



January 4, 2017

BY HAND DELIVERY

Hingham Zoning Board of Appeals
210 Central Street
Hingham, MA 02043

Re: 230 Beal Street, Hingham, MA

Dear Chairman and Members:

Broadstone Bare Cove Alliance, LLC, the project proponent at 230 Beal Street, Hingham, has asked that PAL submit a written response to questions raised by the public during the public hearing process before your board. Alliance has assembled the questions posed and PAL has responded to them in summary format below in bold typeface.

Were all records from the Hingham Historical Commission provided to PAL?

Yes. Andrea Young of the Hingham Historical Commission (HHC) provided all relevant information directly to PAL. PAL Senior Archaeologist/Principal Investigator Holly Herbster initiated contact with Ms. Young at the HHC as one of the earliest components of the background research collection to solicit any available information about the Town Poor Farm/Alms House and/or previous land use with the Hingham Residential Development project area. Holly Herbster and Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Deputy Historic Preservation Officer David Weeden met with Ms. Young at the HHC office on July 19, 2016. The meeting had been pre-arranged and Ms. Young had pulled out the relevant information in the HHC files pertaining to the Poor Farm and to the general project area. Holly Herbster had several follow-up phone calls and emails with Ms. Young after the meeting.

Did PAL take all of the information provided by the Hingham Historical Commission into consideration when completing the report?

Yes. PAL reviewed all information collected from numerous sources (including MHC site files, HHC files, published and unpublished town histories, Hingham Library local research files) as part of the research review. All reviewed sources were cited in the PAL technical report and all information was presented in the report text, along with explanatory text as to its accuracy and its relevance/relationship to the specific Hingham Residential Development project area.

The report speaks to a Bare Cove Park Committee member identifying a Native American grave. Was the grave located on this particular parcel or elsewhere?

The report references observations made by Hingham resident John Richardson that are attached to the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Archaeological Site Form for the Bare Cove Esker Site (MHC site number 19-PL-514). The site form contains copies of hand-written notes (dated 1977) and a typed chronology (dated 1987), both signed by John Richardson, about his personal knowledge and observations of Native American archaeological deposits and human remains in the project vicinity. Based on a sketch map included with the MHC site form and locational references to the originally proposed location for the Hingham Mutual Fire Insurance building, PAL determined that the reported remains were identified west of and outside the boundaries of the Hingham Residential Development parcel.

Did PAL locate any evidence that an Alms House burial ground or gravesite is/was located within the Hingham Residential Development project area?

No. PAL did not identify any documentary, cartographic, or anecdotal reference to the location(s) of a burial ground or graves associated with the Alms House. During the meeting with Ms. Young, this specific question was raised and she stated that while volunteers have identified the names of individuals who died at the Alms House, there has to date been no indication of where these individuals are buried.

PAL's background research confirmed the location of the Hingham Poor Farm complex to the east of the Hingham Residential Development project area, within an area that has been developed as a modern townhouse complex. Although the full extent of the Poor Farm property and its associated features is not known, the main building and several documented outbuildings appear on historic and modern maps outside the Hingham Residential Development project area.

Is there any evidence indicating the presence of a gravesite is on the 230 Beal Street parcel?

No. PAL did not identify any primary, secondary, or informant interview research OR archaeological evidence to suggest that the 230 Beal Street property was used as a cemetery or burial ground.

The one reference to human remains on the property comes from a 2013 Patriot Ledger article on file at the HHC that includes the following quote by a former Navy worker: "...the funniest incident at the depot took place in the 1950s. The Navy told two workers to clean out an old vault in the side of a hill and use it as an office. Much to their macabre surprise, they found a dead body in it. Apparently, the vault was once part of the Hingham Poor Farm Cemetery" (photocopy of article on file at HHC). PAL has uncovered no additional documentation to back up this claim.

Did PAL use ground-penetrating radar in an attempt to locate any gravesite, and if not, why?

The use of ground-penetrating radar is not an accepted method of general archeological investigation by the State Archaeologist at the Massachusetts Historic Commission and archaeological excavation is required to verify any preliminary results. Ground-penetrating radar is not considered to be a definitive method of investigation to identify archaeological sites in New England due to the rocky nature of glacial soils in the region, and in the opinion of PAL would be an unreliable investigative tool at the Hingham Residential Development project area given the specific soils and documented history of construction and demolition.

Is the stone structure a crypt, and will it be impacted by the project?

PAL did not identify any direct historical or cartographic references to the structure on the hillside as a crypt or burial vault. All references to the structure as a “crypt” or “vault” are from the modern period (mid-to-late twentieth century). None of the historical references to the Town Farm/Alms House reviewed by PAL describe a burial ground or burial area.

The structure’s size, shape, construction materials, and position banked into a hillside are consistent with burial vaults within designated cemeteries or burial grounds, however the area surrounding the structure contains no other surficial evidence that it was used as a burial ground, and the steep topography and rocky surface suggest that this area was not used as a burial ground.

The structure is not located within the Hingham Residential Development project impact area and will not be impacted by the proposed development.

If a body is found during construction, what is the procedure?

If any human remains or suspected human remains are exposed during construction, the proponent and their contractors would be responsible for reporting the discovery under the Massachusetts Unmarked Burial Law, which applies state-wide to any accidental discovery of human remains. The Massachusetts Historical Commission has a public hand-out entitled “What to Do When Human Burials Are Accidentally Uncovered” which has been provided to the proponent. The Unmarked Burial sets out a protocol for notifications that begins with the police, who determine that the discovery is not a crime scene and that the remains are more than 100 years old, at which point the State Archaeologist investigates to determine the age and cultural affiliation of the remains. Thank you for accepting this response into the record. I am available to answer any additional questions that the board may pose in writing or at a hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Holly Herbster".

Holly Herbster
Senior Archaeologist/Principal Investigator