

Minutes
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission
February 4, 2013
Great Barrington Town Hall, Selectmen's Meeting Room

ATTENDING: Marilyn Bisiewicz, Don Howe, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, Bill Nappo, David Rutstein

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 3, 2012:

- The minutes were accepted unanimously.

FYs 13 AND 14 WORK PLAN, PRIORITIES AND STATUS

Based upon the matrix of options expressing overall goals and objectives discussed at the December meeting, the Commission agreed on the following specific goals for FYs 13 and 14.

- **Ongoing Tasks and Responsibilities**
 - ✓ Encourage sensitive preservation of fire station, Searles High School, Monument Mills, Housatonic School
 - ✓ Monitor, document and conduct salvage archaeology as needed during Main St. reconstruction project
 - ✓ Continue to provide representation and advance historic preservation in the Town Master Plan Committee
 - ✓ Appeal to owners of fairgrounds to donate key artifacts to town museum
 - ✓ Complete inventory, Memorandum of Gift, acknowledgment (such as a proclamation from Selectmen, media release) of Mahaney gift. The next steps are:
 - Move (from Selectmen's office) to Ramsdell storage the trunk and box of material recently sent from the Mahaneys
 - Add trunk and material in box to Excel inventory
 - Complete Deed of Gift form (Gary will e-mail Paul the Deed of Gift form from the GBHS)
 - Complete section of Deed of Gift with inventory of objects that, although not germane to the collection, will be accepted for sale or donation to appropriate parties.
 - Prepare and sign thank you letter for the gift to accompany Deed of Gift. The Mahaneys sign the DofG and return to the GBHC.
 - Prepare media release describing the gift and Mahaneys' connection to GB.
 - Once the DofG is signed and returned, sell magazines at David's table at the GBHS and Council on Aging flea markets.
 - Complete research on Merritt and Triscott paintings and develop strategy for receiving into collection. According to Bill's research, Merritt has definite ties to Great Barrington.
- **Museum Collections:** Manage and care for town museum collection in accordance with professional museum procedures
 - ✓ Continue work to clarify, locate and inventory materials that are owned by the town.

- *Cataloguing and Volunteers:* Commission members Gary, Marilyn, David and Bill have completed preparation of “mini-inventories,” which also serve as finding aids, for the six boxes of Charles Taylor Commission material. Historical Society contract archivist Margaret Cherin has taken a full-time job elsewhere and probably would not be assisting us in the near future. Gary supplanted Margaret as supervisor. The Commission gratefully acknowledged the assistance of the Historical Society in helping to catalogue this town material.

Library Board member Mary Pat Akers is seeking to raise money for an archival internship for the summer of 2013. Gary noted that the West Stockbridge Historical Society is seeking interns from Simmons College to help with cataloguing both their and Great Barrington’s archives.

Paul will e-mail Jim Parrish about returning the Charles Taylor catalogue of Indian artifacts to secure storage in the archives.

- ✓ As a part of long range planning, consider the technical requirements and possible locations for new storage and work spaces for collection.

- *Historical Records Disposition Meeting:* Kevin has called a meeting of the HC, HS, Town Clerk and HDC to discuss the plight and future of town historical records. The Commission needs to both clearly define the need for proper storage of the town collections and determine the general specifications (i.e. size of space, temperature and relative humidity levels, lighting, work and treatment areas, equipment, security and fire alarms, etc.). When these basics are articulated, they become a checklist when considering existing spaces that could be adapted (i.e. the Ramsdell basement) or designing new construction.

The Commission agreed that it’s important for the HC and HS to maintain control of their collections and that the town should pay for proper storage facilities - a fundamental part of curatorial stewardship of objects it owns. Paul will draft talking points to guide discussion of the Commission’s goals for collection care.

The town vault should contain valuable records and Gary and Paul will check with the town clerk about the contents.

Bill suggested a box count as a security check for anything missing.

- *Some Considerations of Using Ramsdell Basement as Storage Area:*
 - There is a problem with water draining into the cellar, as evidenced by a 4”-6” water-level mark on the walls. Part of the project would need to include hiring an engineer to examine the situation and write specifications to prevent any flooding.
 - There is no evidence of mildew
 - Ceilings are 9 ½’ high
 - It’s a warm workplace

- The oil tanks would have to be buffered with a fireproof wall.
 - Perhaps limit use of the area for storage and work upstairs
 - The area needs climate control and lighting
 - *Jail*: perhaps the old jail in the town hall could be used for archives.
- ***Fund Raising***: Raise monies to supplement annual town appropriation and for special projects.
 - ✓ Gary met with Kevin about procedures for selling de-accessioned and non-germane material for the benefit of the HC. The Town Manager can declare this material as “surplus property” and make it eligible for sale. The proceeds would be placed in a special fund. He recommended doing this during his tenure as it can be accomplished pretty quickly. A good strategy would be to process the Mahaney material first to establish the format and precedent. Another course of action is to allow the GBHS to sell the material for the benefit of the HC.
- ***Historic Preservation***: Promote the preservation of significant structures in town
 - ✓ *Workshop*: HC members will attend an “Introduction to Historic Preservation Planning Workshop,” sponsored by the Massachusetts Historical Commission on February 5 at the Sheffield Bushnell Sage Library.
 - ✓ *Demolition Delay Seminar*: Don reported that the HDC is seeking to arrange a separate demolition delay seminar that includes the Planning Board, Town Planner and HC. They hope to schedule the session in another month or two.
 - ✓ *National Register Nominations*: since the HC hopes to seek grant funding from the MHC and Community Preservation Act, pursuit of this goal will be held until the CPA is active.
- ***Marketing***: to heighten public appreciation of town’s historic resources and build support for preservation initiatives
 - ✓ *Facebook Page*: Bill continues work on the HC’s Facebook page
 - ✓ *“Where is Great Barrington” Program*: Marilyn reported that she has taken photographs of various subjects for the program but requested guidance, brainstorming and research help from the membership. We also need to determine the format(s) for the program (i.e. exhibition, article(s), apps, lectures, weekly articles in the Record with prizes for correct answers, and answers to past week’s entry, etc.).
 - ✓ *Logo*: Bill continues to develop design ideas
 - ✓ *Letterhead*: Bill showed drafts of letterheads. It was agreed that the letterhead, as well as all GBHC publications, signs, websites, etc., should incorporate the new logo. Bill will continue to draft ideas to present to the membership.
- ***Education***: Present programs that educate and interpret Great Barrington history to the general and tourist public and schools.
 - ✓ The Commission agreed that it’s important that any public preservation-related activity on the part of any member include his/her association with the HC.

- ✓ David is scheduled to present a talk, "Great Barrington Changed the World," sponsored by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires at Knesset Israel Synagogue on March 14.

RAMSDELL LIBRARY NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION

- Paul attended the library board meeting and spoke in support of approving submission of the completed nomination form to the MHC and answered their questions. The board passed the measure. Paul and Gary met at the Ramsdell with board member Mary Pat Akers and Director Kate Deviny to tour the second floor and basement and discuss plans and goals of both agencies and how they might complement one another. The library wants the Ramsdell to be a true community center with lots of activities to demonstrate the critical presence of the building in Housatonic.

MAHAIWE CEMETERY STONES

- Marilyn reported that she had spoken with Dave Avery of the Cemetery Commission. He has asked for \$20-\$30,000 to repair the Weatherbee Mausoleum and \$22,000 to rebuild foundation stones of tombstones). With no funds approved, however, Joe Sokol will try to have his DPW crew effect some repairs.

HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

- Don presented the draft of the HDC's "Great Barrington Historic Marker Program for Historic Structures." The HDC will seek approval from the Planning Board and Selectmen and asked the HC membership to review it and send comments to him.

NEXT MEETING

- Monday, May 6 7:00 pm, location to be determined.

ADJOURN

- Motion to adjourn unanimously approved.