

Sharon Historical Society Interim Board Meeting, March 4, 2021

The Board met remotely by Zoom on March 4, 2021.

Present: Brad Larson (president), Don Williams (vice president), Elisabeth McGregor (secretary), Carolyn Weeks (treasurer), Doug Southard (archivist), Maria Anderson, Marie Cuneo, Debbie DeBassio, Paul Lauenstein, Mare Parker O'Toole, Jan Parr, Shirley Schofield, Kristin Slater, Meg Winikates

Absent: Jimmie Keating

Brad Larson called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. The meeting began with welcoming new member Meg Winikates (who had been previously approved by email vote), and with member introductions all around. Meg spoke about her professional background at NEMA and at various museums, her longstanding interest in history, and her pleasure in becoming increasingly engaged in the life of the town of Sharon.

Brad reviewed the agenda, and Shirley waived the scheduled historical reflection.

The minutes of the Feb. 4 Board meeting were reviewed and accepted.

President's Report: Brad began with sharing his delight at seeing the Pandemic Memories project appear in his Google news feed. On a big-picture level, he noted with pride and pleasure the major progress the Board has made in three meetings, providing an example of how people can work well together coming from different perspectives, dealing cordially and collaboratively with topics like elections that have caused a rift in the past. We've developed trust as we deal with weightier topics and need to continue to build trust in the larger group. One of the areas that has caused stumbles in the past is bylaws; he suggested that we need to develop a strategy as a group to deal with them, and will probably decide to defer a full study and revision until a newly elected board is in place.

Treasurer's Report: Carolyn referred to the monthly report of activity circulated earlier, and responded to questions. The report shows receipts of \$465.20 and expenses of \$2456.16, leaving an operating account balance of \$7768.36. For the overall asset balances, she referred members to her January report, which included the CD and other accounts for a total of about 33, 580. Paul asked that she include the total assets balance figure in future monthly reports and she agreed. Beth will send Meg January's report to catch her up on the full financial picture.

Secretary's Report: Beth reiterated her desire to collect all basic relevant information about the Society's operations into a centralized place accessible to the Board as needed. She referred to an incomplete information list circulated earlier, and she and Brad agreed to follow up to consolidate input from Board members in time for the documentation available to the Board elected in June. It was suggested that the information could be kept in a shared Google docs folder. Kristin suggested that it could be accessible to the members of a board google group,

SharonHistoricalBoard@googlegroups.com, and volunteered her help or that of her daughter Kate to help Beth transfer various info into Google docs and set up the files.

Newsletter Review: It was asked whether we have electronic distribution of the Newsletter; the answer was not yet but we hope to soon, so that links could be embedded in it, forms filled out online, etc. For now, hard-copy mailing is our only way of reaching all members since we don't have email addresses for all of them, but a PDF attached to an email could supplement the hard copy for a majority of members, offering choice and convenience.

We reviewed the scan of the current Newsletter which the Board had received by email a day earlier, and is now at the printer's due to a tight timeline. The day's notice gave us time to address only a few typos like the date of the March meeting, not anything more substantive. We expressed gratitude to Don and Carol Gannon for the work accomplished under time pressure, and will make an effort to get the newsletter in the mail as quickly as possible when it comes back from the printer so that members get a timely notice of the March 25 virtual quarterly meeting.

Review of Member Information and Nominations Form: This form, prepared by the Communications committee, was circulated to the Board and will go out with the Newsletter, with no time left for edits. We were able to make two tweaks, to change the second page title from 'Member Interests and Recommendations' to 'Member Interests and Nominations,' and to add a line inviting adding a page in response to the general questions at the end. Don noted that the form could be repeated and the nomination process further explained in the email that will be sent around providing a Zoom link to the March 25 quarterly meeting. Beth noted that the form is currently not adapted to filling out electronically and hoped that someone could adapt it to make it easier to fill out and submit by email, which could increase the return rate. Beth as Secretary (potentially with other volunteer help as needed) will be responsible for receiving and compiling the forms and passing on the information for database updating and for the Nominating Committee's use.

Communications Report:

Don reported on the work of the interim Communications committee, beginning with expressing his warm appreciation for Brad's board leadership.

Website and computers: Don has been working with Kevin Earley on doing revisions and updates to the website as specified in the Memorandum of Understanding. Kevin has done a reset with Comcast and has gotten the computer holding member records unlocked and updated. We have the technology to handle sending out member group emails. Doug, Kevin, Don and Joanne Douglas will meet to start work on digitization methods.

Pandemic Memories project: We discussed how to best gain wide input from members and townspeople of all ages, sharing their memories and experiences of the pandemic. A potential physical and online exhibit might be titled "Prose, Poetry and Pictures from the Pandemic." Don, Debbie, Paul and Beth met with a reporter from the Patriot Ledger who gave us coverage.

We hope to work with other organizations in town, such as the Recreation Department, the library, and clubs. Maria pointed out that as an interim board we have limits in establishing new activities and committees, but recognized that the timing is right now to launch such a project. We asked for volunteers for an ad-hoc special project team to help coordinate the outreach and process the materials received; Jan Parr, Debbie DiBassio, Meg Winikates, Shirley Schofield and Paul Lauenstein agreed to help with it.

Other Business:

Nominations and Election: Brad as president appointed three Nominating Committee members (as provided for in the 2016 bylaws still in effect), Don, Beth and Paul, but was open to the Board adding additional members. He stressed that it was important to keep the positive direction of the Society going, create trust in the nominating process, and not exclude anyone. Discussion ensued, and the Board agreed on 5 members. Maria and Carolyn volunteered to serve on it.

It was moved, seconded and voted to approve the President's appointments augmented by two additional members to create a 5-member Nominating Committee: Don Williams, Beth McGregor, Paul Lauenstein, Maria Anderson and Carolyn Weeks.

Jan noted that one important committee task would be to confirm the membership status and commitment of people nominated and the particular committees or roles in which they were willing and best suited to serve, with the understanding that Board members are expected to play a significant role in committee work.

The plan for now is to create a slate of Officers and Board members, although there is some flexibility in the bylaws regarding the total number of Board members who can be elected. The Nominating Committee will work on mechanisms for how to create a recommended slate, provide an opportunity for members to nominate candidates, and conduct elections at an Annual Meeting that may be virtual or hybrid in attendance; they will report back to the Board for further discussion and planning.

Don expressed his hope that members of the current interim board would continue to be willing to serve, offering some stability, continuity and balance going forward; Brad concurred.

Social Media:

Brad had hoped to add an item to the current newsletter praising and recommending the YouTube videos on Sharon history created by members Jean Zaniewski and Hana Jenner, but there was no room or time to work it in. Brad stated that our success as a Society will depend on working more widely with others, building trust, expressing appreciation for good work done and reaching out to people doing it. Maria asked why at least a brief mention couldn't have

been put in the current newsletter. Doug said that information about and appreciation of their work could be put on the website, along with links to it and to other relevant and useful materials, some of which, like Digital Commonwealth, Meg could recommend.

This led to a discussion of policy on linking to, recommending and sharing social media materials, and on oversight of any materials created in the name of the Society. Mare noted that social media currently provide our best publicity for interesting people in Sharon history, and also that in general too much regulation can stifle social media effectiveness. Meg offered to share some guidelines recommended by NEMA. The question of Twitter was raised; evidently we have a Twitter handle but haven't been using it. Meanwhile, there were positive comments about the Sharon Local History videos posted on YouTube, including ones by Hana and Jean about various historic sites and events and by Ilan Fisher on the Intermediate School, from a few who had viewed them. Some had not seen these and/or had never used YouTube. We agreed that we would make a point of looking at some of them; Meg posted a link. The Communications committee will take on issues of policy and we'll continue the discussion at our next meeting.

Archivist: Doug has been acting as chief archivist, within the limits of building access, since Joanne Douglas stepped down. In formal confirmation, it was moved, seconded and voted to appoint Doug Southard as Chief Archivist.

New Board member: We had approved Meg Winikates by email vote prior to the meeting (replacing Marcia Springstead who regretfully resigned due to family commitments). To confirm the email vote, it was moved, seconded and voted to appoint Meg Winikates to the Board.

Donnell Trust: Don reported that the disposition of the Donnell Trust is being finalized, although we don't know the amount of the gift. It was moved, seconded and voted to authorize Don Williams to sign the final document.

Next Meetings:

The Interim Board will meet again by Zoom on Thursday, April 1 at 7:00 PM.

The virtual spring Quarterly Meeting will be held on Thursday, March 25 at 7:00 PM.

Adjournment: It was moved, seconded and voted to adjourn at 9:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elisabeth McGregor, Secretary