

Public Ceremonies Committee

Minutes of April 22 2009

7:00 Pm the meeting was called to order by Chairman Richard Turner in the selectmen's office
Wayland Town Building

The Following Members were present

Richard Turner Chair

John Dyer

Brendan Place (student Member)

Absent Karen Kiefer

Richard Brisk

7:05 Pm There was no public comment to be heard

7:15 Pm reading and approval of minutes from the previous 4 meetings

Administration

The committee approved the minutes of the previous 4 meetings with revisions

Vote unanimous

Approval of 2 invoices from chairman Turner invoice #1 \$291.00 invoice # 2 \$18.94

Voted to approve the expenditures in the amount of \$301.94 Vote unanimous

Agenda #1

The committee discussed the awards that were given at the town meeting action that the committee with the Board of Selectmen when we are scheduled for a meeting with them at this the schedule time and date is unknown.

Vote None

Agenda item # 2

Memorial day parade and logistics the committee discussed the parade and ceremony and Brendan Place volunteered to contact the pastor at St Ann parish to see if he could officiate at the ceremonies. Brendan would also contact the band director and arrange for 2 buglers for echo taps at the ceremonies .Also he will contact Mr. Delaney history Dept head for a student recite the Gettysburg address chairman Turner reported that Captain Victor Beck USNR will be the keynote speaker chairman Turner will contact him shortly.

The following item was not on the agenda

- Regarding the town crier article the committee consensus is that we all are in favor of placing the attached article in the news paper

WAYLAND - The Public Ceremonies Committee (PCC) had intended to remain silent on the matter of the Lydia Maria Child Award presentation until meeting with the Board of Selectmen as voted at Town Meeting.

We need to bring all the folks in town into more supportive relationships. We must not only practice diversity, we should celebrate our differences with tolerance and respect. Appreciating our differences will make Wayland a better place.

Near the end of Town Meeting, Lew Russell said "this all comes down to trust." Lew is absolutely right; we have to trust our officials. As Ronald Reagan said so diplomatically, "Trust, but verify." Verification is a piece of cake with open and transparent government. Otherwise, this is the under-appreciated work left for "watchdogs in the public interest." In a democracy the watchdogs are a necessary, valued piece of the checks and balances.

However, with the publication of the Town Crier letters attempting to explain the amendment and criticizing Moderator Peter Gossels on due process, we are obliged to bring forward what this incident is all about without embellishing the facts. Innocently or with complicity, these letters are part of a highly orchestrated campaign to stifle the responsible performance by the Public Ceremonies Committee when that conduct fails to please authoritarian top-down interests.

Contrary to these letters, our handout at Town Meeting means exactly what the words say. Regrettably, the Town Crier did not print the announcement, which was submitted, that the award has been named honoring Lydia Maria Child; it should have helped to notify citizens in advance.

Here are the facts as we know them. Over the winter months, we met and decided to name the award in honor of Lydia Maria Child because her writings uniquely coincide with what we believe is the intent of making this award. (The only other residents of possibly comparable stature would be Archibald Cox and Henry Kissinger.) Only after that choice did we settle on the idea of "Watchdogs in the Public Interest" for our 2009 award. In a democracy, watchdogs serve as an integral part of the checks and balances. In time, we considered, fairly and in good faith, a number of individuals and organizations before making our selections based on merit. The basis for the award was worded narrowly to be crystal clear why the award was given.

A few days after our early March meeting, a Public Ceremonies Committee member, John Dyer, gave the information to prepare the award certificates (along with a draft of our reason for renaming the award) to the administrative assistant of the town administrator, as has been customary. While meeting with John on another matter, the town administrator asked John to have one or more names removed or others added. John replied that the committee had selected the names and it would be up to them to remove or add anyone.

Shortly thereafter, John and another person met with a selectman on still another matter. At the end of that session the selectman told John he wanted to call him on something else. When John asked if it was about the award selections, he said yes. When John said it had been a committee decision, the selectman said it was "like a slap on the face." The selectman never made the call to John or to Richard Turner, chair of the Public Ceremonies Committee.

As requested, the PCC scheduled and posted notice of a second March meeting to reconsider the names chosen. No one showed up to present any reason for making changes, therefore after reconsideration we reaffirmed our earlier choices. However we did modify the words in our award statement so that it explicitly stated: "In making these awards we intend to infer no criticism of any public body or individuals serving in public office. And no one needs to agree with this entire set of people or their positions." With these changes we addressed the issue so that no one should feel offended.

Had these awards followed the normal course of presentation this matter would have been quickly forgotten. Because of the inappropriate and pernicious meddling, this matter has brought a degree of notoriety upon those who themselves attempted to fashion the award more to their liking. As for the PCC members we intend to present our rationale to the Board of Selectmen although this committee reports outside of their jurisdiction. It remains to be seen if they are unbiased and not involved in this matter.

There was yet another attempt to muzzle the PCC. The moderator was approached to restrain the PCC choices. He properly replied that while he appoints us, he does not direct or tell us what to do. Bravo, Peter.

When the amender rose to amend our motion, we were not aware that her motion would be made. Contrary to her claim that the renaming and awards to these individuals was a "surprise," she was already prepared with a typed motion in her hands! That evidence confirms the scuttlebutt that an e-mail network had been circulating on this matter.

How did such a network come about? It is not difficult to connect the dots. While this sub rosa means to rally the troops is not illegal, it is not truthful to claim "surprise" at Town Meeting. We admire the amender for her long and dedicated service to the town, particularly for her role in the League of Women Voters' Candidates Night. It saddens us to see her reputation soiled by this orchestrated effort to side-rail this award to oblivion.

The issue over "naming rights" is mostly chaff. Many named monuments exist about town. Some are on granite posts. Some are plaques. Some are on benches. Others are for scholarships. We are unaware of any rules or regulations covering this.

The PCC kept the town moderator, our appointing authority, fully apprised of our naming choice. At his suggestion we did modify part of the text in the naming statement. Also, this was informally passed to the president of the Wayland Historical Society who added her personal comments. We recall the naming of the Lokerville Green entangled several groups who were not often in agreement. Too many cooks spoil the broth.

We acknowledge that we might have publicized it better to solicit public comment. Still, it has been our practice to present the award as a surprise – an "aha!" moment – demonstrating a more thoughtful, than obvious, choice. We look for the unsung heroes. In the future we plan to solicit suggestions for recipients of the Lydia Maria Child Award, and let them come before the PCC to present their case. Our meetings are properly posted and open to all.

We are left with several questions. Whose water were the letter writers carrying? Did any town officials or town employees go beyond boundaries considered to be proper, forthcoming and reasonable? How did this situation find its way to a network of those with special interest? Would we be charitable to believe that those who are behind this power play were absent on the days the concepts of fair play, tolerance, appreciating alternative points of view, and equal rights were being taught?

Let's consider this situation as a learning experience for all.

The members of the Wayland Public Ceremonies Committee are Richard Turner (chairman), Richard Brisk, John Dyer and Brendan Place.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 Pm next meeting May 13 2009 at 7:00 Pm

Submitted By

Richard P Turner Chair