

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

Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road, Great Barrington, MA 01230

FINAL Minutes of the Wednesday, March 13, 2019 Meeting

Attending: Emily DeVoti, Julie Fagan, Justin F. Jackson, Reginald Leonard, David Magadini, Gwendolyn VanSant, Freke Vuijst, Randy Weinstein, Stephanie Wright.

Absent: Barbara Dean, Wray Gunn, Leah Reed

Also attending: Berkshire country residents and dedicated Du Bois volunteers Tim Likarish and James Manning, and Great Barrington resident Fionn DeVoti Roland.

1. Call to Order

Chair Randy Weinstein called the meeting to order at 5:43 p.m.

Mr. Weinstein made a presentation to the committee. The official metal plaque marking the Du Bois Homesite, property of the U.S. Department of the Interior, disappeared from the sight 40 years ago. It was recently returned to Mr. Weinstein, anonymously. Mr. Weinstein presented the plaque to the committee.

2. Approval of the minutes.

The minutes for the meeting of February 2019 were reviewed by the committee.

One change was noted by Julie Fagan, regarding the Historical Society's event on May 11: "It will discuss Elizabeth Freeman's case for freedom and the ~~affects abolitionists~~ *impact the end of slavery* had on the lives of African Americans in the Berkshires." Change accepted.

Julie Fagan made a motion to approve; Freke Vuijst seconded. Vote: approved, unanimous.

3. Financial Update

To date, the committee has not heard back if the \$2500 from the town of GB's Celebration fund will be available to the committee to pay outstanding expenses for the 2019 festival. An official Financial Update will be presented by Ms. Vuijst at the next Legacy Committee meeting.

4. Human Rights Commission Update

David Magadini referred to a letter that he sent to all committee members (most were not received until this actual meeting); it was a copy of a letter he sent to the Board of Selectmen along with a personal note to each committee member asking for support regarding "penalization of GB Eats for refusing to serve me breakfast on February 21, 2019."

The committee discussed the issue, and in the conversation it was declared that the Legacy Committee does not know its role right now in being involved in Human Rights or in having a Human Rights Commission within the Committee.

Mr. Magadini said that any ten citizens can put an article on the Town Meeting Agenda.

Ms. VanSant said that the directive that selectman Ed Abrahams gave us was to present the request to the Select Board. The Committee tabled this issue until after the Du Bois Festival and celebration.

Mr. Jackson said that he feels it would be injudicious to move forward without a mandate from the town. Mr. Weinstein agreed.

Ms. VanSant declared that the next step is to bring the Committee's request to house a Human Rights Commission to the Select Board.

Ms. Vuijst made a **motion**: That the Committee approach the town Select Board and ask for clarification on how they would like the Du Bois Legacy Committee to support the four values outlined in the committee's mission. Seconded by Mr. Jackson. Vote: unanimous in favor.

5. Du Bois Statue

Ms. Fagan requested information about a proposed Du Bois statue. She heard that an application was sent to the Historic District Commission (of which she is a member), and it was sent back for clarification and additional signatures.

Ms. Vuijst spoke as a private citizen involved in the statue proposal. She said that she and her husband Danny Kline have collected additional signatures of abutters to the proposed location of the statue, and that a revised application is on its way to the Historic District Commission.

Ms. Vuijst was speaking as a private citizen, and Ms. Fagan was speaking as a member of the Historic District Commission. Ms. VanSant and Mr. Weinstein reiterated that the Du Bois Legacy Committee itself has no involvement with the statue.

6. Du Bois Legacy Award Criteria

Mr. Weinstein asked: what should be the criteria for the Du Bois Legacy Award?

Mr. Jackson proposed: a resident of Great Barrington, or someone who is not a resident, who has dedicated his or her self to the history of Du Bois or has embodied, furthered, or advanced the issues he stood for.

Mr. Magadini said that the goals and objectives laid out by the town should be the criteria.

Ms. Vuijst said that she will look at the criteria Harvard sets for their Du Bois award.

Questions: How frequent? Annual? How many recipients per year?

Process: How far in advance should the committee create a short list? Does the committee pull a call for submissions/recommendations in the local paper? What is the timeline?

Whoever is interested in helping to establish criteria should research and gather ideas for the next meeting.

The current plaque – created this year to honor inaugural recipient David Levering Lewis – will be on display in Town Hall.

7. Upcoming Du Bois Speaker Added

Mr. Weinstein has invited Du Bois scholar Dr. Phillip Luke Sinitiere (UMass Du Bois Center Visiting Scholar) to speak at the Mason Library Saturday, March 23rd from 1 – 3pm at the Mason Library.

Subject: Resisting Repression: W.E.B. Du Bois's Relationship to Cold War Surveillance

Mr. Weinstein suggested that the Legacy Committee ask to partner with UMass to bring some of their visiting scholars to Great Barrington as the second leg of their lecture circuit, throughout the year. There was a general enthusiasm for this idea. Logistics would need to be considered such as ideal frequency of these talks, funding for an honorarium, and venue location.

8. Du Bois Legacy Festival 2020

Ms. Vuijst suggested the committee begin early this year (Spring 2019) to plan the festival.

Mr. Weinstein said that he will contact Wesley Brown about performing a staged reading of his play. To present the play, funding must be found, specifically the Committee must look into finding a Creative Arts Partner with Berkshire Taconic Foundation. Mr. Leonard said that he will look into this – he will make an introductory meeting with Berkshire Taconic and return to the committee with next steps.

Jeff Peck, Du Bois's great Grandson: Mr. Leonard suggested that we find a hotel for him this time, as well as a rental car so that he has more mobility while he visits.

Someone should research hotels or B&Bs who might offer a discount or donate accommodations.

Festival 2020 timing: Du Bois's birthday will be on a Sunday in 2020.

Ms. DeVoti suggested that the celebration offerings be presented in shorter segments— with a clear time schedule so that attendees know how long they are committing to (the events have been going over schedule by about an hour) even if this results in more, shorter offerings.

The following tentative schedule was suggested:

Saturday, Feb. 22nd: MaryNell Morgan and Wanda Houston sing the Sorrow Songs

Sunday, Feb. 23rd: the actual Du Bois Birthday Celebration at the morning service at Macedonia Church.

Ms. VanSant spoke to budget: what the committee spent for the 2019 festival celebration, start to finish (including banner installation), cost about \$12,000.

She suggested that the Committee needs to start fundraising now for 2020.

Committee ideas of who to approach: Insurance companies, more banks, marijuana companies (who must donate a certain amount to local non-profits annually), realtors, etc.

Ms. VanSan nominated Ms. Vuijst as Treasurer for the Legacy Committee. Mr. Leonard seconded. Vote: all in favor, unanimous.

Ms. VanSant said that she has Legacy stationary for anyone who is writing Thank You notes.

9. Citizens Speak

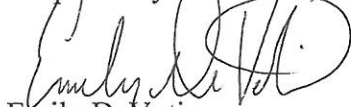
It was announced that Simon's Rock will host its annual W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture on Tuesday, March 26th with scholar and activist Dr. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor.

10. Next Meeting – Adjournment

The next meeting date was set for Wednesday, April 17th from 5:30 – 7:00pm at the Firehouse.

Ms. DeVoti made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Vuijst seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:08pm

Respectfully Submitted,



Emily DeVoti

Recording Secretary