

Minutes  
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission  
November 28, 2011  
Great Barrington Fire Station (Conference Room 6)

ATTENDING: Marilyn Bisciewicz, Malcolm Fick, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, David Rutstein;  
Guest: Robert Tepper, Great Barrington Historical Society

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 26, 2011: Deferred to next meeting as they are not yet prepared.

#### REVISED MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

- Paul distributed the latest edition of the roster. Malcolm requested that his new telephone no. replace the one listed v

#### HERITAGE AREA GRANT

- Paul expressed his thanks to Malcolm for his initiative and grant writing expertise and David, Gary and Don as content specialists. Marilyn offered to help in any way.
- If awarded, the project will clearly help fulfill the Commission's goal of broadening the awareness of the town's heritage and deepening public support of historic preservation as a regular and positive planning option.
- Each tour includes audio, text and images and can be downloaded onto I-phones. It will also be accessible through Google, the "App Store," and Facebook. If the I-phone includes a GPS, the app will show the user's exact location.
- Malcolm reported that once completed, the app can serve as a platform for expanding the number of tours to 10. He cited the possibilities of driving tour collaboration with Berkshire Grown and of the town's historical assets.
- If the grant is approved, a kick-off meeting will be held in January to develop a work schedule and individual assignments for research, draft of text and location of images. Gary will provide the voice-overs. Paul will check if these sub-committee meetings are governed by the open meeting law.
- The Commission will also need to seek promotional assistance and support from related organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce.

#### ALFORD ROAD BRIDGE

- Paul sent a letter encouraging the preservation of character-defining features of the bridge to MassDOT. He also attended the public hearing at which he spoke on behalf of its preservation and, at least, stockpiling the railings for use in another site, such as a walking trail. The response was polite but underwhelming and bureaucratic.
- Paul will also write Chris Skelley requesting that MHC inform the Commission about their decisions and recommendations concerning Great Barrington sites. He was blind-sided at the meeting when the DOT representative read a finding by the MHC that the bridge was not eligible for the National Register. At the meeting, Paul, who disagrees with the determination, had cited the Commission's opinion that it was eligible. This sort of public confusion is counterproductive and the Commission should know MHC's stand on local issues.

#### FY12 and 13 BUDGETS

- *Background:* The FY13 budget is due at the Town Treasurer's office by December 1. Instructions indicate that level-funding will be the norm and any increased requests need to

be justified in the strict context of answering mission. The Commission's traditional allocation has been \$650.00, which has never been spent over the years. Money cannot be carried forward from year to year, rather it is returned to the General Fund.

- *Budget Preparation Objectives:* the Commission needs to (1) spend its \$650 FY12 allocation and (2) submit a budget for FY13, with cogent justifications for the projects that need funding. One planning consideration is to dedicate funds from both FYs to finance various components of a single long-term project, i.e. hard and software for managing the town historical collection.
- *FY12 Expenditure Possibilities:*

ITEM	COST	NOTES
Archival and Storage Supplies for Town Collection	Up to \$650	Gary will conduct Marilyn on a tour of the collection storage area for familiarity with needs and the kinds of supplies that are needed.  Marilyn will research various archival supply catalogues to collect prices. It was noted that the proximity of University Products, Holyoke, will allow us to pick up the order on our own, thus alleviating high delivery costs. She will also talk with the Mason Library director about their access to sources for discounted archival supplies. Gary noted that this approach is a labor intensive project for the library.  Paul will ask Lauren Sartori about the Town's purchasing process.
Scanner	\$100	For use in the inventory cataloguing project
PastPerfect Software	<u>Three Options</u>  1.\$870 for full version.  2.\$740 for full version (includes AASLH membership discount and \$150 member's cost to join.  3.\$300 for concomitant "Scatter Gather" version which can be used as an adjunct to the Historical Society's full version. This allows data entry from another licensee.	If one of the first two options is selected, the HC would be constrained to raise the difference.

Final decisions will be made after fact gathering and estimates are complete.

- *FY13 Expenditure Possibilities*

ITEM	COST	NOTES
Laptop Computer	\$1,000	For use in inventory/catalogue project. Perhaps an excess computer on the town inventory can be transferred to the HC
Scanner	\$250	For transferring images of documents to inventory forms
Archival and Artifact Storage	\$650	Important for proper care of the

Supplies		collection.
Marketing Local History	\$500	To publicize lectures, walking tours (such as those presented by HC member David), and any other programs that help fulfill the HC's goal of expanding public awareness of the town's rich historical assets.
Support Collection Stewardship Services of GBHS	\$1,000	For decades, the GBHS has exercised stewardship of the Town collection. Funds will assist the Society in their efforts to care for the collection.  Robert Tepper, GBHS Board member, spoke on behalf of the Town's provision of this support.

- Paul will prepare the budget documents for submission to the Town Treasurer. If there is enough time, he will e-mail drafts to the membership for review and comments.

#### HISTORICAL COLLECTION

- *Inventory and Conveyance to Historical Society*: Lauren Sartori informed Paul that a completed inventory, a legal review by Town Counsel and the consideration of any existing gift restrictions would be required before the collection could be conveyed to the Historical Society.
- *Volunteers*: Lauren also recommended the Commission's use of members of the town's Senior Volunteer Program (work for the town in exchange for reduced taxes) as a source of free labor on the project.
- *MHC Advice on Historical Collections*: Chris Skelley informed Gary that HCs generally don't serve as stewards of historical collections.

#### BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION PRESERVATION FORUM

- Malcolm, who represented the HC at the meeting, reported that the forum included presentations on historic preservation tools by MHC's Chris Skelley and the distribution of inventories about local preservation activities for participant organizations to complete. The Commission discussed answers to the survey questions which Malcolm will draft and share with the membership for comments.

#### HOUSATONIC SCHOOL

- The Commission approved sending a letter to the Selectboard strongly supporting the preservation of the Housatonic School as not only an opportunity for adaptive use but as an architectural and historical centerpiece of the village. Paul will prepare the draft.

#### ETHICS ISSUES

- Gary reported his conversations with the Secretary of State's office regarding his representation of the Historical Society at Commission meetings as a conflict of interest. The Ethics Commission ruled that as an HS board member it is illegal to even discuss or advocate for the Society to the Commission, in spite of MHC's Chris Skelley's assertion that HC and HS members discuss issues regularly. Gary has completed the required disclosure paperwork but still has to be careful to not "sit on both sides of the table."

## INDIAN SKELETON AND BURIAL GROUND UPDATE

- Gary reported that the Forensic Anthropology investigation of the Commonwealth's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner determined the remains to be of two humans: one old and one young. One pertinent fact is that colonials were also buried in the same area. When MHC and State Troopers arrived to investigate the site, the owner wouldn't provide them permission. MHC told Gary they can't conduct additional research until more bones are discovered and if and when the owner grants them access to the site.

## CASTLE STREET RAIROAD UNDERPASS BUILDING

- Paul and Don attended a meeting with Kevin O'Donnell and representatives of Railroad Street Youth Project to discuss the wall mural project in the tunnel. This public art project is a wonderful outlet for young artists and is fully supported by the HC. The HC emphasized, however, that the blue dolomite stonework in the tunnel should be inviolate since it's integral to the overall design of the railroad station and its landscaping. The RSYP had used the stone as a mural surface. They agreed to remove the paint from the stone and confine their wall art to the tunnel walls and ceiling. Paul queried Kevin O'Donnell about the Town's plans for maintaining the building and response to the preservation measures recommended in the HC's recent letter. He described work on the exterior panels and the consideration of contacting Dale Culleton about his offer to donate replacement windows.

## MHC SURVEY AND PLANNING GRANTS

- The Commission received notice of the matching grant program for a range of preservation activities, such as completion of community-wide preservation plans. Members felt that although the Commission is not yet prepared to implement such a grant, it should be pursued in the future. Too, the November 21 pre-application deadline has already passed.

## GREAT BARRINGTON SOUVENIR TRAY GIFT

- Tracy Ferguson, Housatonic, sent a small Great Barrington souvenir porcelainized metal tray to Paul as a gift to the town museum. Members concluded that the tray was from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, c. WWI, and transferred it to the Historical Society, via Gary, for deposit in the collection and accessioning. The Society will acknowledge the gift.

## INVITE CHRIS SKELLEY TO A FUTURE MEETING

- At the BCRPC meeting Chris Skelley talked to Malcolm about attending one of our meetings to discuss plans and priorities. All agreed this is a good idea and Chris will be invited to a future meeting, perhaps the one in January. Because of the potential import and length, a special meeting may be the best course.

## NEXT MEETING DATE

- Because of unknowns in personal schedules, the exact date of the next meeting, scheduled for January, still needs to be determined.

## ADJOURN

- Members voted unanimously to adjourn.