

Minutes  
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission  
May 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 FEBRUARY 4, 2013

- The minutes were accepted unanimously, but with Gary's revisions concerning the probable unavailability of Margaret Cherin and Gary's appointment as supervisor. (Note: the minutes have been edited to include these corrections).

REVIEW AND AFFIRM FYs 13 AND 14 WORK PLAN AND PRIORITIES

- The Commission agreed on the following priorities in the various categories of the plan  
***Ongoing Tasks and Responsibilities:*** complete inventory, Deed of Gift, acknowledgment, (such as a proclamation from Selectmen, media release) of Mahaney gift.

***Museum Collections:*** Manage and care for town museum collection in accordance with professional museum procedures.

***Cataloguing and Volunteers:*** Commission members Gary, Marilyn, David and Bill have continued preparing inventories and finding aids of priority archival material, including six boxes of the Charles Taylor collection. David noted that there are missing sections to the Taylor material. They are working on three boxes containing the diaries of Esther Worthington (c. 1921-1991), the mother of the owner of the Worthington Dairy. Gary noted that they contain some rather interesting accounts of local residents. They are very pleased with the PastPerfect software program. Marilyn's research has included the use of oral history sources to help identify people in the photographs. She shows the images to friends and family with a request for help identifying people in the photos.

***Collections Security:*** Gary discovered that the rope, with a sign prohibiting entry, across the entry aisle on the north side of the second floor main room, was down. This could indicate unauthorized access to the HC collection area. In discussing a means to resolve this security issue, suggestions for enhanced barriers included a sandwich board, pegboard, a large piece of cardboard or an easel.

***Charles Taylor Archaeology Catalogue:*** Jim Parrish reported to Gary that he can't locate the catalogue. Gary will continue inquiring.

***Ramsdell Library***

- ✓ Gary suggested a meeting with the library trustees to clarify the relationship of the cataloguing programs of the HC and GBHS and the library.

- ✓ Gary reported that in informal conversations with the library staff, GBHS president Jim Mercer was told that the trustees are considering allowing the GBHC and GBHS use of a large first floor reading room (the “fish” room) and the basement. This transfer has been a part of the trustees’ discussions about converting the Ramsdell building into a community center with a focus on historical programs.

As a part of long range planning, consider the technical requirements and possible locations for new storage and work spaces for collection: a summary sheet, “Notes and Standards for Management and Care of Town Historical Collections,” has been prepared to serve as a measure for assessing the potential of sites that emerge as possibilities.

*Purchase of Archival Supplies:* Gary will provide a list of supplies for the FY 13 budget (\$650) to Paul who will place the order. The FY14 budget for supplies is \$1,200. Paul and Gary will meet to draft a program to hire an archivist. It’s important to execute this program well to establish a good track record as a segue to requesting FY15 funding and seeking grants.

***Fund Raising:*** Raise monies to supplement annual town appropriation and for special projects:

Paul will explore potential grants to provide matching money. Bill suggested the fabrication and installation of a “poor box” in the library. He will prepare a proposal for a stand that displays an impactful photograph and text describing the town archive and its importance, and the need for support. It will need some sort of a money collection device such as a slotted plexiglass box for people drop in donations. Paul reported that a similar arrangement at Chesterwood yielded thousands of dollars.

***Historic Preservation:*** Promote the preservation of significant structures in town.

*Demolition Delay Seminar:* Don reported that planning for the seminar is on hold until there is full membership in the HDC. Too, Chris Skelly also holds a seminar on combining a HC and HDC into one body.

*National Register Nominations:* Bill will check with MHC about FY14 planning and survey grants. The next step is to prepare an action plan and timeline for updating the survey.

***Marketing:*** to heighten public appreciation of town’s historic resources and build support for preservation initiatives.

*Logo and Letterhead:* Bill is working on design ideas and will present them to the Commission when he’s completed drafts.

**Education:** present programs that educate and interpret Great Barrington history to the general and tourist public and schools. The membership gratefully acknowledged David's local history talks. He has used this forum to demonstrate the walking tour app.

#### REVIEW OF HISTORY AND CULTURE IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX IN TOWN MASTER PLAN DRAFT

- The Commission will forward recommended edits to this document to Chris Rembold for consideration by the Master Plan Committee.
- The changes include more action plan detail that reflects priorities and goals expressed in the main Master Plan document and acknowledgment that some recommendations are already active Commission and Historical Society programs. It also recommended that, while the Commission supports the cultural initiatives recommended in the plan, the Lead and Responsibility agency should be the Cultural Council.
- The edited section draft is attached as a part of the minutes.

#### WHERE IS GREAT BARRINGTON? PROGRAM PLANNING

- Marilyn has been taking photographs to build up a selection of images for the program. She has been using an architectural dictionary, loaned from Bill, as a reference. Bill and Malcolm joined Marilyn as the project's principals.
- Next steps are to continue to assemble images, background research on the site and architectural element(s) in the pic and checking any legal requirements or prohibitions connected with publishing private or public property. It is important that all HC members scout for and photograph locations. Too, images need not be limited to residences: civic, industrial, agricultural and religious structures, as well as cemeteries and landscape features, need to be considered as well.
- The preferred format that has emerged is publishing a weekly photo in the *Record* with the answer in the next issue. The central theme is that there is great beauty in our buildings and we can experience aesthetic enjoyment in looking around us. A project description sheet needs to be completed to present to the Record
- This program is a candidate for the HC's Facebook page.

#### HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY: QUESTIONS FROM CHRIS REMBOLD

- Chris Rembold has asked if the HC will be undertaking an historic sites inventory this summer and if the increase in the budget request reflects this project. David reported that his inquiry was the result of a misinterpretation of remarks about using the existing (and outdated) list as a source for the "Where's Great Barrington?" program at a Master Plan Committee meeting.
- The budget addition is for archival supplies and a part-time archivist to properly care for and manage the Town collection.
- The survey will not be held this summer as it takes an extraordinary amount of planning, scheduling, funding and coordination to prepare for and execute this project. Planning is a HC project goal for FY14.

#### REVIEW OF GBHDC'S "GREAT BARRINGTON HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM FOR HISTORIC STRUCTURES"

- Paul will prepare the next draft of edits and circulate to the membership for comment.

#### BERKSHIRE COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION SUMMIT

- Paul, Bill and Gary will attend the Berkshire County Historic Preservation Summit on May 20. Sponsored by the Berkshire County Regional Planning Commission, the meeting will look at the historic preservation element of the sustainable Berkshires long-range plan, and explore action items that participants can take to implement their community preservation plan.

#### CIVIL WAR PRESERVATION GRANTS

- The MA Dept of Veterans' Services, the MA Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission and the MA Foundation for the Humanities are offering a Civil War Preservation Grant program to fund the renovation, rehabilitation, preservation or enhancements of objects related to the Civil War.
- Unfortunately, there is no substantial Civil War material in the collection that would justify the time spent on the application. The *Winged Victory* is in good condition although the sandstone pedestal hasn't been restored. Paul will e-mail Jim Mercer who has the conservation treatment reports for the monument.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

- Gary reported that Andrew Blechman has requested that the HC photograph each new edition of the Board of Selectmen for the historical record.
- Malcolm reported that there have been 325 i-phone app-tour consumers to date. He passed out app-tour brochures for members to distribute.
- Gary reported that Ingersoll, Ontario, our sister city in Canada, is sending a fire truck (on a flatbed) and a bagpipe band to march in the Memorial Day parade.
- The HC needs to brief the new Town Manager on its activities. The Ramsdell Library would be a good site for "show and tell" artifacts and as a potential future permanent site for HC operations.
- Don reported that the HDC has posted openings for alternate members. Conflict of interest issues have caused some members to resign and if Dan Bailly is elected as a Selectman, he will have to recuse himself from some votes. He also noted that the HDC is experiencing problems with some local owners who are not complying with established and legal procedures.

#### NEXT MEETING

- Monday, July 8 at 7:00pm at the Fire Station.