

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

Zoom Teleconference

Minutes of Wednesday, November 17, 2021 Meeting.

Open Meeting; All votes are roll call

Attending: Gwendolyn VanSant Randy Weinstein, Sloan T Letman IV, Stephanie Wright, Thasia Giles, Tim Likarish, Emily Williams, Sara Mugridge

I. Call to order at 6:15 by Chair; reading of town mandate by Vice Chair

II. Review / approve minutes

Ms. Giles motions to approve, seconded by Ms. Wright, approved by all

III. Updates

- A. Mr. Weinstein read an update from Mr. Abrahams about his meeting with Ms. Carmel. In sum, if a non-profit acts as conduit, it cannot be a “funnel,” but can raise tax deductible money. Ms Mugridge suggested that this is an answer to a question the committee did not ask. Rev Letman agreed that the committee is not trying to start a non-profit. Mr. Weinstein offered to email the entire message. Ms. VanSant noted that this is affirming what we knew. Mr. Likarish pointed out that the committee has been asking for advice and specific steps and hearing the town say “no” rather than providing counsel. Rev Letman noted that we already have the precedent of having BRIDGE act as fiscal sponsor. Any organization should be mission appropriate given Du Bois’s stature in the town. Ms. Mugridge added that what we don’t have precedent for and question remaining is MOU. Rev Letman requested that the committee look at the MOU for Friends of Library or BIFF. Mr. Likarish proposed that if a process and model do not exist, then town’s legal should write the guideline. Ms VanSant suggests the committee needs to move forward with something clearer and cannot ask any non-profit to go into this without clarity. Agree that there is a need for a short-term solution for this year and continued pursuit of a long term solution.
- B. Ms. VanSant updated the committee that Jeff Peck reached out for town support in honoring mother’s passing on Monday morning. Ms. Van Sant noted that this decision is a demonstration of the impact of the town’s work to honor Du Bois’s legacy and represents a homecoming for the family. Mr. Peck and family would like to see the play written about Yolande performed - perhaps this could be an event during the festival? In addition to conversations about marking the gravesite, discussions about producing the play are in progress with a commitment to partner from Shakespeare & Co.
- C. Ms. VanSant updated the committee on talks with the Mahaiwe, which is holding dates. Currently discussing costs.

- D. Ms. Giles reported that Brooklyn-based dance company Urban Bush Women who have been connected for a number of years to Berkshires. They are at the beginning of a 2-year development of new work H'aint Blue with the full company. JP, Mass Moca, Williams, and many community partners are involved. Company is researching sites specific to African-American history, the land itself, and embodied histories in the Berkshires. They were at MassMoca last weekend, and visits in GB area included CCR, Housatonic River Walk, Homesite, Ashley House, Samuel Harrison House, 2nd Congregational Church, looking at familial lines and histories and stories of elders and ancestors, reflecting on what has been lost and what can be recovered. Urban Bush Women are looking for sites for April 2023; next visit in April 2022. There is an opportunity for advanced planning to build connection & moments of intersection. It would be appropriate to reach out as a committee.
- E. Ms. Giles reached out to CCR and Rachel Fletcher who has confirmed interest and seeks to know about next steps forward.
- F. Ms. Giles reports playing phone tag w/health office in GB re: guidelines on gatherings.
- G. Mr. Weinstein updated the committee that the Executive Director of the museum foundation in NYC taking on stewarding the Du Bois Center in Accra visited GB about a week ago. It was a short visit - 1 hour 15 min. Selectboard members Mr. Abrahams and Ms. Davis gave tours of the town. Jefete was inspired. Will continue to update on developing relationship/partnership.
- H. Ms. Wright confirmed that the First Congregational Church will be available for use for the festival. Rev .Tara just asks for updates.
- I. Dr. Williams wrote a sponsorship letter and asked if we have moved forward on any yet. She said she has held back on reaching out to speakers for panel or keynote and on specific asks. Ms. VanSant suggested further conversation about fundraising, because that will dictate the resources available to pursue programming.
- J. Dr. Williams noted that most conferences still are being projected for remote participation. If we decide to go in that direction, that will impact costs. For speakers, more may be inclined to participate and it would then be appropriate to send a gift box to celebrate, support, and respect peoples' involvement. One suggestion includes looking to Clark-Atlanta U Center to partner for a celebration panel. They would likely see that as something they would want to do. We would ask the president(s) to speak as well.

Discussion continued, with consensus that hybrid would be well-suited for the festival events and possible for Mahaiwe to host. Preference is for the Wednesday birth date itself, and the event would include keynote, panel & Legacy Award. Ms. Mugridge suggested that with the collaboration of so many educational institutions, we might consider campus "viewing parties." Dr. Williams confirmed she will reach out to

prospective panelists. Mr. Weinstein suggested Gerald Horne (U Houston) and/or Craig Harris would be interested in doing the keynote.

Rev. Letman asked if the committee had decided who would do the keynote? Mr. Weinstein affirmed that was not the case and no commitments had been made. Rev. Letman proposed that we make the decision as a committee. Ms. Giles noted that the keynote should amplify the theme. Dr. Williams offered to collect names and send bios out for consideration this evening, then proposed Dr. George French, president of Clark Atlanta. Locally, Mr. Weinstein suggested Justin Jackson would be interested in doing something. Ms. Giles asked if a returning speaker would be possible, and Ms. VanSant emphasized the powerful connection Dr. Rabaka made with youth in his 2018 speech. Ms. VanSant also suggested Dr. Francisca Oyogoa.

In addition to speakers and panelists, Ms. Van Sant asked to follow up on performances, but noted we still do not have a full accounting of what we have available for engagements. This has always been an important part of the festival.

K. Finance update from Mr. Likarish [\[link to report\]](#)

Fisk Singers 1500-2000 for a speaker; Discussed ensued about approaching as partners rather than only exploring with their agent.

Pending organizational asks & outstanding grant applications (total ask 4500)

Ms. VanSant asked when we will be hearing back from grants, and Mr. Likarish responded that he will have something to report at the end of month, but the LCC grant is not announced until the end of January.

Members discussed next steps in securing partners and sponsors. Dr. Williams clarified that asks come from leadership with members supporting the connection. Member commitments:

Ms. VanSant will cont talking to Mahaiwe, can make a cold call to Fisk unless someone has a relationship

Rev Letman will collaborate on Jubilee Singers outreach.

Dr. Williams will reach out to CAU & five institutions for support.

Mr. Weinstein shared that he has reached out to Wheeler & Taylor & Ward's.

Per Mr. Likarish's suggestion, Mr. Weinstein will try again to reach out to the Sociology Dept at UMass.

Ms. Mugridge will reach out to Simon's Rock and Davis Center at Williams.

Committee discussion turned to the possibility of voting on the budget as-is. Ms. VanSant raised concern about the continued lack of clarity. Mr. Weinstein offered to follow up with Mr. Abrahams, and Rev Letman reiterated that we need a clear understanding of processes and an MOU. Mr. Likarish suggested he can take the proposed budget to the town and ask for clear guidelines about how to carry it out. Following Ms. Van Sant's suggestion, Mr. Likarish will direct questions to Mr. Rembold who may be of assistance. Ms. VanSant and others commented that the situation is unfortunate and also contradictory to values of equity. Dr. Williams asked to return to the question of forming a 501c3 with a separate board at a later date.

IV Old – New Business

A. Committee secretary - nominations

Mr. Weinstein nominates Ms. Mugridge, Dr. Williams seconds. Ms. Mugridge expressed interest with the caveat that she is not available at the next meeting. All in favor. Ms Wright volunteered to take notes at the next meeting.

B. Du Bois festival and Feb 23, 2022, birthday celebration - see above

- a. Dr. Williams will send keynote bios, and Ms. VanSant and Mr. Weinstein will collect input.
- b. Ms. VanSant reviewed roles.
- c. Mr. Weinstein requested to follow up on the play. Ms VanSant brought an update, and stated that we still need to figure out financial pieces. Will be planned, but we need clarity and then ways we can connect.
- d. Ms. VanSant confirmed attendees at the next program meeting can discuss how we can create a central calendar for partners.

V Announcements / Citizens Speak / Adjourn

Meeting adjourned 8:04