

DRAFT Minutes

Great Barrington W.E.B. Du Bois Legacy Committee

Town Hall, 334 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230

Minutes of the Wednesday, November 28, 2018 Meeting

The meeting opened at 5.20 pm. Attending were Barbara Dean, Emily DeVoti, Julie Fagan, Wray Gunn, Justin F. Jackson, Reginald Leonard, David Magadini, Gwendolyn VanSant, Randy Weinstein, Stephanie Wright. Also attending was Ed Abrahams, Select Board liaison for the committee.

Absent: Leah Reed, Freke Vuijst

1. Call to Order

Chair Randy Weinstein called the meeting to order at 5.20.

2. Approval of the minutes.

The minutes for the meeting of October 17, 2018 were reviewed by the committee. Barbara Dean found an error and asked that Virginia Orlowski to Vivian Orlowski. With that amendment, Wray Gunn moved to approve the minutes. Reginald Leonard seconded.

3. Updates

Homeless Unity Day

David Magadini presented documentation of the state proclamation of Homeless Unity Day, as was requested at the last meeting. He handed the following out to the committee and asked that it be added to the public record:

Section 12QQ: Homeless Unity Day

Section 12QQ. The governor shall annually issue a proclamation setting aside February twentieth as Homeless Unity Day and recommending that such day be observed in an appropriate manner by the people.

As February twentieth falls within the annual birthday celebration of Du Bois, Mr. Magadini proposed that we find a way to observe the day as part of the festival.

Mr. Magadini also distributed information to the committee on state proclamation Section 12NN: Human Rights Day (December 10th) and Civil Rights Week (December 8 – 15th) and proposed that the committee set aside these days as an opportunity to further the committee's mission. The committee agreed to review these documents and discuss them at the next meeting.

OLLI Update

Gwendolyn VanSant asked that the committee members put January 25, 2019, from 3:30 to 5pm on their calendars, so that the entire Legacy Committee could be introduced at the first OLLI class.

The new line-up for the class is as follows:

1/25: Intro session with Town of Great Barrington Du Bois Legacy Committee, moderated by Gwendolyn VanSant and Randy Weinstein, followed by a performance of *Beyond the Veil* at the Mahaiwe (7pm).

2/1: Dr. Justin Jackson, professor of History at Bard College at Simon's Rock

2/8: Leticia Haynes, VP for Institutional Diversity and Equity at Williams College

2/15: Reverend Sloan Letman IV, Second Congregational Church, Pittsfield

2/22: Dr. Tasha Alston, Assistant Professor Educational Psychology, Western Carolina University, "the Legacy of Dr. Du Bois: The significance of the global citizen; Social Justice for the betterment of society as a whole"

3/1: Dr. Mary Nell Morgan, professor of political science at SUNY with Dr. Frances Jones Sneed, retired professor of MCLA, co-founder of Samuel Harrison House.

***Beyond the Veil* update**

Emily DeVoti updated the group on the progress of the play. Shakespeare and Company is casting right now. All seems to be going well.

Budget update

Gwendolyn reported that she and Emily DeVoti met with Greylock Credit Union to request funding for the festival. They have agreed to donate \$5,000. This is currently ear-marked to cover speaker fees for OLLI and MLK day, banner installation and take-down, press material/releases/flyers, and \$700 towards *Beyond the Veil* (or more, pending actual cost of banners). They have also offered to make introductions to potential donors at other financial institutions.

Ms. DeVoti and Barbara Dean will meet to craft a fundraising letter, for: St. James Place (for the Du Bois Birthday), Salisbury Bank, Berkshire Bank, Lee Bank, Wheeler and Taylor, Berkshire Taconic Foundation.

A Program sub-committee meeting is scheduled for Saturday, December 1, at the Du Bois Center for more fundraising and program planning.

Du Bois Educational Series update

UMass will sponsor a day of basketball scrimmages at Monument High School on December 1st to engage youth in the topic of Du Bois. Teams from Monument and Mt. Everett will meet to scrimmage throughout the day and there will be a talk by Dennis Powell (NAACP), Whitney Battle-Baptiste (Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Center at UMass), and Cliff Warren (asst. head coach, UMass Basketball).

February 27 – March 1, the Jubilee Kids from Philadelphia will be visiting. They will visit the UMass Library and on March 1 have a tour of Great Barrington preceding their presentation at the Mahaiwe.

Mason Library Update

Randy Weinstein updated the committee that the focus of the exhibition of original documents at the Mason Library will focus on Dr. Du Bois as a global citizen, featuring original letters from Thomas Mann and Albert Einstein to Dr. Du Bois about world peace, and pictures of Du Bois with world leaders. The exhibition will open in January.

Mr. Weinstein also presented the committee with a copy of Whitney Battle-Baptiste's new book, *W.E.B. Du Bois's Data Portraits: Visualizing Black America*, which Dr. Battle-Baptiste has given to the town of Great Barrington. Dr. Jackson suggested a book talk and signing to coincide with the exhibit at the Mason Library; Mr. Weinstein will follow up.

MLK Interfaith Program update

Chaplain Kathleen George, the coordinator of the Program from the Interfaith Alliance, attended. She confirmed that the First Congregational Church has offered to host the noontime speaker/s event.

Ms. VanSant explained to Ms. George that we are adding a day of service to the program, then transitioning into the traditional 12 pm time slot, for which we are planning a panel discussion with confirmed participants Wesley Brown (Simon's Rock) and Justin Jackson (moderator), while awaiting confirmation from Dr. Frances Jones Sneed.

Ms. VanSant has attained an intern from Smith College, Chantal Leven (co-owner of Rhythms in Lenox) to help coordinate the day of service. Ms. Leven will take this volunteer opportunity as the Social Justice Project part of her graduate work at Smith.

Ms. VanSant has already organized a painting project in the Macedonia Church. She has reached out to local high schools. She and Ms. Levin and colleagues at BRIDGE will reach out to local non-profits.

The committee asked Ms. George to ask the First Congregational Church if, in addition to the noon time slot, the church can also host the early portion of the day, as a place for people to gather and do projects for the day of service, and to meet to be shuttled to their service sights. The requested time is 8 to 8:30am, for a 9 – 11:30 working slot, followed by the 12 noon panel. The committee also asked Ms. George to confirm the Interfaith Alliance’s support, for their fundraising networks from the past, etc.

Du Bois Birthday event update

Keynote: The invitation is out to Deval Patrick.

Other ideas for the keynote address include Dr. Battle-Baptiste, Mary Nell Morgan. And Amilcar Shabazz (UMass).

The plan for the birthday is a musical presentation, set up by Barbara Dean, following the great success of last year’s musical tribute in St. James Church. The committee still needs a location for this. Ms. Dean will contact St. James, and she and Ms. DeVoti will craft a letter asking if they can subsidize the cost.

4. New Business

Human Rights Commission

Ms. VanSant informed the committee that the US Department of Justice has invited the Du Bois Legacy committee to become an official Human Rights Commission. Ms. VanSant suggested that the committee create that council as a subcommittee, with its mission to “promote human and civil rights and harmonious community.”

She handed out an information page on the Medford (MA) Human Rights Commission as a model. The purpose of that committee is “To protect the civil rights of Medford residents, reinforce a positive community atmosphere, work with community groups and agencies to educate, promote understanding to eliminate prejudice and intolerance, and to mediate within the community whenever needed.”

Ms. VanSant explained that this mission seems aligned with the Legacy Committee’s official mission to “To preserve and promote Great Barrington native W.E.B. Du Bois's legacy as a scholar and activist for freedom, civil rights, progressive education, economic justice, and racial equality.”

The Commission concept also aligns with the Town of Great Barrington’s Trust Policy and Order, which was adopted by the town at a Town Meeting in May 2017. From that meeting came a mandate to form a Trust Policy Advisory Group to hear complaints pertaining to issues covered by the Trust Policy, and for the group to sit down with Chief Walsh and the Town to

resolve these grievances. Ms. VanSant proposed that this Human Rights Commission, as housed by the Du Bois Legacy Committee, serve that role.

Ms. DeVoti made a motion: That the committee form a subcommittee that will house the Trust Policy Advisory Group as outlined in the 2017 Town of Great Barrington Trust Policy.

Discussion: Selectperson Ed Abrahams said that this is not something that the Committee can vote on and finalize; it must be presented to the Selectboard.

Committee members, including Ms. VanSant and Mr. Magadini, felt that this is within the scope of the committee's power. But collectively the committee agreed to amend the motion.

Ms. DeVoti made an amended motion: That the committee wishes to form a subcommittee that will house the Trust Policy Advisory Group as outlined in the 2017 Town of Great Barrington Trust Policy. The committee also agrees that the next step is to approach the Great Barrington Select Board to towards this end. **Ms. Dean and Mr. Leonard seconded the motion.**

VOTE: All in favor except Mr. Magadini.

Ms. VanSant made a motion: That, provided that the Select Board agrees to the Legacy Committee housing the Trust Policy Advisory Group, the Du Bois Legacy accepts the invitation to join and the Massachusetts Human Rights Commission. **Mr. Magadini seconded the motion.**

VOTE: All in favor: Unanimous.

5. Residents Speak

Jim Manning, of Great Barrington, proposed that we become a sister city of Ghana, Africa. Mr. Weinstein agreed to add this topic to the next meeting agenda.

Tim Likarish, of Great Barrington, wished to express the importance of giving cities a place for citizens' human rights to be discussed and heard. "So, thank you, Gwendolyn."

6. Next Meeting - Adjournment

The next W.E.B. Du Bois Legacy Committee meeting date is set for Tuesday, December 18th from 12 noon to 1.30pm at the Great Barrington Firehouse.

Mr. Jackson made a motion to adjourn. Julie Fagan seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 6.15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily DeVoti
Recording Secretary