

Minutes
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission
July 8, 2013
Great Barrington Fire Station, Main Meeting Room

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

MINUTES OF MAY 8, 2013

- The minutes were accepted unanimously, but with Gary's revisions concerning the probable unavailability of Margaret Cherin, his description of the Worthington diaries, Marilyn's oral history methodology and cataloguing, and space planning with the library. (Note: the minutes have been edited to include these corrections).

FY WORK PROGRAM: HIRING AN ARCHIVIST

- The FY14 HC budget includes \$5,000 to hire a contract archivist to help inventory and catalogue the town collection. It is important that this project be planned and executed prudently and efficiently to assure effective use of the town's allocation as well as establish a good record of performance to lend to future funding requests. The membership discussed the following areas of this project:

Job Description: This document is very important as it defines the goals, archivist qualifications and work parameters of the project so that there is common understanding by both the HC and archivist. Paul has assembled some sample job descriptions. He will prepare a draft job description and share it with the membership for comment. He will also check with the Town if there is a template required for new hires.

Supervision: Gary, who works four hours each week for the GBHS and is supremely knowledgeable of the collections and its management, agreed to serve as the supervisor.

Work Goals and Projects: the overarching goal is to organize and catalogue the town collection using PastPerfect software. Gary will develop and recommend specific priorities.

Dates: can be negotiated. There is latitude since the project needs to be completed by June 30, 2014. It also depends on the availability of the candidate.

Advertising and Recruiting for the Position: Paul will check with the town about any required procedures.

Procedures for Time Sheets and Payment from the Town: Paul will check on town practices.

Hourly/Flat Rate: the HS was paying its archivist \$35/hr which seems to be the current standard rate. If this is the base rate, the amount can be adjusted according to a candidate's qualifications and negotiations. Malcolm pointed out that this rate of pay

would allow around 143 hours of work. This could also be expressed as 10 hours/week for 14 weeks.

Qualifications: Paul will include standard qualifications in the Job Description draft. Gary stressed the importance of trustworthiness in all areas, such as honesty in recording work hours, and an understanding of the relationship with the library. Reference checks can affirm the former.

COLLECTIONS

- Mahaney Gift
 - ✓ Paul will complete the cover letter, Memorandum of Gift and Excel inventory attachments and mail to the Mahaneys in the next week.
 - ✓ The Commission agreed with Gary's recommendation that the accession be officially referred to as the Baldwin Collection as this specifically describes the intellectual content. In public announcements it will be referred to as the Mahaney gift of the Ruth Baldwin collection.
 - ✓ Once the Mahaneys have signed the Memorandum of Gift, next steps include formal acknowledgement (probably from the Selectmen and/or the Town Manager) and a media release with accompanying photograph of one of the more interesting pieces.
- Archives Report (Gary)
 - ✓ Jim Parrish has still not been able to locate the Charles Taylor archaeology catalogue.
 - ✓ There have been no security problems of unauthorized access to the storage areas in the Ramsdell Library.
 - ✓ On behalf of the Commission, Paul expressed thanks to Gary for his excellent and detailed reports of archival activity and gratefully acknowledged the excellent inventory and cataloguing work of Marilyn, Bill and David.
- Computer from the Town
 - ✓ Lauren Sartori has notified the HC that the surplus town personal computer designated for Commission use is ready for pick up. The computer will be assigned to the archivist when that position is filled.
- PastPerfect Cataloguing Software
 - ✓ The Commission will install the Historical Society's PastPerfect software. Although the two organizations are melding their respective collections onto the same database the owner (i.e. the town and the Society) of each object will be identified and have the capability to generate separate reports. The PC (inherited from the town) will be networked with the GBHS computer so that changes, additions, deletions in one will be reflected on the other.

WHERE'S GREAT BARRINGTON

- On behalf of the Commission, Paul applauded Marilyn's hard work and perseverance in her role as the chairperson of this program. She has been assembling an inventory of possible images as candidates for use and considering various formats and venues for its implementation.

- Some ideas discussed included piggybacking on the Society's website and developing an accompanying lecture program.
- The immediate objective is to assemble a solid catalogue of documented sites and their context and history. This involves continuing to amass images, preparing a "short list" of selected sites and objects to be featured, completing research on the architectural feature for the accompanying narrative (i.e. date and history of the structure, description, function and background, etc.), photographing the "mother" structure, and locating period images of the subject.
- Marilyn will meet with Malcolm to discuss program development.

BERKSHIRE COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION SUMMIT

- The MHC will be holding the 2013 Massachusetts Historic Preservation Conference on October 18 in Lexington. Paul encouraged HC members to attend (www.MApreservationconference.org).

OTHER

- Historic Marker Program
 - ✓ The HC reviewed and concurred with the draft program guidelines, with suggested edits by Paul. In addition to the insertion of a program goal, the only significant change was the recommendation that the two tier eligibility rule be replaced with a single criterion that the structure be 50 years old. Paul noted that there is no age restriction for National Register nominations. Paul will insert the edits and circulate the revised draft to the membership and Jim Mercer and Holly Troiano of the GBHDC.
 - ✓ The policies and procedures need to include the make-up of the review committee, who appoints them and length of terms. Although it's an important courtesy to keep the Selectmen (as well as the Town Manager and the Planning Board) informed about the program, it is not necessary to have their official approval.
 - ✓ The GBHS will sell the marker plaques at cost and a representative will join the HC and HDC on the evaluation committee.
- Ramsdell Library
 - ✓ Jim Mercer reported to Gary that in a discussion with library director Kate, the library wants to expand the role of the Ramsdell in history activities. This was a preliminary discussion. Since the Ramsdell is under the management of the library, the HC will defer to their initiatives in exercising a joint program.

NEXT MEETING

- Monday September 9, 2013 at 7:00pm at place to be determined.

ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting was adjourned on a unanimous vote.