

# TOWN OF BECKET

## HISTORICAL COMMISSION Minutes

557 Main Street, Becket, MA 01223

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**Meeting Date:** Tuesday, March 12, 2019

**Meeting Time:** 3:00 PM

**Meeting Place:** Historical Commission Office, Becket Town Hall

**Attendees:** Sandi Jarvis, Chair; Rita Furlong, Treasurer; Katherine Hoak, Clerk; John Garvey, Guest  
**Absent:** Gail Kusek

1. The meeting was called to order at 3:20 PM.
2. The minutes of our February meeting were unanimously approved.
3. Treasurer's Report: there is a \$3,181.13 balance after paying for the Legacy Family Tree software.
4. Communications:  
Old-

a. We received a query about a Lake Yokum Hotel Certificate, from Dora Sutter, issued to A.E. Gaudreau (her paternal grandfather) dated October 1, 1919. Sandi and John, along with the Local History department at the Berkshire Athenaeum did an extensive investigation. It could not be determined whether the hotel was actually built by J.C. and Willis Ballou along with Walter D. Otis of Becket and Thomas W. Irwin and Arthur G. Taylor of Springfield. The Massachusetts Articles of Organization stated the corporation was chartered for 50 years. Dora was provided with a link to a site that may help her determine whether the Certificate continues to have a monetary value. Otis had been the manager of the summer Yokum View House on the site of the proposed hotel. She was also provided with more than a dozen articles from 1913 to 1971 concerning development around Yokum Pond (Lake). The 1926-1928 and 1929-1931 Becket Directories showed listings for a "Yokun" Hotel but was not found in the 1935-1942 issues. Sandi filed all the information gathered in a "Yokum" folder in the file cabinet and on the HC computer.

- b. We have several newspaper articles of interest, all from *The Berkshire Eagle*. One of them discussed the ramifications of the spring on Rte. 20. There has been considerable controversy about it because of the determination by the state's Dept. of Environmental Protection that there was coliform present, indicative of E. coli. At a town meeting, residents voted against investing in an expensive ultraviolet filtering system. Other residents argued that the spring is a valuable resource. A second

article was an overview photo of the Athenaeum Book Club and, essentially, an invitation to others to join it. A third article presented what can be done with a grant which could help a town develop a database which would enable people to locate gravesites by name and/or date of birth or death of those buried. Another article, registered under *Hikes and Walks* is titled "Experiencing the new-and-improving Highlands Footpath which connects paths through the Hilltowns. The final article, *Historical Landscape*, presents "The Flood of 1927: How one man saved a town." That man was J. Clinton Ballou who raced through parts of Becket to alert residents when he realized the dam had burst.

New-

We received a Notice of Public Hearing which will take place on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019<sup>th</sup>. The applicants are seeking relief from a zoning by-law in order to construct an external staircase and an exit door leading to a ground level deck for customer dining at 30 Washington Street.

5. New Business:

Welcome to new member, John Garvey. We learned that John was accepted as a member of our Commission by the Board of Selectmen, but has yet to be sworn in by George Roberts, Town Clerk.

6. Old Business:

- a. "Welcome to Becket" pole flags. We have to decide if we want to duplicate the flags used by Chester and Jacob's Pillow which are generic or do what we've done previously, had flags with Becket's emblem. The latter are considerably more expensive. We decided to let this decision go for now. A couple of our remaining flags need to be moved.
- b. Display cases We discussed how we'll decide what will go into the cases. A subcommittee will meet at the HC room next Tuesday morning, March 19<sup>th</sup>, from 9:30-11 AM to work on the displays. John will bring heavy paper, appropriate for labels for the artifacts.
- c. "Visitor Center" property at Rte. 20 & Rte. 8 North We decided to omit discussion on this.
- d. 21 Maple Street property research: this had formerly been the Baptist parsonage. Decisions about this property is in progress. The plan is to develop a park and parking. We want to get a sign indicating the importance of that location to be mounted on a large rock there. Rita will pursue the development of this plaque. We do have necessary funding for this in our treasury. We also discussed the former pallet shop property at the end of Maple Street which currently is private property.
- e. Office organization Rita and Katherine will tackle the two large, map file cabinets to perfect their organization, using mylar for delicate articles within the files.
- f. Plan of Action We did not decide on a specific plan at this meeting.

- g. Goals We'd like to develop an audio/video walking tour of Becket to be used on SmartPhones.
  - h. New members: We're delighted to have John Garvey with us!
  - i. The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 PM.
7. The next meeting will be held on April 9 at 3:00 PM.

\_\_\_\_\_ Katherine Hoak, Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_ Sandi Jarvis, Chair