

Minutes
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission
November 4, 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 September 9, 2013

- The minutes were accepted unanimously with deletion of the first two sentences of the last paragraph of the "Where's Great Barrington?" section.

FY14 WORK PROGRAM: REVIEW OF DRAFT ARCHIVIST JOB DESCRIPTION

- Paul recommended the deletion of "Prepare Cataloguing Manual" and substituting with "Draft Cataloguing Guidelines" in both Para III5E of the draft Job Description and Para 4E of the draft Agreement for Archival and Curatorial Services. Requiring fulfillment of the original objective was too ponderous and time consuming for such a short contract period. A motion to approve the changes, made by Malcolm and seconded by Marilyn, passed unanimously.
- On the advice of Lauren Sartori, the HC will keep the total payment below \$5,000 (i.e. \$4,999) to legally eliminate a lot of bureaucratic requirements. The archivist will be treated as an outside consultant and not a regular employee of the town. Too, we will not be required to get three quotes.
- The Commission will check with a professional archivist in the area, who used to work for Paul, about her availability to fill the position. If that option fails, the Commission will place an ad in the Shopper's Guide with instructions to e-mail a cover letter and resume to Paul. Gary and Paul will screen the replies, create a short list and schedule interviews at the Ramsdell. Gary stressed the importance of clarifying Historical Society or Town ownership as a key part of the project.
- Once an archivist is hired, the Commission will issue a media release citing the project and extolling the value of the town museum collection.

FY15 BUDGET AND WORK PROGRAM

The next fiscal year budget is due on December 2. Paul will prepare a draft, share with the membership and submit. The Commission agreed on including the following objectives in the budget package.

- Continue major programs in FY14 program
- Pay the MyTours.com license fee for the Smartphone walking tour. Malcolm will clarify the exact amount and whether it can be paid in one or three year increments.
- Fund archivist position
- Conserve Newsboy monument
- Plan for update of architectural survey
- Coordinate expanded museum storage area options at the Ramsdell with the library board

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT REPRESENTATIVE

- The membership unanimously elected Bill as its representative to the Community Preservation Act committee. Paul will prepare the appointment letter and get it to Bill before their next meeting.

COLLECTIONS

1. Ramsdell Spaces for Historical Commission

- The membership reviewed "Use-Square Footage Matrix for Ramsdell Library," prepared by Paul as a planning document for assessing new space options. The key missing pieces of information are the figures in the "Required Space Size" column for each operational area of the museum.
- All the special features and considerations for museum storage spaces don't have to be realized at once; they can be phased in. Gary reiterated the importance of citing past flooding in the Ramsdell basement and stressing the fundamental requirement of housing museum collection in a dry space.
- Paul will complete drafts of the matrix and a cover memo to Library Board chair, Ed Abrams, circulate to Commission membership for comments, make revisions as needed and send, with a cc to the Town Manager.

2. Mahaney Gift

- *Exhibit:* Marilyn has prepared a short list of 20 items from the donation (including Town Hall programs, letters, blueprints, church cookbooks, photos and books) as candidates for display at the Mason Library. Marilyn will check with the library about the availability of display cases and dates and Paul will help with design and labels. This is a good opportunity to not only show off new town treasures but raise the silhouette of the cultural and educational values of the town museum collection.
- *Media:* the exhibit opening can be the segue for the media release about the donation. Bill will also post the exhibition on our Facebook page

WHERE'S GREAT BARRINGTON? PROJECT

- Summary Project Planning Sheet: The membership discussed the planning sheet, (including a draft project goal, program concept, components of an individual entry sequence, media vehicles for the program, frequency, staffing and schedule, photography and next steps), prepared by Paul to express his understanding of the overall project and how it is intended to work.
 - *Goal and Concept:* Everyone agreed with the goal and concept.
 - *Components of an Individual Entry Sequence:* While Paul felt it would be less complicated to not have prizes for the winners, Marilyn suggested a special private tour and Malcolm recommended a "Where's Great Barrington?" t-shirt.
 - *Media Vehicles for Program:* it was agreed that Don's suggestion of the *Shoppers Guide*, with its high local circulation, was the first choice as the media carrier for the program, even though it lacked the editorial coverage, that would accompany the *Berkshire Record*. Each edition of

the program would be followed up with a Facebook entry. Malcolm will seek an entree with the *Shoppers Guide* through Chris Rembold.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UPDATING SMARTPHONE WALKING TOUR

- Marilyn and Malcolm met. While considering the option of presenting the "Where's Great Barrington?" program as a smart phone app, Marilyn and Malcolm concluded that our walking tours need to be more family-friendly-fun, especially including activities that animate interest and participation by children. They prepared a table of "Discovery" activities for each stop and the attendant additions needed on the app. The membership will think of other creative ideas to make the site more fun for kids.

REPORT ON MHC PRESERVATION CONFERENCE, LEXINGTON

- Don reported that the conference was well organized and attended (200 people). He attended the Community Preservation Act and tax credit sessions. In the latter, it was reported that non-profits can sell tax credits to other people to use; the process is very involved. Other lessons Don noted included: there is strength in unity through Historical and Historic District Commissions and historical societies working together on projects; one town purchased a property about to be demolished and resold it with tax deductions; the Historical Commission is in a better position to secure funding for museum collections than the Historical Society.

HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

- The Commission unanimously approved the edits in the current draft. Paul will incorporate them into the next draft and present to the HDC.

NEXT MEETING

- Monday January 6, 2014 at site to be determined.