

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

Mason Library, 231 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230

Minutes of the Wednesday, October 17, 2018 Meeting

The meeting opened at 6pm. Attending were Barbara Dean, Emily DeVoti, Julie Fagan, Wray Gunn, Justin F. Jackson, Reginald Leonard, David Magadini, Leah Reed, Gwendolyn VanSant, Freke Vuijst, Randy Weinstein, Stephanie Wright. Also attending was Ed Abrahams, Select Board liaison for the committee.

1. Call to Order

Select Board member Ed Abrahams called the meeting to order. He asked for a volunteer to record this session of the meeting. Emily DeVoti volunteered.

2. Introductions

The members of the new Great Barrington W.E.B. Du Bois Legacy Committee introduced themselves and talked about their interest in Dr. Du Bois and in being on this committee as well as outside affiliations.

3. Review State Ethics Protocol

Mr. Abrahams explained that committee members can bring their affiliations into the meeting and committee, because it's a small town, but know that the goals of the Legacy Committee are what must foremost be pursued here.

Mr. Abrahams mentioned the Conflict of Interest eLearning module that all town employees and committee members must complete. All who have not should check in with Town Clerk Marie Ryan.

4. Review Open Meeting Law Protocol

Mr. Abrahams reviewed the Open Meeting Guidelines, which include that meetings be announced to the public with a minimum of 48 hours advance notice, that the agenda be submitted 48 hours in advance through town hall, and that the meeting take place in a publically accessible building. He also stated that a quorum of this committee cannot meet and discuss committee-related topics outside of this meeting.

5. Review Mission of the Committee.

Mr. Abrahams reviewed the mission of the committee, which can be found on the Town of Great Barrington website:

Mission: 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 committee will do this through town-sponsored events and programs.

Possible examples include:

Du Bois Day celebration

annual Du Bois Festival (from MLK Day through Du Bois's birthday on Feb. 23)

banner installation

classes, seminars and guest speakers

collaborating with UMass and local educational institutions and arts, historical and community organizations

keeping a rotating year-long display of Du Bois artifacts at the Mason Library

Mr. Abrahams noted that the committee members have unlimited terms. But if committee members find they cannot make meetings consistently, they should consider stepping down as there was more interest in this committee than actual seats available.

6. Election of Committee Officers

Randy Weinstein was nominated Chair by Ms. DeVoti. Gwendolyn VanSant seconded. He was unanimously elected.

Gwendolyn VanSant was nominated Vice Chair by Mr. Weinstein. Leah Reed seconded. She was unanimously elected.

Emily DeVoti was nominated Recording Secretary by Barbara Dean. Reginald Leonard seconded. She was unanimously elected.

7. Discussion Re: W.E.B. Du Bois's Legacy

Mr. Abrahams explained that there was a temporary Du Bois Legacy committee formed last year for the task of celebrating the 150th anniversary of Dr. Du Bois's birthday. This committee has continued to meet in an ongoing way since the birthday, and it brings some ongoing projects to the official Committee. Members of the Committee explained the plans in progress and discussed how to handle them as a committee.

An OLLI course on W.E.B. Du Bois, a follow-up to last year's very successful OLLI course/lectures on Du Bois. Randy Weinstein and Gwendolyn VanSant will again lead this class. The theme this year is: W.E.B. Du Bois, Global Citizen, Rooted in the Berkshires. The class will be held Fridays from January 25, 2019, to the end of February.

There are plans to present a staged reading of *Beyond the Veil*, a play about W.E.B. Du Bois by Emily DeVoti, directed and presented by Shakespeare & Co., on January 25th in the evening at the Mahaiwe Theater. The play will be part of the Du Bois 2019 celebration and will also be part of the OLLI course.

Banners that were created last year to honor Du Bois (reflecting Du Bois's core principles of racial equality, progressive education, civil rights, and economic justice), and were hanging along Main Street for the festival and beyond, have been in storage. There is a cost for the banners to be hung again. But the Committee does not yet have a budget.

A motion was made that the Select Board take ownership of the banners and pay to have them put up and down every year. The motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

The question of a budget for the Committee was raised. Mr. Abrahams recommended that now is the time to talk with the Town Manager about a budget for the next fiscal year. Freke Vuijst volunteered to approach the Town Manager.

In the absence of a budget, and with the upcoming annual Du Bois celebration to take place within 3 months, certain concerns and questions were raised:

If an event is sponsored by the town, can admission be charged?

Can the committee fundraise on behalf of the town?

Wray Gunn introduced Vivian Orlowski of the Interfaith Committee and Southern Berkshire Clergy Association. Ms. Orlowski explained that the Interfaith Committee has been hosting the Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration for the past 19 years (2019 would be its 20th anniversary). She said that Dr. Du Bois has been part of the keynote speech for many years – how King was inspired or influenced by Du Bois. Ms. Orlowski submitted a document stating: “In light of the death earlier this year of Interfaith Committee president Phyllis Weiss and since the Southern Berkshire Clergy Association is now focusing on interfaith clergy dialogue, not task-oriented projects, it’s urgent to transition MLK Day leadership and planning as soon as possible.” Ms. Orlowski has requested that the W.E.B. Du Bois Legacy Committee assume responsibility for this event.

The committee expressed concern that they have too many other events already in process, and the timing is short. Instead, Mr. Weinstein made a motion to create a Program Subcommittee for the planning of events related to the Du Bois celebration, from MLK Day through March 2019. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

David Magadini said that he would like to include Homeless Week during the Du Bois celebration, corresponding with an official state proclamation designating Homeless Week the last week of February – as the date falls within the dates of the Du Bois celebration and the issue of homelessness and respect for the homeless falls under the values of Dr. Du Bois. This led to discussion of what the scope of the Du Bois celebration should be. Some

committee members said that only Du Bois events should be considered – at least in this early stage of the committee, when there are so many events already in place that need to be managed. Others agreed that homelessness might be a topic to address as a committee. Mr. Magadini made a motion that Homeless Week be included in the 2019 Du Bois Celebration; the motion was not supported. But Ms. VanSant suggested it might be addressed on MLK day, which is traditionally celebrated as a day of service. Ms. Reed suggested that Mr. Magadini make a copy of the state proclamation, do some more research, and present findings to the Program Subcommittee.

Among other Du Bois promoting work done by the temporary Du Bois Legacy Committee prior to the formation of this official committee of the town: There is a display case in the Mason Library that will be dedicated to Dr. Du Bois. Mr. Weinstein and Ms. DeVoti have been discussing exhibit ideas with Amanda Martinson DiGiorgis, director of the Mason Library, and have been in touch with the DuBois Library at UMass Amherst, who have agreed to lend original Du Bois artifacts and archives for the purpose of this display. The tentative topic for a first exhibit is: the Du Bois Homestead. Speakers and other events (student readings, artwork, etc. inspired by Du Bois) may be planned to coincide with the presentation of each new library exhibit. The goal is to have the first exhibit open in December 2018 or January 2019.

8. Citizens Speak

Michel Paul Richard, of New Marlborough, a sculptor, has been preparing a bust of W.E.B. Du Bois. It will be ready by December, and he will offer the Town of Great Barrington the right of first refusal. He offered to show pictures to the Committee and any audience members after the meeting.

Vivian Orlowski asked who in the committee to talk to about the MLK event. She was directed to the newly formed Program Subcommittee.

9. Other Business

Ms. VanSant announced the Schumacher Society's Annual E.F. Schumacher Lectures, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of W.E.B. Du Bois on October 27th at St. James Place: "Towards a New Reconstruction: Land, Racism, and Economic Emancipation," with Leah Penniman and Ed Whitfield. She said that the Schumacher Society has invited Dr. Du Bois's great-grandson, Jeffrey Peck, to come to Great Barrington for the event as a special guest. She further explained that once Susan Witt (of the Schumacher Society) heard about the inauguration of the Town's Legacy Committee, she immediately wished to include the Committee in welcoming Mr. Peck and has invited any interested committee members to join him for dinner after the event on October 27th. Those from the Committee who do attend will do so at their own expense.

Mr. Weinstein made a motion to invite former Governor of Massachusetts Deval Patrick to be the keynote speaker for the Du Bois Birthday Event on February 23, 2019. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

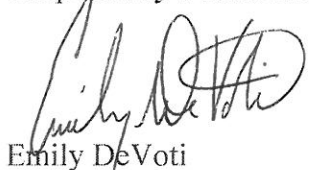
10. Selection of Next Meeting Date

The next W.E.B. Du Bois Legacy Committee meeting date is set for Tuesday, November 13, 2018, at 6pm in the Town Hall Select Board meeting room, if the elevator is fixed; or if not, then again in the Mason Library.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm, after which time Mr. Abrahams took a picture of the Committee for the Town website.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily DeVoti", written over the printed name.

Emily DeVoti
Recording Secretary
12/4/18