

Minutes  
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission  
July 11, 2016, 7:00pm  
Meeting Room  
Great Barrington Fire Station  
37 State Road  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

ATTENDING:

- *Members:* Marilyn Bisiewicz, Malcolm Fick, Don Howe, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, Bill Nappo, David Rutstein
- *Guest:* Robert Kroll, Director, Great Barrington Historical Society

MINUTES OF MAY 2, 2016

- Gary noted that the full name of the "Robert" included in the Don Victor report is Robert Tepper.
- Paul will insert this edit.
- On a motion by Malcolm and a second by Marilyn, the Minutes of May 2, 2016, with the edit, passed unanimously.

COLLECTIONS

A. Ramsdell Environmental Controls

- A key collection care priority for the town historical collection is to stabilize the temperature and relative humidity in the second floor of the Ramsdell Library. This goal coincides with a library-town initiative to install a new HVAC system in the Ramsdell building, which Library Committee chair Kathy Plungis recently reported to Paul. The library intends to seek a grant to fund this project.
- Don, who has been exploring environmental control options for the Historical Commission, reported that Joe Sokul is working with an engineer investigating a "split system," which is a compressor located outside the building and the unit on the inside. Unfortunately, there is no funding for this project. Bill stated that he had looked into this type of system two-three years ago. The system would require electric upgrades in the building. Whatever system is chosen, an important feature is transportability, allowing the Commission to move it to a new site should that become necessary.

B. Don Victor Collection

- Weight Load Ramsdell Second Floor: According to our estimate, the total weight of the 160 boxes of photographs is in the two ton range. In response to Paul's request for guidance, Assistant Building Inspector Anthony Barnaba recommended consulting with a structural engineer to determine if the second floor can support this weight. Don, who doesn't see a problem but agreed that this needs to be confirmed, will check with the Building Inspector. Another option is to ask Joe Sokul about hiring an engineer to make the calculation.
- Management Issues: Bob Kroll reported that many people are asking for access and acquisition of the pictures in their files. This is in response to Don's wish to give the images to those who request them. There are also many files that aren't related to Great Barrington and thus outside the scope of our collection policy. Paul stated that we can't ignore Don's wish, as he had expressed to Gary and Bernie Drew, and that providing the images to those who request could be a win-win because there are so many duplicates both parties could have the same images. A receipting system and negotiations with the individuals would be needed, as well as assistance in identifying the subjects and dates. As to the non-Great Barrington photographs, the cataloguing process has to determine if the significance of his body of work is its artistic value, i.e. Don as a photographer, and/or its historical value, a record of late 20th century Great Barrington.
- Priorities: The basic steps needed to secure the collection include: acquiring legal title to the collection for the Historical Commission through completion of a Memorandum of Gift; determining if the

Ramsdell can support the weight load; moving the material from its present storage in a pod on the Historical Society grounds to the Ramsdell; and cataloguing the collection. Gary will settle the Memorandum of Gift component of the process.

- **Funding for Project:** Bob Kroll requested the Historical Commission pay the bills for the storage boxes, pod rental and move to the Ramsdell. The estimated costs are \$800 for the boxes, \$80/month for the pod and \$500 for transporting the material. It was emphasized by Gary and Don that the Commission and Society work hand-in-hand to preserve local history, including shared space in the Ramsdell Library, and had to act fast to save the Victor material. It was agreed that as the collection will be stored in the Ramsdell second floor and the packing, storing and transporting expenses will be paid from the Commission budget, the Commission will be the owner.
- **Motion:** Malcolm offered, and Paul seconded, the following motion concerning this project: The Great Barrington Historical Commission authorizes payment of up to \$1,100, from its current budget, for documented expenses incurred as part of its project to preserve the Donald Victor Collection. Costs include: rental of the storage pod for up to six months, purchase of storage boxes and transportation of the collection to the Town Historical Collection, second floor, Ramsdell Library. Payment(s) are contingent upon: the availability of sufficient funds; affirmation that the library second floor can support the weight of the collection; and execution of a Memorandum of Gift between the Society and the Commission.

The motion passed unanimously. Gary abstained because of his connection to the Society as its archivist.

#### C. Veterans Graves Book

- Gary reported that Buddy Atwood turned over the books that were compiled as part of a WPA project to record information about veterans' graves in town. The goal is to preserve the books and make them accessible on-line to the public by scanning and digitizing their contents and making it searchable by researchers. Margaret Cherin has secured estimates from Chicago Albumen Works: \$1,062 for scanning and digitization and \$1.50 per each \$1,000 value while on site for insurance.
- Malcolm asked: how can the public access the PDF data files, where will the digital material be stored and what is the search engine? Everyone agreed that this is an important project but we need to know these details of the end game (i.e. how the public can get access to the data) before we can proceed. Gary will direct these questions to Margaret. Paul noted that we also need to determine how this project compares to other priorities in our work plan and budget.

#### NEWSBOY PROJECT PLANNING AND TIMELINE

- Thank You:** Paul thanked Bill, Gary and Don, the *ad hoc* committee who dedicated their time and expertise to successfully executing this project.
- Fountain Pump:** Bill reported that the pump, with automatic shut-off when there is no water, works well but the Devil's head plumbing is clogged preventing a free flow of water. He worked with Gilmore Heating and Plumbing to resolve the problem. He notes that the pump and lines need to be drained in the fall ahead of the winter freeze. Too, responsibility for pump maintenance and the resupply of water needs to be assigned. It takes about five gallons to fill the horse trough. Paul will discuss these issues with Joe Sokul
- Invoice:** The Daedalus conservation bill was \$22,190, the base price. The \$11,450 contingency in the budget was not spent. In response to Bill's detection of some areas on the base that needed more work, the conservators returned to successfully resolve these problem areas.
- Booklet:** Gary reported that he has completed 80% of the booklet and will next have a graphic designer put it in final form. Marilyn suggested including the Lucien Aigner photograph of newsboys posing by the fountain.
- Landscape:** The juniper bushes need to be removed and replaced with grass.

- F. Event: The event is scheduled for Monday October 10 (Columbus Day) at 10a.m. The program will be straightforward with an introduction, thank you's and description of the work by Paul, a summary of the statue's history by Gary with the re-reading of Col. Brown's one-minute speech at the original unveiling, and disbursing copies of the booklet (free). For publicity Bob will send an e-mail blast to the Historical Society membership announcing the event. Gary will e-mail Bob photographs to use in the blast.

#### HOUSATONIC SCHOOL

- In response to MHC's request for additional photographs and information about the school and the Housatonic Community Center ("Housy Dome"), Bill assembled a thorough portfolio of interior and exterior views of the school. Paul will complete research on the Center and draft the reply package for Jennifer to send to Boston.

#### HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY UPDATE PROJECT STATUS

- The RFPs have been distributed and advertised with an August 15 reply by date. A small *ad hoc* committee will convene to review and rate the proposals in accord with MHC's specific guidance and instructions. The names of potential members include: Chris Rembold, Bernie Drew, Don Howe and Paul. Bernie has not yet confirmed and Marilyn volunteered her service if he is unable to participate. Paul noted that the town's comprehensive insurance requirements for contractors could be a problem as many small contractors don't carry a full scope of coverage. The Town Counsel did insert wording that could allow for some flexibility and negotiation.

#### REVIEW OF FY16 BUDGET FINAL FIGURES

- FY16 Budget: In reviewing the "FY17 Budget and Work Plan Implementation Sheet," Paul noted FY16 remainder funds included \$4,295 for the archivist and \$5,672 from other expenditure items leaving a \$9,967 remainder. This amount (if the Town Manager approves of a carry-over) plus the \$7,740 Fy17 budget would total \$17,437 in available funds for FY17.
- The FY17 budget includes: \$5,000 for the archivist position; \$2,145 for archival supplies and furniture; \$50 for Newsboy monument maintenance; and \$275 for the walking tour brochure.
  - Final Figures for FY17: Paul will check with Lauren if the Town Manager approved the carry over amount and confirm the amount of actual funds available for FY17.
  - Newsboy Annual Maintenance: Don noted that if the GBHC undertakes the Newsboy maintenance with volunteer labor, the \$50 budget is insufficient to cover the cost of staging and insurance. He felt that the safety risk liability and the hassle of installing and working on staging would not be worth any savings of an in-house project. He recommended that the Commission join with the Historic District Commission to hire Daedalus perform an annual inspection and remedial treatment of the Newsboy and Winged Victory monuments and the exedra in front of the Town Hall. The project would also include a condition and treatment report for the statue's conservation file. The Commission's share would be \$1,500. The annual date for this treatment would be in the spring of 2017. Because the expenditure is not included in the FY17 budget, however, it could be a part of the FY18 budget and the work completed in the fall of 2017.
  - Veteran's Book Project: We need to answer the questions raised about the project and reach a decision about when it will be done. This will be a deviation from the original expenditure plan.
  - Environmental Control Measures for the Ramsdell: There may be possible expenditures for this project, depending on the outcome of the town's plans for a HVAC system for the building.

#### AME ZION CHURCH BUILDING

- The building is an important local landmark and listed on the National Register. Gary reported that Richard Stanley had called the Historical Society and suggested they take on the task of preserving the building. The Society is unable to undertake this project because of insufficient funds and staff. The Commission will need to

compile material on the building and be vigilant about the plans for its sensitive use and preservation of any new owner.

#### NOMINATION AND VOTE FOR HISTORICAL COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVE TO COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

- The Commission has been notified by the town to nominate its representative to the Community Preservation Committee for FY17. Paul lauded Bill's work and thanked him for his participation on the committee; the extensive amount of time reviewing applications, interpreting policy and spent at meetings required great dedication which Bill clearly exhibited. In response to Malcolm's suggestion that perhaps another member of the Commission would be interested in serving (as evidenced by the last round), no one stepped forward. Malcolm made the motion, and Paul seconded, that Bill continue as the Commission's representative on the CPC. The Commission voted unanimously in favor.

#### PRESERVATION MASSACHUSETTS MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC RESOURCES PROGRAM

- The Commission reviewed the handout about the program. Paul included it in the meeting packet to alert members about the program and with the idea that it might serve as a model for a similar program in Great Barrington in the future.

#### CITIZENS' SPEAK

- There were no participants in Citizens' Speak.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

- Belcher Square Trolley Shelter: Gary reported that this structure is deteriorating significantly. The roof is rotting and the cement crumbling. He suggested that the Commission consider seeking CPA funding to preserve the shelter.
- Demolition Delay: Don reported that he met with the Planning Board about the Demolition Delay bylaw. He believes although there was some misunderstanding, there is still common ground; we should continue to pursue it. He and Malcolm will work together and prepare recommendations.
- Certified Local Government: Don and Chris Rembold want to pursue this designation for Great Barrington. Paul will accompany them when they brief the Town Manager, who has expressed positive interest in this program.
- Historic District Commission: Don reported that there is a vacancy on the HDC and is seeking suggestions of names to fill the slot.

#### NEXT MEETING

- Monday September 12, 2016 at 7:00 pm at a place to be announced

#### ADJOURN

- Motion made, seconded and passed unanimously.