

1772 MEETINGHOUSE RESTORATION COMMITTEE
MEETING

February 27, 2012

7:00 P.M.

NEW DURHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

Members Present: Cathy Allyn, Ann Kelley, Bob Craycraft
Others Present: George Gale

Call to Order – Chair Cathy Allyn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She said she would take the minutes of this meeting and future meetings.

Welcome New Member – The Committee expressed its gratitude to Ann Kelley for being willing to serve. Ms. Kelley recounted her family's hard work on the building during her son's Eagle Scout project.

250th Celebration – The Committee discussed possible involvement, and decided to host tours of the 1772 Meetinghouse in the morning and have an informational booth at the ballfields. Ms. Kelley said she could enlist her son and daughter-in-law to help with a professional looking informational sign. The Committee decided against having a float in the parade, as all members are too busy. Members agreed to meet again before the event, although timing would be difficult as Chair Allyn was going to be in CA, and Ms. Kelley, in France up until a few days before July 28.

Any Other Business – The Committee discussed the vacancy on the committee. Chair Allyn reported that the person contacted never responded.

Chair Allyn expressed regret that the Budget Committee is recommending an amount for the CRF much lower than that put forward by the CIP Committee. She said she wrote a rationale for funds (i.e. – monies need to be in the coffers to indicate to lending sources that the Town is behind restoration, or to qualify for matching grants) and passed it out to the BC to no avail. Members agreed that support from the Town might be more forthcoming if the Budget Committee and Selectmen came to the building, where the Committee could explain what needed to be done and what the committee was trying to accomplish.

Adjournment – The meeting adjourned around 8:15 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Allyn

Accurate notes of this meeting are in New York State and will be added to this version of the minutes upon recovery of same.

On May 21, 2012, during a work session, the Board of Selectmen made the following motion: **Motion by Selectman Kratovil that, as of this date, the 1772 Meetinghouse Restoration Committee has been given 30 days notice to produce some body of information regarding minutes and any money expenditures, and if not, all committee activities will be suspended as of August 1, 2012.**

Selectman Kratovil revised his motion.

Motion by Selectman Kratovil that 30 days out from this day, the 1772 Meetinghouse Restoration Committee will have submitted any minutes to the Board of Selectmen, and, if not, all committee activities will be suspended as of August 1, 2012. Chair Bickford said suspension of activities would mean there would be no more meetings. Selectman Jarvis added that the motion should include that all keys to the building would have to be turned in. **Second by Chair Bickford. 3-0.**

As chair of the 1772 Meetinghouse Restoration Committee, and as a private citizen, I believe the Board has mishandled the situation regarding the set of missing minutes, most notably with your motion of May 21.

No one on the committee ever led the Board to believe that the situation was being taken lightly – everyone is aware of the legal responsibility entailed upon both the committee and the selectmen. The Board, or individual members, were told that repeatedly. Yet, the amount of airtime devoted to denigrating the committee was directly out of proportion to what was actually transpiring.

Selectman Jarvis made the statement on May 21 that the committee chair has known for 60 or 75 days that the minutes were missing. Stated in such a manner, that made it sound like I was sitting around twiddling my thumbs, which is not the case. Following the Board meeting of April 2 when I reported that some minutes had not been turned in, I contacted the committee members and a citizen who attended some of the meetings for information, and I spoke with the secretary at the time. She asked her husband to check their home computer to see if the minutes were there. I spoke with the town administrator about the minutes of February 27 of this year, which I took, and explained my notes were in my car, which is in New York state currently. I told the Board all of this on May 7, the meeting prior to Selectman Jarvis's comment.

The timeframe we're discussing, then, is not 60 to 75 days. I started the wheels turning as far as they could at that point directly after the meeting of April 2. And, the important thing to remember is that it was not until May 7, only two weeks before the Board's motion regarding the committee, that anyone agreed on what to do about the missing minutes.

At that point, Alison reported that she had checked with the Local Government Center to determine how to recreate them.

I understand that publicly declaring that something hasn't been done for 60 to 75 days stirs up far more drama, but it was a misrepresentation. In fact, many of the Board's repeated statements concerning the situation were misrepresentations.

Other concerns that were voiced were completely unnecessary, as I had already addressed them and supplied information; but still, these concerns were stated over and over at meetings.

Regarding the worry of minutes being taken in the future, I assured the Board there would be no problem, as I would take them. At the meeting of May 7, I informed the Board that no decisions to expend funds were made at any of the meetings in question. Yet, in Selectman Kratovil's first motion, he included that the committee was to produce information regarding any money expenditures. Why include that, something that the Board had been told specifically had not occurred, unless the purpose was to blow a situation out of proportion?

The Board's motion may be indicative of why there are vacancies on committees. This Board's attitude is punitive rather than supportive. Instead of running to the Local Government Center after the April 16th meeting regarding shutting down the committee, the Board might have gotten together with the committee, or with me, to set goals that both sides found reasonable.

Remember, the ultimate goal was the same for both the Board and the committee - to get the minutes submitted. But it wasn't until May 7 that we knew how to complete that goal. And no one from the Board ever spoke about a timeline on May 7. Instead, two weeks later I was handed a formal decree that I had 30 days or else.

Setting a deadline is fine; in fact it's a good idea. But not without conferring with the people involved. That is heavy-handed and unprofessional; it would never happen in the workplace. And I'm not an employee, I'm a volunteer. No one asked about my personal situation this month, and if 30 days was doable for me, or if it would create a hardship.

I understand perfectly well the Board's legal responsibility, and there is no way I would ever put its members in jeopardy. Everyone here knows how responsible and dedicated I am - if I say I'll do something, I do it.

Everyone on that committee at the time in question was civic minded; each of us served on other committees, also. We were certainly not the

bunch of negligent fluffheads we were made out to be on air, so I can only assume the brouhaha and misrepresentations were a deliberate attempt to set the stage for a particular action. Members of the committee see themselves as a replay of another committee in town, which was done away with. It's conceivable that the Board will now allow the committee to spend time and energy at the 250th Celebration, and then disband us right afterward.

The Board would do well to take a lesson from Alison, whose initial reaction to our committee's situation was not to castigate, but to assist. She offered to put together the re-creations herself, if supplied with the meeting dates and those in attendance.

Whatever personal issues there are boiling under the surface of this situation, I would ask the Board that they be put aside. The real point of all of this is that the Town has a valuable landmark that needs to be preserved. Work needs to be done on the building. My house isn't going to fall down in the next two years either, but that doesn't mean I should neglect its maintenance. Common sense dictates that an irreplaceable piece of the Town's heritage be looked after. I would ask the Board to not lose sight of that fact.

In the discussion regarding the committee's charge, Selectman Jarvis brought up that there is no provision for membership of the town historian. The charge, however, does call for a partnership between the committee and the town historian. Actually, Ms. Orlowicz served on the committee. She left it in the fall of 2010.

I would like to bring up a point made by the town historian at the meeting of May 21. She said she had been reaching out, trying to get things working again. I'm not aware of her reaching out. As I said, she left the committee in 2010 and she has not contacted me about anything since then; nor has she contacted any other members of the committee.

Selectman Jarvis asked about those individuals who worked on the 1772 Meetinghouse in the 1980s. Ernie Vachon and George Gale were part of that group.

The week of May 28, I submitted the missing one agenda and three sets of minutes, along with a brief summary of a site walk held in August of 2011. I trust the Board found that information satisfactory. I would hope in the future there would be a greater attempt on your part at communication and working with a group of volunteers who serve their town.

people, and a concentrated effort to refrain from denigrating public comment regarding volunteers who serve their town.

I would ask this Board, why do you seem so eager to slam closed the doors of the meetinghouse?

All of the things they brought up at this May 21 meeting were addressed previously

This case is indicative of the fact that this Board is punitive rather than supportive.

So now you want me to go back to the committee, This smacks of playground behavior

The vetting policy is distasteful and puts people off. Volunteers shouldn't have to feel like they're facing the Inquisition. You might try a friendly phone call if you don't know the person involved – introduce yourself rather than calling a busy person before you to interrogate them and imply someone else might be better suited.