

## **Sharon Historical Society Interim Board Initial Meeting, Jan. 7, 2021 MINUTES**

Present: Brad Larson (president), Don Williams (vice president), Elisabeth McGregor (secretary), Carolyn Weeks (treasurer), Maria Anderson, Marie Cuneo, Debbie DeBassio, Jimmie Keating, Paul Lauenstein, Jan Parr, Shirley Schofield, Kristin Slater, Doug Southard

Absent: Mare Parker O'Toole, Marcia Springstead

**CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTION:** The meeting, held virtually on Zoom, was called to order at 7:05 PM 1/7/21 by Brad Larson, interim president, who welcomed everyone and identified the primary purpose of the call as getting to know each other and beginning to work together, along with a few immediate items of business.

### **HISTORICAL REFLECTION:**

Shirley Schofield, after expressing gratitude to Brad for volunteering and inviting her reflection, spoke on the need to remember that history doesn't mean just the distant past but also the very recent past and the present. The year 2020, for instance, has been truly, even extremely, historic, between a pandemic and major political upheaval. Looking back only a few years, she recalled Sharon Family Week and First Night Celebrations, and in particular the yearlong events in celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the town's incorporation, beginning with a First Night celebration on Dec. 31, 2014 and lasting through 2015, with a grand banquet and the production of an anniversary book of stories, interviews and photographs capturing Sharon's history. She expressed hope for successful continuation of the Society's mission to gather and preserve Sharon history, sharing the slogan that "Our museum is where the past is always present."

### **MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS:**

Brad invited all those present to share something about their interests, and what they'd like to gain from and offer to the Society through their participation. Briefly summarized, here are some of the comments:

Brad, describing himself as a 'peaceful midwesterner' (transplanted to Boston area after college), felt he could offer the calm ability to listen, and he would like to gain more experience working with a group in a leadership role. He also shared his interest in the use of technology in learning, particularly in history and museums, connecting museum contents with audience experience, reflected in his professional experience at the Boston Children's Museum and as an independent museum professional designing and advising on interactive exhibits.

Jan Parr, a former president and vice president of the Society and a lifetime Sharon resident, spoke about working on and liking historic house tours, the yard sale, and enjoyable fundraising events. She'd like to see broadly engaging activities, both traditional and new, including some fun. She suggested that we should invite all ages in the town to share their experiences of the 2020 pandemic, and perhaps tie it to any records of 1918.

Beth McGregor, a 40+ year Sharon resident, shared her interest in how local history helps tell the story of larger historical events and forces, and in making these connections in education. She spoke of her professional work at the Norwood Historical Society, the Kendall Whaling Museum, and the Norfolk Charitable Trust Archive, which gave her particular familiarity with the interests and influence of the Kendall family of Sharon and Walpole. Her main interest is in creating interesting programming and exhibits; she's willing to work on publicity, policies and procedures, and other tasks as needed.

Debbie DeBassio, who came to Sharon in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and lived here many years before moving to Norton, has been involved in many Historical Society activities over the years. Her favorite is "Sharon Memories," gatherings that invite residents to share memories around a particular subject, like music. She's also worked on the Hot Rod

club. She noted that our state's history is distinctive, as well as sharing commonalities with other parts of the country.

Jimmie Keating, a lifelong Sharon resident, has been a Society member for a long time and has become more regularly active since retirement. His biggest projects are the Veterans' display, which he's hoping to expand, and the Golden Oldies weekend of antique cars and music.

Paul Lauenstein grew up in the Midwest and came to Sharon 34 years ago. He became interested in genealogy and discovered a Sharon ancestor from the 1700s. He feels that we might build on the rising interest in genealogy as one way to further engage members and other residents in the Society.

Don Williams, who started out in Stoughton and has lived for 50 years in Sharon, just retired from 34 years on the Sharon police force; he's also a veteran. He shares Paul's interest in genealogy, and he sees himself as a leader and a doer with a gift for team building, working with lots of people, and building trust in the community.

Doug Southard, a Sharon resident since 1997, is a lover of archival work. He joined the Society's Archives group around 1999, starting with recording Shirley Schofield's memories of Sharon history, and has served as the Society's Chief Archivist as well as an ongoing member of the Archives group. While the corona virus time is tough on a public institution like the Society, he feels that it's also a good time to take the opportunity to think about new ideas, like digitization of our collection.

Kristin Slater is a professional librarian and director of a library organization who has always been interested in history since growing up in historic Fairhaven. A past president of Digital Commonwealth, she is passionate about the opportunities to use digitization to preserve local history and make it more widely accessible online. She's experienced and comfortable with database management and happy to work on it. She loves seeing old photographs on the Society website and would like to see us add more documents and other resources online. She has lived in Sharon for 10 years, having moved from Middleboro, and has a daughter at Sharon High School.

Maria Anderson grew up in Maryland but always had a strong affinity for New England. She has lived in Sharon for 20 years, has served on the town's Finance Committee, and loves old houses and other historic buildings. She feels ready to get more involved in volunteering again not that her children are older. She has a strong financial background, is currently employed as a Controller, and offered her knowledge of finance to the Society.

Carolyn Weeks, who 'married into Sharon' and formerly worked in real estate, has been involved over the years in many Society and town activities, including the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, the Sharon First Night Committee, and the Fourth of July Committee. She likes doing projects and working on big events, and is very interested in fundraising. She sees a need to form a budget committee soon.

Marie Cuneo belongs to her family's third generation in Sharon, where she has lived for over 80 years; her father was a Sharon letter carrier and her grandfather and an uncle ran the launch boat on Lake Massapoag. She has served in the past as President and Vice President of the Society, and likes fundraisers, good speakers and interesting programs.

Shirley Schofield, a Sharon native, graduated from Sharon High in 1946 (the class with the greatest number of active Society members). She has been a member of the Society (formed in 1981) since 1982, and over the years has held just about every office, board and committee position in it, including President. She particularly loves activities like the Sharon Memories program, antique car shows and house tours, and is glad that the museum has more open hours than many similar small historical societies. She is looking forward to meeting

new people and answering questions, especially once we can be open to the public again. She has compiled a list of all the Society activities and events since 1982 and is happy to share it. She emphasized the need to activate and staff our various committees as soon as possible.

## **REPORTS:**

### **President's Report:**

Brad expressed gratification with the variety of skills and interests on the Board and excitement to be part of a success story. He noted that the main goal of this interim board is to work on dynamics to establish stability, positive working relationships, effective outreach, and preparation for a successful Annual Membership Meeting in June, including an engaged election process.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Carolyn reported current fund balances as follows:

CD Sharon/Crescent Credit Union	\$21,672.26
Passbook account Dedham Savings	2,536.00
Checking account Credit Union	9,568.10
Post Office account	311.19

She briefly reviewed recent cash flow and will provide an updated record of income and expenses for the next meeting.

She needs to file sales tax on Jan. 15 and needs receipt records from the building; Don and Shirley will obtain them for her. (There have been few sales in the past year so tax due should be very low).

She noted that our balance of funds is low and we have ongoing expenses for insurance, utilities, fees, maintenance etc. even when closed, so that serious fundraising is needed soon.

Shirley asked about how money given in memory of individuals is handled and how records are kept; there may be a need to work on Memorial Fund records.

### **Secretary's Report:**

Beth would like to create a Board Contact List (results so far attached). She asked everyone to email her with: Name (as they prefer to be listed), Preferred email address, Phone number(s)--home and/or mobile, and Mailing address. She will circulate the list and turn over emails to Kristin who will populate an email group, SharonHistoricalBoard@gmail.com

## **ITEMS OF BUSINESS FOR VOTE:**

### **Affirmation of the Memorandum of Understanding of November 10, 2020.**

This MOU (attached), which addressed issues of disputed leadership of the Society and establishes the interim board of directors serving until the June 2021 annual membership meeting, was drawn up by the negotiating team of Brad Larson, Paul Lauenstein, Shirley Schofield, Kristin Slater, Gary Sullivan, and Don Williams, mediated by Andy Nebenzahl.

Moved (Williams), seconded (several), and voted (11 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions pending full reading of the document.)

### **Replacement for resigned member:**

We were notified that Joanne Douglas has resigned from the interim board, and Jimmie Keating has been invited to replace her.

Moved (Williams), seconded (DeBassio) and voted (12 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention) to appoint Jimmie Keating to fill the vacancy.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **1. Plan next communication with Society membership.**

(a) Agreed that we should send out a Heritage Hunter newsletter as soon as we have a clear message showing stability and introducing plans going forward. Don suggested that we aim for the end of February, a normal schedule leading up to a March Quarterly Meeting.

We don't currently have a Newsletter Editor, so we need to find one, or at least someone to do it in the interim. Carol had declined. Don will pursue.

Doug inquired about newsletter printing and mailing cost, and suggested that we could circulate the Newsletter primarily electronically as a PDF, saving cost and allowing for links for readers to connect to website, advertisers and other resources. It was noted that ads normally cover about \$900 out of \$1200 cost; we could also sell ads to PDF version.

(b) Possible President's Letter from Brad (before newsletter). Distributed how?

(c) Use Facebook page to post news, photos, Brad's letter and report of our meeting. Shirley will post; there are three administrators of the Facebook page (who?) but she does most of the posting.

Could we use social media more effectively to let people know we're active, and to recruit participation, and perhaps survey what they're interested in?

(d) In our first major communication, we could invite everyone to submit their experiences of the pandemic for preservation by the Society.

Brad suggested that we need to form a Communications subcommittee or working group soon.

### **2. Should we attempt to hold a virtual March meeting of the membership, with a program?**

This could be tied to Deb's idea of inviting all ages to record their pandemic experiences. Beth mentioned a possible speaker who had written a book on the 1918 flu pandemic in Norwood.

**3. Website urgently needs addressing.** Clean out old stuff, replace with current, take down most recent one. Who can do this?

**4. Building Access and Maintenance.** Don checks in regularly, does minor maintenance, has cleared snow, will put up map in kiosk. Carolyn will coordinate with him to leave records there. Carolyn checks PO Box regularly. Will need to do cleaning before reopening. Who has keys?

### **NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held Thursday, Feb. 4, 7:00-8:30 PM (via Zoom.)**

Brad noted how difficult it was to schedule an initial meeting, and after reviewing schedules we determined that we should aim for the first Thursday of the month in general.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Elisabeth McGregor, Secretary