



**GARDINER CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**



Meeting Date	10/09/2019	Department	Other
Agenda Item	4.3 Palmer Fountain Restoration Preliminary Plan		
Est. Cost	n/a		

Background Information

Recently there has been a committee of interested persons working towards the restoration of the Palmer Fountain/Lady and the Birds at the Common. This committee has recruited several companies and individuals (plumbing, fountain design, local businesses, trusts, etc.) to work together towards the restoration of this fountain. It is estimated that the initial cost will be approximately \$40k with some of that being in-kind donations.

Robert Abbey will be present to update the City Council on the progress and to also ask for the council's support of placing the Common (Brunswick Square) area on the Historic Register District for the State of Maine. This placement does not require a vote of the city council, however, it is recognized that the councils support of such a registration, will provide an opportunity for more funding sources.

Requested Action	'I move to support the City Manager in preparing a submission letter to the State of Maine Historic District asking for placement on this register.'
City Manager and/or Finance Review	The City Manager recommends the above action.
Council Vote/ Action Taken	
Departmental Follow-Up	

City Clerk Use Only	1 st Reading _____	Advertised _____	EFFECTIVE DATE _____
	2 nd Reading _____	Advertised _____ w/in 15 Days	
	Final to Dept _____	Updated Book _____	Online _____

Hi Sue,

The Maine Community Foundation (MCF) manages one program, the Belvedere Fund, that is earmarked for the restoration of historic properties. MCF awards grants once a year, but this year's application deadline has passed. The Davis Family Foundation also supports historic preservation projects, as does the Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust. In addition to these sources, there may be others that have a particular interest in the preservation of outdoor art/sculpture. The Maine Arts Commission may know if such grant opportunities exist, and you could also conduct a search through the Maine Philanthropy Center.

Eligible properties for the Belvedere Fund must be listed in or be determined eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. I do not know if the other two granting entities have similar requirements. Listing in the National Register is a prerequisite for any development awards that the Maine Historic Preservation Commission makes. If the Common were to be listed in the National Register, and if the fountain were considered to be a contributing historic resource to its significance, the City of Gardiner could apply for funds from our office through the Certified Local Governments program. The City is one of only eleven communities in the state that can participate in this program because its historic preservation program (largely embedded in the provisions of its preservation ordinance) has been certified by the National Park Service.

As you may recall, the City's comprehensive plan at one time recommended the creation of a second historic district in the neighborhood surrounding the Common. I do not know if that would be feasible at this time, but you could also ask us to determine if the Common is individually eligible for listing in the National Register. If you wish to pursue this option, please contact Michael Goebel-Bain of our staff at Michael.W.Goebel-Bain@maine.gov.

Good luck, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Kirk

Kirk F. Mohny

Director

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

Sue,

We have several files filled with information on the common or Brunswick Square in Gardiner. The Square has been determined eligible as a contributing site in a potential historic district. The Square is also individually eligible for listing in the National Register, and from our telephone conversation, I understand individual listing is the course the city would like to pursue.

The Square has a long history which involves many changes over time. A tentative period of significance for the Square is from 1824 to 1969. Changes made within that period can be historic in their own right. Changes made since then, within the last 50 years, make features of the Square non-contributing to its overall historic significance. The playground on the east side is one example. The 1894 Palmer Fountain would also be considered a non-contributing object within the eligible Square. Because the original Neptune statue was removed during W.W. II, the historic integrity of the fountain has been lost. The 1979 *Lady with Birds* sculpture is a major component of the overall fountain. Because this sculpture is less than 50 years old it would need to be of exceptional significance to contribute to the Square on its own or as part of the overall fountain.

The period of significance for the Square extends to 1969 for a variety of reasons. It does not extend further because to do so would require exceptional significance. The square itself and more recent changes do not rise to that level. We can review nominations and eligibility at a later date however and adjust the period of significance. When this sculpture reaches 50 years of age, it may be eligible in its own right for significance in the area of Art. The fountain as a whole at that point might also be considered a contributing object to the Square if the period of significance of the square is determined to extend to 1979 or after. The status of the *Lady with Birds* sculpture and the Palmer Fountain should be reconsidered in 2029. Until that time, the fountain (granite base and sculpture together) is considered a non-contributing object of the National Register Eligible Brunswick Square site and as a result could not use CLG grant money for work.

Availability of grant funds for the fountain was mentioned as one factor making listing of interest to the city, so I want to be clear about that. I would be happy to discuss this further and move a nomination for the Square forward with the knowledge that it could be revised in 2029 with the possibility that the fountain would likely become a contributing object to the district upon revision of the Square nomination at that date.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Michael

Michael Goebel-Bain

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Palmer Fountain Update 10/1/19/ Preliminary Plan

Background: The Palmer Fountain on the Gardiner Common is more than a century old. It has been the site for three sculptures, King Neptune (melted down for the war effort in the 1940s), a stone structure (built by the city) and now "Lady and the Birds" cast by Maine sculptor Norman Therrien. This work was the result of efforts by Friends of the Common and installed in 1977, part of the city's observation of our national bi-centennial.

The fountain operated into the 90's until it became sporadic due to maintenance needs and issues with the pump. Five years ago, Building and Grounds along with volunteer efforts cleared the reflecting pool of debris, leaves, sticks, mud, branches and trash. That summer, efforts were made to install a brand-new pump and Lady was brought back to life for the first time in over a decade!

Continued use has revealed that the substructure of the fountain plumbing and the concrete pool need significant work. The current condition requires an average of fifteen hours of maintenance PER WEEK and three weeks of prep in June. City workers and volunteers share the workload.

A group of local folks is planning an approach to restore the fountain and to keep it running for years to come. We have met twice as a large group and Tony LaPlante, Mike Gent and Robert Abbey will continue as a steering committee. A group of interested supporters traveled to Portland in September to meet with Deputy Parks Director Ethan Hipple and staff who tend the restored Lincoln Park Fountain.

Areas of Concern:

- Very old plumbing
- Missing or compromised spray wands
- Deteriorating concrete pool, heavily patched
- No usable drain
- Pump sits just above standing water in a pit
- Pit is difficult to access and unpleasant to work in
- Surrounding sidewalk is sinking near the spigot
- Must be filled by a hose/daily
- Needs skimming and chlorinating daily, vacuuming 3X per week minimum

What Restoration Would Mean:

- A new mechanical 'vault' for pump and controls
- All new plumbing to the pedestal/statue
- A new water supply method, eliminating the need for a hose and daily fill
- A way to treat the water as it is recycled
- New spray wands and pump (current pump is oversized for application)
- Complete replacement of concrete pool
- Sealing seams in the granite surround

What is in good condition:

-The basic structure: the granite surround, the statue, the pedestal (has some chipping)

What we propose as a preliminary plan:

- Form a steering committee of Tony LaPlante, Mike Gent, Robert Abbey to draft a basic approach
- Contact outside services with specific expertise with water features, restoration (Tito Concrete/Portland/Lincoln Park)
- Determine extent of in-kind services from Public Works
- Develop a budget and seek cost estimates

Possible funding sources:

- Certified Local Government \$\$ through the Maine Historical Commission, requires the addition of the Common to the Historic Register (guidance from Historic Preservation Commission)
- JW Robinson Trust,
- Local businesses (Libby Hill)
- Fund raising campaign/individuals

Timeline:

Preliminary Plan - October, 2019

Development of Components of Restoration Plan - Winter, 2019-20

Fundraising - 2019/2020/Seeking active Rotary support

Demolition and Reconstruction - 2020/21

Respectfully Submitted,
Robert Abbey
Fountain Keeper

