

Minutes
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission
March 5, 2018, 7:00pm
Meeting Room
Great Barrington Fire Station
37 State road
Great Barrington, MA 01230

ATTENDING:

- *Members:* Marilyn Bisiewicz, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, David Rutstein, Bill Nappo
- *Town Staff:* Chris Rembold, Town Planner

MINUTES OF JANUARY 8, 2018

- On a motion by Marilyn and a second by Gary, the Minutes of January 8, 2017 passed unanimously.

COLLECTIONS

Ramsdell Library Renovations and Shelving

- *Shelving:* Paul gratefully acknowledged the work of Gary and Don in calculating the weight loads and distribution and determining the most suitable shelving units to purchase that will comply with weight constraints and allow for facile access of the archival boxes for the Victor collection. Because of the weight concerns we have been following a cautious approach in fulfilling the goals of this project. This has also slowed its pace. Don's concerns of movement of the shelves during an earthquake and the confusion caused by the ease of rearranging them out of proper order by other organizations using the room notwithstanding, Paul felt that the advantages of shelves with wheels outweighed those without. As Bernie pointed out, the wheels make it much easier to move into new positions as needed. Too, lockable wheels or using braces to stay the units will preclude any inadvertent movement.
- *Final Weight Decision:* As it turns out, all of the conclusions and decisions for the weight load and distribution have been verbal among Don, the DPW chief and Building Inspector. To ensure that all voices in the decision are documented, we need a written policy statement that clarifies exactly what we need to do. This may require a structural engineer. Depending on the fee, our budget may be able to pay for this service that would provide conclusive guidance. Bill recommended the engineer with Barry Architects. Paul will discuss the situation with Sean at DPW and the Building Inspector to determine what we need to do to wrap up this project.
- *Work Table:* Marilyn revealed that she needs to lug a 6' table up the stairs for a work surface when she's working in the archives. Paul recommended the Commission purchase a table to leave on site.

Ramsdell Curatorial Housekeeping

- Gary expressed concern for the coating of dust on the second floor, probably from the work on the chimney. For sound stewardship, this dust should be removed, preferably as part of a regularly scheduled housekeeping program. Margaret Cherin had prepared this policy but it has never been closely followed. Paul suggested exploring the use of dust covers. Instead of hiring someone and spending the time needed to train and supervise, Paul and Marilyn agreed to volunteer to clean the area after the chimney work is completed in the spring.

Ramsdell Security

- Marilyn noted that the library desk is very diligent about checking who she is when she requests the door key when she is volunteering there.

Archival Use Policy and Form Draft

- The Commission reviewed the most current draft. Paul thought it was sound policy and procedures. However, it doesn't provide specific guidance about requests for photographs verbally promised by Don to his subjects. Bob at the Historical Society said that he gets weekly inquiries about this matter. There is a conflict between honoring Don Victor's wishes and maintaining the integrity of the collection. If duplicates are given away, or copies are scanned or Xeroxed there needs to be a fee structure and someone needs to be in charge of handling and recording these transactions. Bill suggested requiring a donation from individuals making requests. Paul noted that giving away pieces of a museum collection without following a formal deaccessioning policy and procedure violates

museum ethical and legal standards. We need to consult an archivist in the field who has experience in these matters. In the interim, Gary recommended we handle each request on a case by case basis.

HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY UPDATE AND TOWN WEB SITE

- *Summary of Plan:* Paul summarized the plan to provide the public access to the survey through first issuing binders of hard copies and then via on-line outlets. Chris Rembold remarked that the survey is already being used via a request from the owner of 910 South Main. Gary also requested the form for the Tefft House for a contractor working on the site.
- *Status of Binders:* He reported that he has just completed the fourth draft of the introduction to the binders which presents the background, context, table of contents, street index, National Register contexts and recommendations and useful information about the National Register for the consumer. Once this preliminary organization is completed, the Commission will have a printer, such as Kwik Print, print copies (four: Mason Library, Ramsdell Library, Town Planner, Town Historical Collection) of the forms. Each page will be inserted into a sheet protector and placed in a binder. Paul requested comments on the draft from Commission members.
- *Digital Access:* Too, Paul will provide Malcolm with all digital contents so he can execute the transfer to on-line outlets.
- *Media Release:* A media release needs to be released when these milestones are met. Perhaps a presentation can be made to the Selectmen.

SEARLES POWER HOUSE DOCUMENTATION

- The Commission reviewed a memo for the record from Paul about a February 15, 2018 on-site conversation with Powerhouse Square developer, Mike LNU. The former powerhouse had been demolished and was a pile of bricks. They will be moved to the mason's for use in construction of a replica. Chris Rembold noted that the bricks were in such deteriorated condition that they could not be re-used. Mike saved the windows and doors which are being stored in his shop. The pieces, or their sections, that are sufficiently stable will be reused in the replica. Mike agreed to comply with Paul's request he donate those original parts not used to the Commission. Mike did not know the status or whereabouts of the cast iron boiler door or the brass gauges and pipes that were in the building. Mike made photos of the building which he will use in the replication. Paul offered to share the Commission's photos and provide help with the project plans. He felt that the best location of the replica is on the Searles property, along the fence line and facing Memorial Field. Although appreciating the developer's efforts, Paul expressed disappointment that the powerhouse will have minimal original fabric and that the Commission didn't get to the demolition site soon enough to rescue the boiler door and gauges.

SEARLES HIGH SCHOOL UPDATE

- Paul reported that he had exchanged e-mails with Vijay Mahida regarding the removal of objects and architectural fragments from the building. In January Vijay referenced Item #4b of the town's Special Permit Conditions regarding "the preservation of selected artifacts" and asked where they are to be stored. Paul responded with the most recent list of materials and a request to notify the Commission when they are to be removed so we can direct them to the appropriate location (listed in the "Storage Location" column of the list. To date we have not received a reply. Chris Rembold recommended a follow-up e-mail to him.
- If the property is ever re-sold, Chris said that the same restrictions would apply.

FY19 BUDGET AND WORK PLAN

- *Background:* Paul reported that because the town is experiencing financial constraints and demands for the forthcoming fiscal year (2019), it has imposed a budget of \$2,000 for the Historical Commission, in place of our prepared request for \$7,490. A heavy part of the town's rationale is the existence of the Commission's remainder funds and donated funds accounts totaling \$14,046 (this figure doesn't include the \$7,490 (less expenditures) in the FY18 budget).
- *Estimate of FY19 Budget Amount:* Thus in preparation of the work program for FY19, the Commission can anticipate an available budget (as of this date) of \$14,406 + any unspent FY18 budget monies + \$2,000 for FY19.

We will continue to update and execute the plan for spending down the funds on priority projects (see: *Project Options For Historical Commission Remainder Funds*)

ST JAMES PLACE PRESERVATION RESTRICTION AGREEMENT

- Chris Rembold explained that as part of the Community Preservation Committee's requirement for awarding a grant to St. James Place for their roof preservation project, they must agree to a historic preservation restriction on the building. The agreement, which helps protect the architectural character of the building, includes a description of the property (including the sanctuary and the parish house), references to key identifying architectural features that must be retained in their current condition, and requires that the owners will not raze the building. There is no provision for inspections. It is a formal agreement that will become a part of the deed.
- The Great Barrington Historical Commission is empowered to hold a preservation restriction agreement.
- Paul saluted Fred and Sally Harris for sensitively preserving the building and restoring its utility and aesthetic presence in the community. If they hadn't stepped forward, the building would not exist today.
- A motion by Bill and second by Marilyn for the Historical Commission to accept the Preservation Restriction for St. James Place passed unanimously.

CITIZENS' SPEAK

- Sharon Gregory is planning to organize a "Great Barrington Historic Downtown Day" event in May to celebrate the historic buildings in the Main Street area and requested the addresses of pertinent structures, on an Excel spreadsheet. Paul suggested consulting MACRIS address search options. He will also try to copy and paste the addresses from the file title pages in the current survey.
- In response to the discussion on the remainder fund accounts, Sharon requested if some of these monies could be directed to help support the design and fabrication of an exterior panel introducing Great Barrington historic buildings. It would be located somewhere in the downtown area. Chris Rembold said that this concept was discussed in Master Plan meetings. Bill thought that this sort of project would be more suitable for the Historic District Commission. Chris responded that the HDC is more concerned with specific buildings, not a town-wide scope that the panel project entails.
- Paul stated that the Commission has already established priorities for the projects that the funds will support. However, the Commission would be glad to consider a proposal for the project but in the context of existing priorities. He said it should be specific with detailed information about the text narrative, illustrations, graphic design, size, location, fabricators, timeline, budget and who would be doing it. Sharon suggested that her proposal be made a part of item no. 8, historic interpretive panel program, on the priority list. She also said she would work on the project, along with Bill who volunteered to help. Gary suggested a downtown kiosk structure.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Marilyn reported that a large chunk of Flag Rock had recently broken off and fallen away, changing the contour of the feature.

NEXT MEETING

- Monday, May 14, 2018 at 7:00pm. Site to be determined.

ADJOURN