

Minutes  
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission  
January 9, 2017, 7:00pm  
Small Conference Room, Town Manager's Office  
Great Barrington Town Hall  
334 Main St.  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

ATTENDING:

- *Members:* Marilyn Bisiewicz, Don Howe, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, David Rutstein
- *Guest:* Chris Rembold, Town Planner

TOWN HALL RESTORATION: Chris Rembold

- Chris reported that the town is seeking a Historic Preservation Projects Fund grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission for the Town Hall roof. The project includes full replacement of the asphalt shingles, repair/replacement of trim, and complete replacement of the membrane on the flat roof section. The total cost of the project is \$250,000 and the Town hopes to reach this goal with matching grants of \$150,000 from the CPA and \$100,000 from MHC. Chris noted that the maximum request for a MHC grant is \$100,000 and because of their budget limitations it is unlikely they will receive the full amount. Chris requested a letter of support from the Historical Commission which would help make the application competitive. The deadline is mid-March.
- On a motion by Gary and a second by Marilyn the Commission voted unanimously in favor of sending the letter of support. Paul will draft the letter and coordinate with Chris.

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 14, 2016

- On a motion by Gary and a second by Don, the Minutes of November 14, 2016, passed unanimously.

COLLECTIONS

Archivist

- Gary reported that Bernie is enthusiastically delving into the organization of the Don Victor Collection. His wife is providing volunteer assistance.
- Paul thanked Gary for his back-breaking effort to pick up the archival supplies Bernie requested at University Products in Holyoke and deliver to the Ramsdell.

Don Victor Collection

- *Storage:* The Commission needs to continue to address the challenges of securing a permanent storage area that will accommodate the sheer volume and weight of the collection. The Ramsdell second floor serves this purpose but with severe limitations of stacking height and dispersal of the boxes on the floor. Eventually they will have to be placed on shelving for easy access by users. Don cited the need to make as accurate a determination as possible of the weight in order to make informed decisions about its future physical organization on the floor. The extra weight of the acid-free folders will have to be added as well. As the current banker boxes are too unwieldy and are not archival quality, Bernie is replacing them with smaller, easier-to-handle acid-free cartons.
- Gary will ask Bernie to calculate the weight of the collection and Don will figure out how high the boxes can be stacked. If the boxes are shelved, weight dispersal can be better achieved by eliminating legs on the shelving units and placing the units on boards to spread out the weight load.
- *Cataloguing and Disposition of Duplicates:* an important curatorial management decision needs to be made concerning the disposition of the large number of duplicate and near-duplicate images in each file. Practically, they can be used to fulfill Don Victor's wish to share the photos with their subjects and maintain key originals for the collection. However, they also add to the ponderous bulk of the collection. On the other hand, is the high number of copies and near-copies an important revelation of Don's art, technique and/or the intellectual content of the collection? Paul recommended consulting with an archivist experienced in these matters for guidance. In the

end, a clear policy statement needs to be written to assure uniformity in preserving the disposition of the collection.

### Lucien Aigner Collection

- Marilyn reported that she has filed 28 boxes of the Historical Society's Aigner collection.

### Veterans' Graves Book

- Chris reported that the Town thinks this document is important and unique and wants to issue a media release about the book's preservation, accessibility and significance. Gary will submit two paragraphs to Chris who will draft the release.
- Gary reported that he has provided copies of the PDFs on disks to the Berkshire Athanaeum and Mason Library. The Historical Commission also has TIFFs of the data.
- Paul thanked Gary for his leadership in bringing the project to fruition and for Malcolm's technical guidance in the computer software aspect of the program.

### A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

- Paul reported that he is researching the Foundation Directory Online (at the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation office) for foundations that could potentially support the church restoration project. To date he has found 76 possibilities. The next steps are to review their programs and giving histories, as well as their Forms 990, in detail, in order to pare down the list to a prioritized and manageable number.
- Paul also prepared a one-page summary of the historical significance of the church for use by the Clinton Church Restoration committee.
- Marilyn noted that W.E.B. Dubois was firmly connected with the Congregational Church whose congregation paid for his Harvard education.
- The Commission acknowledged the tenuous condition of the church structure, noting the moisture problems in the basement, the result of water run-off from the adjacent hillside.

### HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

- Paul reported that the survey is progressing pretty much on schedule, having completed Phase 2 and starting number 3. He thanked the sub-committee members for proof-reading and commenting on the sample completed inventory forms submitted by the consultants. He found their work to be well written, scholarly, well documented and thorough.
- Final List of Sites to be Included on the Inventory: Paul distributed the draft final list. To meet the total authorized number of 136 sites to be reviewed and the priorities the Commission established in the RFP, Larson Fisher Assoc.'s (LFA) will cover the Brooklyn neighborhood (approximately 135 properties) and Risingdale (approximately 47 properties) on Area Forms and 45 individual (and heretofore unlisted) sites, selected as priorities by the sub-committee, on Building Forms. (Note: evidently the total number of sites on the Area Forms is compressed because of grouping the properties). Some addresses on the list still need to be filled in. The Mass Historical Comm. has approved. The membership made the following comments on the list.
  - No. 5 34 Bridge St. (former Laramie's Cleaners): As this c. early 20th century building will be razed as part of the Co-Op Market Project, LFA will prepare a form to document its appearance and history.
  - No. 6 42 Bridge St. (Searles Estate Powerhouse)
    - ✓ Even though it is attached to the former Dempsey Garage Quonset hut, Don stated it should be considered as a discrete structure.
    - ✓ Its future is fragile as it occupies the site of a future parking lot for the Power House Square condominiums. The power house is not within the boundaries of the Local

Historic District and the HDC is exploring with the developer and John Dewey Academy the possibility of dismantling the building and rebuilding it on the Academy property for their reuse.

- ✓ The Dempsey garage complex (to be razed as part of the Power House Square development) should also be documented with a Form B.

The Commission agreed that because the buildings will soon expire, LFA should complete the forms for no's 5 and 6 first. Don noted that the documentation and recognition the forms accord to the buildings will be supportive of the HDC's efforts to save the building in a new location.

- No. 21 (Wheeler and Taylor building): Gary recommended that its location on the site of the Old Stone Store be included on the form.
- No. 27 (Brookside Manor, GB Housing Authority): Gary asked why this complex is historically important. Paul will check but surmised it's early public housing in town.
- No. 31 (17 Mahaiwe Rd [sic]): Change to Mahaiwe St.
- No. 32 (29 Mahaiwe Rd [sic]): Change to Mahaiwe St.
- No. 33 (38 Mahaiwe Rd [sic]): Change to Mahaiwe St.

#### REVIEW OF FY17 BUDGET AND WORK PLAN

- Members reviewed the "FY7 Budget and Work Plan Implementation Sheet," prepared by Paul.
  - Gary pointed out that the Archival Supplies expenditure for \$1,493.15 to University Products should include the 15% discount.
  - Don will ask Josh Craine if the Daedalus estimate for annual Newsboy maintenance includes treatment of the stone base and pedestal.
  - Don will follow up with the DPW chief on the status of the installation of HVAC in the entire Ramsdell Library and coordination with the HC.
- FY18 Budget: Paul will prepare a draft and e-mail to everyone for final discussion and vote at the next meeting.

#### MASS MEMORIES ROAD SHOW

- Great Barrington Libraries are considering sponsoring a "Mass Memories" project, sponsored by UMass-Boston. It is a public history project that scans and preserves digital images of family photos and memories brought in by the public. The program does not copy images from institutions, such as the HC archival collection. It is a free event operated by a local planning group and the project team. The library has asked if the HC would be interested in participating. Marilyn will attend the informational meeting on January 23 and report at the next HC meet.

#### CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Don will continue his discussions with Chris Rembold. He noted that this designation would be very helpful in access to state funding and preservation programs and that it only requires approval by the Selectboard, not by a Town Meeting vote.

#### CITIZENS' SPEAK

- No participants

#### OTHER BUSINESS

- None

#### NEXT MEETING

- Monday March 6, 2017 at a place to be determined.