



Municipal Building – Town of Franklin
355 East Central Street
Franklin, MA 02038

Town of Franklin, Massachusetts Historical Commission

Meeting Minutes December 21, 2010

Attending:

Commissioners

Present:

Del Arnold
Alan Earls
Debbie Pellegri (Chair)
Bob Percy (Secretary)

Absent:

Dianne Brunner
Mona Ghiringhelli
Alice Vendetti (Treasurer)

Associates

Connie Lawson
Marlene Oliver
Mary O'Neill

Absent:

Colette Ferguson
Eamon McCarthy Earls
Mary Olsson

Key:

→ = an action item

A→ = a resolved action item

Finances

No bills were received or paid this month.

Last Meeting's Minutes – Approved.

Commission Membership

Currently, the Commission allows 7 members, 7 alternate members, and an unlimited number of associate members.

→What's the process for amending this bylaw?

A→There's no provision for updating them. We'll revisit this after the first of the year.

(To become an Associate Member of the Historical Commission, prospective Associate Members need to a) send a letter of request to the Town Clerk and b) meet with the Town Administrator Jeff Nutting.)

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

⊗ Communications – (Bob, Alan, and Mary O'Neill)

No changes may be required for the demolition delay bylaw. When it receives a demolition notice, the Historical Commission will determine at the outset of the process whether the structure in question has historic value. If the Commission determines that it does, the process as described in the bylaw commences.

Mary O'Neill has been pursuing research of various types for visitors:

Mary O'N. brought in a great deal of information she collected, placed in 3-ring binders. These will be available in the Library Room. These items include brochures from and about surrounding towns, and the findings she made based on various search requests from visitors. (These binders will serve as a record of completed search items.) We will add to this great start with additional info in the future, and likely expand what's here into multiple binders.

Debbie contacted Tim Raposa to ask him about locating the online versions of the Wadsworth Diaries that we used to have posted on our web page. He said he would look into it.

→Bob will contact Gail Lembo to see if she has an electronic copy of one or more of the 4-volume set that we could post and/or keep available at the Museum.

→On Thursdays this winter, the Museum will close if school has been canceled that day. Bob will post that info to the website.

→Is there a copy of the Museum opening from last May at the Museum?

A→Yes. Del made a copy.

Del found out that ex-Chair Carol Harper and Lisa Piana provided the content that appears on the current walking trail sign on the Town Common.

→The walking trail. Debbie suggested making this available as a high school or Dean College project that students could work on. We will ask Rob Lawson if there would be an interest in doing this.

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: Set up a Facebook page, and perhaps an account on Twitter. Social networking could reach a different audience. If you “like” (electronically) the Museum, you can be notified of upcoming events. (Perhaps this is something Dean interns could assist us with.)

⊗ **Document Preservation and Policies – (Alan, Connie, Del, and Eamon)**

We discussed the need to have someone to coordinate an oral history project, to preserve the recollections of town residents on audio/video.

→Nominate one or more people who would like to work on this project.

A→Connie and Mary Olsson have expressed interest in working on this.

We may want to get Franklin HS and Dean College involved in this project as well.

For this project, we might want to have access to a studio. We could use the existing Comcast studio. The alternative is to record these sessions in the Library Room.

→Debbie will ask Bob Dean about doing this.

Stella Gione will give us copies of all of her interviews, some on DVD, some on VHS. They are currently held by the Council on Aging who felt the Museum would be the best repository for them. There are roughly 100 interviews! This is a wonderful addition to our video archives.

→Who can perform the video transfer for us to turn VHS into DVD? We will ask Bob Dean for ideas on this.

We discussed looking into purchasing a flame resistant file cabinet. It would be good to have a locked cabinet in the Library room as well. WB Mason provides 4-drawer file cabinets.

Del has many historic postcard pictures on CD. He is creating a slideshow of them that'll be playable on the Museum screen. This will also be available on CD at the museum for people to display and to make copies of individual postcards.

For ambiance at the Museum when it is open, it would be nice to have a CD player.

→Can we purchase one?

Del has decided on a Brother Laser Printer (\$299.) which would produce black and white copies at a cost of roughly 3 cents each.

Alan recommended obtaining a low-cost 11” x 17” scanner.

Both of these units would be attachable to one of our PCs.

We talked about having a low-cost scanner in the Library Room, and a more high-resolution capable scanner downstairs for archive preservation projects.

→Del and Alan will make a list of the hardware we need, and submit it to Jeff Nutting.

Alan met with Library Director Felicia Oti to discuss the effort for converting the Franklin Sentinels from microfilm to digital format. Felicia O. felt this was very worthwhile, and cost-effective. She is willing to undertake this project, and to provide us with digital copies.

→We discussed posting a comprehensive fee schedule in the library room (and perhaps on the website). Do we have this information?

Alan found that the Franklin HS has also provided us with microfilm version of FHS yearbooks, from roughly 1928 to 1996. These will be great fun for people to look through at the Museum.

⊗ **Events - Debbie, Colette, Mary O'Neill, Eamon**

→To improve attendance, we had previously discussed creating a calendar of events for 2011, so we can distribute it well in advance. Is this in progress?

We discussed the possible need for an events board in front of the museum. The Planning Dept. has a new sign bylaw. We would like some kind of sign, but don't want that section of the downtown to become "sign crazy".

The Holiday Stroll went well, but not all Downtown Partnership members participated in holiday decorating.

Some time in February, we would like to host a reception/discussion led by Franklin's Gulf War veterans, in recognition of the 20th anniversary of the outbreak of this war.

Ms. Rain from the Oak Street School would like to have 85 or so students visit the Museum.

→Can we ask her about having the kids tell us afterwards, perhaps in writing, what they liked best during their visit? This was done in past years, and was wonderful feedback.

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: Do we charge for events? Charging can actually increase the draw. Perhaps charge \$5. and serve light refreshments. We might then also consider something like "Eat at **, get a free ticket to a Museum event."

⊗ **Grants - Marlene, Alan**

Marlene received feedback on her original plan for the combined grant to celebrate the achievements of Horace Mann and Stanley Chilson. David Martz of the National Endowment for the Humanities felt that the grant itself contained two separate tiers:

- A First Tier, about Horace Mann. This would require assembling a Project team that consists of Horace Mann scholars from around the country. Marlene has located two such people so far: Prof. Charles Glenn of BU, an author of a book on education reform that featured Horace Mann, and US Rep. Richard Ross of Wrentham, himself a Horace Mann descendent. The ideal Project Team would also include one or more documentary filmmakers and/or screenwriters. We might also want to contact the President of the MA Teacher's Assoc.
- A Second Tier, about Stanley Chilson. Mr. Martz felt that this would be a project of local (State) as opposed to national interest.

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: Create a strategic plan, to project 1+ years into the future. This can be an aid in obtaining grants. This is important for continuity through the years, so that focus doesn't get lost.

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: Find a template for an interpretive plan. There are books about writing strategic plans. The National Park Service has a lot of resources about this, including free webinars.

⊗ **Hosting - Debbie, Mona**

Forge Hill seniors' visit was postponed, due to bad weather.

Del distributed an updated Hosting Information sheet. (This provides a list of tasks for museum hosts to follow when hosting.)

The Newcomer's Club will be visiting, on an off-hours basis. Mary O'Neill agreed to greet them at the Museum.

Del had noted previously that on Saturdays (open 10 to 1), people generally do not arrive until 11AM.

→Discuss whether to change the Museum's hours.

A→Given the recent number of visitors we've had between 10 and 11, we decided to keep the hours as they are.

We discussed the possibility of meeting with teachers, perhaps during one of their professional days.

→Debbie will discuss this with Superintendent of Schools Maureen Sabolinski.

→Instructions for exterior lighting need to be provided for Thursday openings.

A→The light out front is automatic.

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: Perhaps institute a policy of quickly and painlessly surveying each 3rd or so visitor to the Museum, by asking:

- How did you hear about it?
- Have you been here before?
- What would you like to see?

Perhaps we could put a survey of this kind in the next Quarterly Town Newsletter.

⊗ **Intern Coordinators – Alan**

Through Del, Prof. Rob Lawson of Dean expressed an interest in having any Dean interns at the Museum be able to perform some non-clerical research.

→Bob and Alan will work on a list some ideas that Dean students could research. Add to this list any Horace Mann related topics, and a Museum brochure.

→Bob will email a list of the proposed projects Dean students could assist us with to museum consultant Deborah Kreiser-Francis.

→Who can be our contact for interns from Franklin High?

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: Interns with us can broaden their skills in these areas:

- Developing programs

- Filtering displays based on age
- Serve as interpreters

If these sound like worthwhile tasks, we can add these to the list of intern projects.

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: Have FHS or Dean interns perform research requests that are recorded in the Museum's log book. If we agree this is something we would like them to do, we can add this to the list of intern projects.

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: Research could include researching objects, similar to what the show "History Detectives" portrays. We could post images of these objects on our website. Also post questions and receive questions. We could receive requests for specific events, or types of events. Do we want to begin something like this?

⊗ **Museum Displays - Del, Alice, Dianne, Colette**

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: In order to provide a tactile experience at the Museum, we should get touchable things from yard sales or antique stores.

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: When walking into the Red Brick School room, it isn't immediately clear whether one is allowed to touch the items there.

⊗ **Museum Operations - Del (inventory, requests), Alice (finances), Dianne**

Del presented a letter from Jeff Nutting about the use of the former Horace Mann Museum. If someone wants to use this building, the Town would in effect be their landlord. The Town is concerned about any liability associated with using the building.

→We pledged to contact arts and music organizations who would be interested.

→Bob agreed to see if the DVD drives can burn new DVDs.

The room in the museum basement adjacent to the elevator operating room remains locked. We have many museum items stored there and we need access.

→Who can help us open this?

→Where to put the cupola from the Four Corners School? – One suggestion – to place it near the granite Horace Mann memorial on East Central St. Debbie will contact Shaw's Plaza owner Ann Alovisto to meet to discuss this.

→Any news about the Spanish American War cannon?

We are now officially renewed with NEMA for another year.

→It would be helpful to have a doorbell at the backdoor (which also serves as the Museum's handicap entrance). We may also need a bar and "glide" style door there, similar to what's at the Town Offices. We can contact Mike D'Angelo about this.

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: At some point, we would like to enlist the services of a textile conservator. Deborah knows one who does not charge for estimates. NEMA also has resources for this.

→From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: The cabinet drawers should have UV Plexiglas.

⊗ **Publicity - Mona, Mary O.**

We have added enormously to the number of publicity outlets we are in contact with. Debbie has created a comprehensive spreadsheet of these contacts.

A Mr. Reynolds of 02038.com asked us who to contact for more information about the Museum (donations and hosting).

A→Bob sent him an email with our contact info for these purposes.

A new monthly newspaper for Franklin will be distributed to all residences. It would be good to include some publicity about the Museum in the February issue. The deadline is 1/15.

We could also add info to the Council on Aging bulletin.

→ From Deborah Francis-Kreiser: Attempt to focus specific events on specific audiences:

- For spinners? Post sign at the Franklin Mill Store
- For instruments? Post signs at music stores.

This would lead to “quality” visits: people who stay and become engaged.

Friends of the Franklin Historical Museum (FFHM)

FFHM received a check for \$1,000. from the Busy Bees. Thank you!

Correspondence

Dell received an inquiry from a prospective buyer of 273 Pond St., asking if the house were of historical significance.

→What is/was the next step, if any?

Housing Rehab Requests -- None

Demolition Requests

We received a request packet, including many photographs, for the property at 82 Park Road. There was a motion to review its historical value. Motion was approved. After reviewing the information and photographs, there was a motion to vote on the question ‘Is the property in question of historical significance?’ The votes were: 4 NOs, 0 YESs, with 3 abstaining.

→Debbie said she would contact David Roche about the approval. Bob will respond to him in writing to the same effect.

Research Requests – (See Communications Subcommittee)