

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

Zoom videoconference

Final Minutes of the Wednesday, January 13, 2021 meeting.

Attending: Barbara Dean, Emily DeVoti, Thasia Giles, Reverend Sloan Letman IV, Tim Likarish, Sara Mugridge, Randy Weinstein, Stephanie Wright.

Absent: Leah Reed, Gwendolyn VanSant, Emily Williams.

1. Call to Order

Randy Weinstein called the meeting to order at 6:22pm.

Mr. Weinstein asked Secretary Emily DeVoti to run the meeting for him because of the technology. Ms. DeVoti tried to log into the town Zoom account for 20 minutes, but the password was not working. Therefore, the group moved to a private Zoom call based on the following information on the mass.gov website for public meetings during the exceptional time of Covid-19 restrictions:

“The executive order provides that a municipal public body that, for reasons of economic hardship and despite best efforts, is unable to provide alternative means of public access that will enable the public to follow the proceedings in real time, may instead post a full and complete transcript, recording, or other comprehensive record on its website as soon as practicable after the meeting. “

The committee will therefore post a “comprehensive record” of the meeting in the form of these thorough minutes, to be posted as soon as possible — with an intent of within 10 days from the original meeting.

All votes at this meeting will be made via roll call.

2. Review of minutes

Motion: Barbara Dean made a motion to approve the December 2020 minutes.

Second: Thasia Giles.

In favor: all; opposed: none.

3. Treasurer’s Report

Mr. Likarish reported that in the overall Town Budget, there is a “Celebrations Budget” which the committee might request funding from, to supplement the cost of the 2021 Du Bois Legacy Festival. That town budget currently has a balance of \$4,813.70 unspent.

Mr. Likarish asked: how can we apply for this? This is a question for the town.

The Du Bois Legacy Committee's budget, allocated by the town, is \$5,000, all of which is unspent. However, the festival cost may exceed this amount.

Mr. Likarish reported that there was a meeting on 12.22.20 between Multicultural BRIDGE, Mr. Likarish (as Treasurer of the Du Bois Committee), and the town to discuss reimbursement of expenses paid by BRIDGE on behalf of the committee and awaiting reimbursement since February 2020.

In July, the town said that the Du Bois Committee could use its Donations Account to reimburse BRIDGE, and that this could happen after the end of the fiscal year ending in July 2020. They confirmed this via email at the time. The delay was due to the town's request of additional financial documents from BRIDGE.

The town has now received all necessary documents from BRIDGE. However, at the 12/22/20 meeting, the town said that they are unclear if the funds could indeed be used to reimburse BRIDGE at this point in the year.

So the issue is still unresolved, and BRIDGE has still not been reimbursed.

On another topic, Mr. Likarish mentioned that the committee had hoped and agreed to pay Dr. Emily Williams \$500 for her role in organizing the line-up of scholars for the 2020 Du Bois Legacy Festival (she was not yet a committee member at that time). When he asked for this payment to be made, it was drawn to his attention that the committee had not formally voted on this fee at the time.

Motion: Mr. Likarish made a motion to approve a stipend of \$500 for Dr. Emily Williams for her role in planning the 2020 Du Bois Legacy Festival.

Second: Sara Mugridge

In favor: all. Opposed: none.

4. Updates

Grants Update

Mr. Likarish reported on the meeting of a Grants sub-group of himself, Dr. Williams, Ms. Mugridge, who met to talk about grants and funding, as agreed upon at the December meeting.

Mr. Likarish said that both Berkshire Bank and Greylock, who have funded the festival in the past, require an organization have a 501(c)(3) to apply through, in order to grant

funding. In the past this not-for-profit fiscal sponsor was BRIDGE, who is no longer in that role.

Mr. Likarish said that the committee needs to follow up with Ed Abrahamson, who suggested at the last meeting that The Friends of the Library could serve that role for the Legacy Committee.

However, most grant applications will not be processed or responded to before the festival, so the Committee needs to function within the confines of the allocated Committee budget of \$5,000.

Ideas:

1. members of the committee reach out to local businesses for sponsorship.
2. Ask the town for fund from the Town of GB's Celebration Budget.

Ms. Mugridge suggested the committee write up the program budget, then submit to the town with a request for fund from the Celebrations Budget.

Mr. Likarish said that this is another example of where the Committee needs to keep working with the town on process for fiscal sponsorship and reimbursements, so the Committee can present a new fiscal sponsor with a clear process and thus pursue grant opportunities in the future.

Mr. Weinstein said that he will follow up with Mr. Abrahams on The Friends of the Library and their willingness to be a fiscal sponsor.

Du Bois swag

The committee will revisit this point when Ms. Reed is back in attendance.

Festival Program Sub-Group Report

Ms. Dean reported back on a meeting between the program committee (Ms. Dean, Ms. DeVoti, Rev. Sloan, and Mr. Weinstein) and the Mahaiwe Theater (Michael Beuth, Janis Martinson), a meeting facilitated by Ms. Giles:

The Mahaiwe was very enthusiastic about co-hosting the Du Bois Legacy Festival events this year.

The Mahaiwe offered to host the program "Deeper Than the Skin" with Reggie Harris and Greg Greenway on its Zoom platform and to market the event on its website and to its mailing list. They will also support the meeting's technical requirements during the event. Tentative time for this event is Sunday, February 21 at 3pm.

The Mahaiwe also offered to film the Du Bois Birthday Celebration event on its own stage. The plan would be to film individuals participating in the program, one or two at a time, a couple of weeks before the event. Then the Mahaiwe will edit this footage into a video to premier at the appointed time (tentatively: February 23, 6pm.) The video can then also be posted on the Mahaiwe's YouTube channel afterwards and also embedded on their website — as well as wherever else the Committee would like it to be viewed (such as the Du Bois 150th website).

Other programming news:

Rev. Sloan heard back from the Fisk Jubilee Singers. They are not currently performing, due to Covid-19. They would charge \$1,500 for one song and a spoken intro, but the Committee would also have to pay to have a crew go to the Fisk campus to record the event. The committee agreed that it would be better to revisit the possibility of Fisk when Covid restrictions are lifted, also giving the Committee time to raise more funds — perhaps even as an event to coincide with the 2021 Du Bois Homesite Commemoration.

Ms. Giles said that regarding Joanna Haigood, Jacob's Pillow will be focusing on a different even they are hosting on Saturday, Feb 20: a virtual dance party in collaboration with the 10x10 festival and Downtown Festival. However, the Pillow will be happy to lift up the events of the Du Bois Festival at that event.

The committee agreed upon the following schedule for the birthday celebration on Feb 23, 2021:

The Birthday Celebration Program

The committee agreed to accept the offer from the Mahaiwe theater to prerecord the event at the theater, one or two speakers/performers at a time. The Mahaiwe staff will support the recording and will make a finished video to launch on Feb 23 and also on the theater's YouTube channel. It can be embedded on their website.

The goal is to have a master of ceremonies introduce the evening.

1. Event welcome and intro by Du Bois Legacy Committee: **2-5 minutes**

Possible gist: This has been a big year for Du Bois and Great Barrington...and the country at large, even, if we wish to make that connection here to the current racial justice movement and Du Bois's work as influential to this moment.

2. Selectboard presents W.E.B. Du Bois Day and reads the Proclamations: **5 minutes**

3. W.E.B. Du Bois Middle School naming celebration: **15 minutes**

Ben Doren and Peter Dillon speak on the renaming of the middle school

Video footage of the school receiving and hanging a portrait of Du Bois at the school.
Students speak about why this naming is significant for them.
Perhaps a teacher of color from the school speaks?

4. Performance: Wanda Houston and Mary Nell Morgan sing their collaboration on *The Sorrow Songs*: **30 minutes**

5. Du Bois Legacy Awardees: Ray Gunn and Reggie Harris
Each awardee is introduced (5 min each), each awardee accepts with speech (5 min each): **20 minutes**

6. Jeffrey Peck, Du Bois's great grandson, speaks: **3-5 minutes**

Tributes: Within the festival, the committee wishes to acknowledge the contributions and passing of Freke Vuijst and also Fritz Lord.

Totally run time: 1 hour, 20 minutes

Still to work into the program: Input from Frances Jones Sneed and Whitney Battle-Battiste, if they are interested in participating. Roles could involve a brief intro to the school naming and its significance and/or the overall resonance of Du Bois at this moment in history/ Black Lives Matter movement.

The committee also discussed a virtual celebration dinner within a week after the virtual events, but the plan was not finalized. Last year, the committee spent \$1,500, but this year, those funds may not be available, so individuals may need to all buy their own meal. Pleasant & Main could be approached to prepare and sell these meals, to go.

Mr. Giles suggested a community reflection after the event, perhaps in tandem with the virtual celebration dinner.

Mr. Weinstein said that he would:

- approach Ms. Van Sant to see if she would like to M.C. the event.
- ask the town for a representative to read the Proclamation of Du Bois Day.
- approach the library, to see if the committee can present one of the Du Bois photos stored at the library and present it to the middle school.
- ask the town how to move the process forward to put up the banners this year.

Ms. Mugridge will approach a first year Monument Mountain student and activist, Noellia, who spoke on the School Board Committee Meeting about the significance of the naming

of the school in honor of Du Bois (at the meeting where the naming was voted upon.) She will see if this student is interested in speaking at the Birthday Celebration event.

Ms. Dean will check with Mary Nell Morgan and Wanda Houston to see if they would like to record their event at the Mahaiwe, in person.

Ms. Dean will introduce "Deeper Than the Skin" on the Zoom call on 2/21/20.

Motion: Ms. DeVoti made a motion to approve the following expenditure for the 2021 Du Bois Legacy Celebration:

Performers, \$2,000 (\$500 each to Wanda Houston, Mary Nell Morgan, Reggie Harris, and Greg Greenway)

Plaques (for Du Bois Awardees and the photos for the middle school: \$200

Banners, \$2,000

1-2 speakers + M.C. for the event = up to \$600

Motion: Emily DeVoti,

Second: Stephanie Wright,

In favor: all. Opposed: none.

Total: \$4,800 approved.

5. Community Speaks

Ms. Mugridge announced that BRIDGE just began its MVP (Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program) Climate Justice training for the Town of Great Barrington. She said that members of the Legacy Committee are eligible to attend, and given the mission of the committee, she encouraged whoever is able to do so.

It was agreed that as, due to technical issues, this meeting was compromised and public access was not available, that the committee will meet in one week's time to review everything discussed at this meeting and vote again on motions made.

6. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn Ms. DeVoti

Second: Ms. Wright

In favor: all; opposed: none.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 pm

Next meeting: Wednesday, January 20 at 6:00 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily DeVoti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Emily" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "DeVoti".

Emily DeVoti

Recording Secretary