

[D R A F T]

OYSTER RIVER MASSACRE MARKER – Roundtable Discussion

Thursday, March 21, 2024

DURHAM TOWN HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS

4:00 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS PRESENT:

Larry Brickner-Wood (Chair of the HDC/HC – serving as meeting chair)
Charlotte Bacon (Montgomery Will) – Facilitator
Barbara Will (Montgomery Will) – Facilitator

Durham Historic District/Heritage Commission (HDC/HC):

Jennifer Becker
Carolyn Singer

Durham Human Rights Commission:

Richard Belshaw
Janet Perkins-Howland

Durham Historic Association:

Steve Eames
Janet Mackie

New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR):

Amy Dixon, Community Preservation Coordinator
Nadine Miller, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT):

Sheila Charles, Cultural Resources Program Specialist/ Archeologist

New Hampshire Commission on Native American Affairs:

Anne Jennison, Chair (Attending remotely on zoom)

**Indigenous New Hampshire Collaborative Collective and Cowasuck Band of the
Pennacook Abenaki People:**

Denise Pouliot, Head Female Speaker of the Penacook Abenaki People

ALSO PRESENT: Durham Town Planner Michael Behrendt

1 **ABSENT:** Jill Edelman (NHDOT, Cultural Resources Manager)

2
3

4 **I. Welcome**

5 Chair Larry Brickner-Wood opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m. and welcomed
6 participants.

7

8 **II. Recap of Meeting Two**

9 Barbara Will expressed thanks to all for listening and engaging in the process. She
10 noted historic accountability isn't easy and commended the group for spending six
11 hours addressing 14 lines of text, weighing every word.

12

13 She said, "You're modeling how to do this kind of 'careful excavation of history,'
14 which is also courageous because not everyone in the room agrees. You're showing
15 that history matters and is at the core of a strong community."

16

17 Charlotte Bacon gave a brief recap of what was discussed at the first two meetings.
18 She emphasized the group is serving in an advisory role to the state.

19

20 Today, they will consider four new versions of the text. The goal is to decide what
21 they like about each version and see if they can be combined into a single marker.
22 Ms. Bacon said they don't need to get every detail right, but to give the NH DOT the
23 best possible version to work with.

24

25 She asked participants, "How do you want your community to be reflected in the
26 text and tone of the marker?"

27

28

29 **III. Discussion of Template – Appropriate Drafts of Plaque**

30 Ms. Bacon invited those who had submitted draft texts to each read their own
31 version to the group. She will take notes on-screen about what participants
32 like/don't like about each draft.

33

34 **[NOTE: Draft texts are available on the town website at Historic District
35 Commission/Heritage Commission/ Current Projects Before the HDC/Oyster
36 River Massacre Marker.]**

37

38 **Richard Belshaw (Durham Human Rights Commission)** read his draft, prefacing
39 it by saying some of the information is in brackets because he's not sure of word
40 choice and/or dates.

41 **Comments on Mr. Belshaw's draft:**

42 **Jennifer Becker** said she likes that it incorporates many points from earlier
43 versions and thinks it's very cohesive.

44
45 **Janet Perkins-Howland remarked,** "I love how it tells a story."

46
47 **Denise Pouliot** supports the idea of naming Indigenous people specifically.
48 The New Hampshire Commission on Native American Affairs debated
49 including tribal names in their draft but left them out because of space
50 considerations. She would like to see them included.

51
52 Consensus was reached that it's important to include specific Indigenous tribal
53 names on the marker.

54
55
56 **Steve Eames then read the version that he and Janet Mackie drafted.**
57 He believes the title, "Oyster River is Layd Waste" is attention-grabbing; and has
58 power because it's taken from original documents.

59
60 **Comments on Mr. Eames and Ms. Mackie's Draft:**

61 Ms. Will raised the question about the specificity of number of people killed
62 and captured; buildings burned, etc. that appears in Mr. Belshaw's draft but is
63 not present in this one. Is it important? Ms. Mackie said historical records are
64 not exact and it's uncertain how many people died.

65
66 **Mr. Belshaw** said using round numbers in the absence of accurate numbers
67 is a flaw that can easily be corrected. He questioned the use of the chiefs'
68 names Bomazeen and Madockawando. Is it crucial to have their names
69 included?

70
71 **Steve Eames** said both chiefs are searchable on the internet and **Janet**
72 **Mackie** added that Madockawando was on par with Passaconaway, in her
73 opinion.

74
75 **Anne Jennison** agreed it's important to include their names as a matter of
76 education. She said both Bomazeen and Madockawando were signers on
77 several major peace treaties.

78
79 **Jennifer Becker** added that with limited space, leaving a "tangible
80 breadcrumb for people to research further" is important.

81
82 Agreement was reached to include the names of the Wabanaki chiefs.

83 Ms. Will then asked if the person who sent the dispatch should be named and the
84 consensus was that person's name isn't critical. The point is the village
85 communicated with the government in Boston.

86

87 Carolyn Singer was then invited to read her draft for the plaque.

88

89 **Comments on Ms. Singer's Draft:**

90 Mr. Eames said his only issue is it's trying to do too much in a small sign.
91 It's either about this raid and its consequences or it's about injustices done
92 to all Indigenous people. It's too much for one sign without detracting from
93 the story.

94

95 **Richard Belshaw** agreed and said the last sentence doesn't connect as well
96 with the rest of it.

97

98 Ms. Will asked about the word choice: "stronghold vs. settlement?"

99 **Ms. Mackie** said Oyster River wasn't a stronghold because they weren't
100 prepared for being attacked. Three garrisons were abandoned because they
101 had no gun powder.

102

103 There was group wordsmithing over the use of the word, "town" or
104 "village" and how to phrase the numbers affected by the attack.

105

106 **Ms. Mackie** said it's critically important to mention the peace treaty, since
107 in her view that was the only reason for the attack. She pointed out the
108 Wabanaki had no grievance against the inhabitants of Oyster River. Their
109 sole purpose was to break the treaty.

110

111 Janet Perkins-Howland was then invited to read her version. She added a
112 timeline for the back side of the marker, which she said needs editing. Her "side
113 one" version includes the line, "Truth and reconciliation are ongoing."

114

115 **Comments on Ms. Perkins-Howland Draft:**

116 Several participants expressed enthusiasm for a timeline. **Jennifer Becker**
117 said it's a good way to include a lot more information and give it context. It
118 mirrors where Americans are going with their consumption of information:
119 shorter bullets instead of bigger blocks of text. She thinks it will age well.

120

121 **Steve Eames** pointed out a couple of factual issues with the timeline. He
122 emphasized there were two wars going on, which is one of the reasons the
123 attack happened. The second Anglo-Abenaki War began in 1688 and

124 continued to 1699. The proposed timeline shows the dates of King
125 Williams War.

126

127 Ms. Bacon said the timeline is anchored in the fact that Abenaki were on this land
128 12,800 years ago and finishes with Durham being the first NH community to
129 recognize Indigenous Peoples Day. Her one concern with ending the timeline with
130 Indigenous People’s Day is that it might imply the town is finished with its work.

131

132 **Mr. Eames** suggested moving “Truth and Reconciliation is ongoing” to the timeline
133 instead of the narrative and there was general agreement over the idea.

134

135 **Ms. Mackie** reiterated that the Peace Treaty needs to be added to the timeline.
136 Discussion continued over the wording on the timeline and then Mr. Eames said he
137 had prepared a different version of the timeline that might help clarify some of the
138 issues. He distributed copies to the group.

139

140 He pointed out the Treaty of 1693 brought a pause/peace to the Anglo-Abenaki
141 War, but it didn’t bring peace to the French-English War and that’s why the French
142 did what they did.

143

144 There was discussion about the line – “**1732 - Town of Durham incorporated**” (on
145 Janet-Perkins-Howland draft timeline). Should it be included? What’s the relevance
146 to the raid? After brief discussion, it was decided to leave it in.

147

148 Getting back to the topic of how to include the two wars and the breaking of the
149 treaty, Ms. Bacon asked what critical factor emerged from the wars that led to
150 settlers being killed? Mr. Eames replied the timeline isn’t designed to stand alone.
151 It’s meant to work with the narrative on the other side – which he believes addresses
152 those questions.

153

154 Ms. Will said in the interest of time, the specific wording on the timeline can’t be
155 finalized today. She strongly encouraged the state to take into account the notes
156 from this roundtable discussion.

157

158 **Ms. Pouliot** commented that it’s inaccurate to say the Wabanaki “broke the
159 treaty.” She said the attack was in response to Europeans continuing with land
160 encroachment after they’d signed the treaty. “We didn’t actually break the treaty;
161 this raid was in response to the treaty being broken.”

162

163 **Ms. Mackie** asked for proof of this and **Ms. Pouliot** said evidence for the stealing
164 of land is in the English records.

165 **Mr. Eames** added that Madockawando wanted to keep the peace but the French
166 used taxes and the consensus system to break him down. They did not want the
167 Wabanaki to be at peace. He said there's little proof the Wabanaki knew what the
168 word "treaty" meant, in terms of how we think of it as a legal document today.

169
170 He noted the French gave the Wabanaki gunpowder and muskets, while the English
171 only offered to teach them how to read. The French were successful at getting the
172 Wabanaki to "break the treaty" because they understood the consensus system better
173 than the English.

174
175 With ten minutes remaining for this part of the discussion, Ms. Will asked if anyone
176 wanted to support one of the four versions presented today.

177
178 General consensus was expressed for the draft from Steve Eames and Janet Mackie,
179 titled: "Oyster River is Laid Waste." There was consensus to include a timeline on
180 the other side of the marker to give it context, using Janet Perkins-Howland
181 modified draft as a starting point.

182
183 There was discussion over the use of the word "encroachment," but it was decided it
184 could be used as an educational opportunity.

185
186 **Ms. Pouliot** again said she has issue with the wording, "the French had convinced
187 them to break the 1693 treaty," proposed on the timeline.

188
189 **Ms. Singer** said historian and author Colin Calloway talks a lot about the concept of
190 treaties and questions whether there was understanding of treaties [among the
191 Wabanaki].

192
193 **Ms. Mackie** added the French thought it was a legitimate treaty and Ms. Bacon said
194 if the concern is noted, it will be helpful to the state.

195
196 **Mr. Belshaw** said through the Human Rights Commission lens, this has been a
197 positive experience. He believes the state has good fodder to work with.

198

199 **IV. Discussion of Placement of Plaque – Pros and Cons**

200

201 Ms. Will asked about where the old plaque was and why that location had been
202 chosen. Participants offered that it's a visible spot in town. It was clarified the raid
203 didn't take place on that spot, but rather up and down the Oyster River all the way to
204 Little Bay.

205 When asked how locations are generally chosen, **Sheila Charles** replied there are
206 many different reasons for choosing a location. In this case, she thinks near the
207 Oyster River makes sense. It has to be in a state right-of-way.

208
209 Ms. Will asked why this type of sign would be placed in a “gateway to the town.” Is
210 that what people want others to see coming into town?

211
212 Town Administrator **Todd Selig** came forward to address the question about the
213 location for the marker. He believes it was originally in a different location but isn’t
214 sure why it was moved. He thinks there are a lot of good reasons for it to be in that
215 spot:

- 216
- 217 • It’s near a major highway, which ensures more people see it.
 - 218 • It’s also near a sidewalk that leads to downtown.
 - 219 • That location really was the original heart and center of Durham.
 - 220 • This event occurred up and down the river, so one location isn’t better than
 - 221 another.

222
223 He added the proposed location isn’t the first marker you see coming into Durham,
224 there are welcome markers at different spots from all directions.

225
226 **Janet Perkins-Howland** said she’s hoping this marker will be in conjunction with
227 several other things the town can do in that area. She talked about a garrison home
228 and a trail and said, “the possibilities are endless.”

229
230 **Carolyn Singer** asked if the town could have the opportunity to review the final text
231 before the state sends it to the foundry.

232
233 **Denise Pouliot** offered a broader view for the timeline. She envisions a more
234 comprehensive town history on the huge fence running along the river. Everything
235 should be taken into consideration for the site, including what will be done as part of
236 the 106 mitigation for removal of the dam.

237
238 **Amy Dixon** said the consulting parties will meet next week about the 106 mitigation
239 and discuss a broader plan for the site. There’s no set idea for what those signs could
240 be.

241 242 **V. Possible Next Steps for Town in Light of This Process**

243
244 Ms. Bacon invited participants to share some suggestions for how Durham can move
245 forward beyond the marker. What are ideas for activities and experiences people
246 could share?

247 **Janet Perkins-Howland** asked if she could share some ideas she developed. In
248 terms of “truth and reconciliation,” she proposed the town of Durham set aside one-
249 half of one percent of its operating budget (an estimated \$75K) toward “truth and
250 reconciliation.” How it should be spent is a separate conversation among many
251 groups, including the Historic District Commission, Land Stewardship Committee,
252 the Conservation Commission, Human Rights Commission and others.

253
254 She proposed focus groups to discuss historic walking tours, Indigenous People’s
255 Day, exhibits, etc. and asked, “How do we continue to educate visitors and residents
256 about the history?” She would like to see businesses involved and proposed a
257 program called “Pints of History” at Tideline [Public House].

258
259 Ms. Bacon noted Janet’s bold proposal to have the town fund the programs, but
260 added there may be grant monies available for many of the activities she suggested.

261
262 **Jennifer Becker** proposed the town create a website with digitized historic
263 resources, to make it more accessible. Ms. Bacon said NEH grants and Library of
264 Congress grants exist for that purpose.

265
266 Ms. Will asked if there should be an annual event that commemorates the Oyster
267 River Raid.

268
269 **Janet Mackie** said the Durham Historic Association is considering having a
270 program about Madockawando and other Indigenous people, not only those
271 involved in the massacre.

272
273 **Ms. Becker** suggested audio recordings, modeled on what the WPA did with
274 formerly enslaved people, as something to consider.

275
276 **Steve Eames** asked state participants what the process is for the sign going forward.
277 **Mr. Behrendt** stepped in and said he would like to propose everyone on the
278 roundtable from Durham have a few more meetings. He thinks they could come up
279 with language that is more finalized before sending it to the state.

280
281 Ms. Bacon said it would be respectful for the state to send the text to the group
282 before it goes to the foundry. She’s more interested in the next step beyond the sign
283 and encouraged residents to debate about their vision for the town.

284
285 **Mr. Belshaw** said in all of this he has seen great value in speaking up, being open
286 and listening. He sees Durham as a welcoming place where people can speak to each
287 other.

288 **Carolyn Singer** directed a comment to town leaders. She said the Wagon Hill farm
289 site incorporates all of the town's history, including indigenous settlement. A new
290 barn there hasn't yet been finalized for programming. Right now it's sitting vacant
291 and being used by Public Works, but she would like to see it become operational for
292 programming.

293

294 Ms. Will commented on the opportunity for the town to incorporate its broader
295 history, apart from the terrible event of the massacre, at a site like Wagon Hill. Re-
296 thinking the town's history around a site (like Wagon Hill) makes sense.

297

298 **Ms. Singer** added the opportunity also exists at Wagon Hill for a changing exhibit
299 gallery space.

300

301 **Larry Brickner-Wood** asked Sheila, Nadine and Amy (from the state) if they have
302 enough information from today's notes to move forward and **Amy Dixon** replied
303 that she believes they do. They'll send draft text for final review by the group.

304

305 **Sheila Charles** responded further to Steve Eames' earlier question about the process
306 going forward to have a new sign installed. She said after meeting with the traffic
307 department this week, they learned there's no definitive budget for state plaques.
308 Timing is dependent on maintenance of existing signs.

309

310 A priority list will be set-up (statewide) which tells them which signs are in poor
311 condition and unsafe. Durham's new sign will be put in the database. There's no
312 promise it will be three months from now.

313

314 She then offered a few general tips for any signs going forward, based on
315 observations around the state:

- 316 • Include more mention of women and different ethnicities.
- 317 • Include black history, since Durham has a story to tell.
- 318 • Think about branding signs so they are recognizable as being part of this specific
319 community.

320

321 **Janet Mackie** said the DHR website showed in 2021 the cost for one of these signs
322 was \$2,500. She asked DHR about the current price.

323

324 **Amy Dixon** said she doesn't have an exact price but thinks it's still in that ballpark.
325 Ms. Mackie said her understanding is the state can pay for the sign or the community
326 can find a sponsor to cover costs and this was confirmed.

327 Wrapping up the roundtable discussions, Ms. Bacon thanked everyone for the time
328 together, on behalf of herself and Ms. Will. She thanked Larry Brickner-Wood and
329 Michael Behrendt for inviting them to facilitate the conversations. She also thanked
330 Todd Selig for supporting the process and expressed huge thanks to the state for their
331 willingness to consult with the community.

332 She thanked all participants who came together to find a way to move forward. She
333 said it's important to get the words right. She said "thank you" in English, Wabanaki
334 and French. Since the town seems committed to ongoing truth and reconciliation, she
335 and Ms. Will are confident Durham has a vision to move forward.

336
337

338 **VII. Adjournment**

339 With no further discussion, Chair Larry Brickner-Wood adjourned the meeting at
340 5:54 p.m.

341

342 Respectfully submitted,
343 Lucie Bryar, Minute Taker
344 Durham Heritage Commission

345

346 *Note: These written minutes are intended as a general summary of the meeting. For*
347 *more complete information, please refer to the DCAT22 On Demand videotape of the*
348 *entire proceedings on the town of Durham website.*