consensus was to invite them to view the web site and forum.

There was discussion about the logistics of promoting the forum. We agreed to meet on Tuesday 1/24 at 8:15.

On a motion by Mia, seconded by Niki the meeting was adjourned by unanimous roll call vote at 10:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Joshua Ostroff, Clerk