

## **Sharon Historical Society Interim Board Meeting, April 1, 2021**

The Board met remotely by Zoom on April 1, 2021.

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

Brad Larson called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM with greetings and a review of the proposed agenda.

Shirley Schofield offered a historical reflection about the memory of the zeppelin Hindenburg flying low over Sharon on May 6, 1937, on its disastrous final voyage from Frankfurt, Germany to Lakehurst, NJ, with 36 passengers and 61 crew aboard. The Sharon schools released all their students just before 11 AM on that day. Shirley recalled that she was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at the High Street School, that the engine noise was very loud and that it was flying so low that the children on the playground could see the passengers in the gondola. Shortly after that it was obscured by fog. The zeppelin's course was to follow the Boston-New York train line; it may have altered its course slightly in Sharon to avoid the church steeples. Its landing was delayed by thunderstorms, and when it came in for a landing a serious fire broke out which destroyed the zeppelin. The last of the 27 passengers who survived the crash and fire died just recently.

**Minutes** of the March 4 meeting were unanimously accepted as corrected (spelling of the Donnell Trust.)

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

Brad commended ongoing positive activity, progress and healing, and focused on addressing fears of "the other side taking over." He said that he and Don were happy to sit down with anyone having concerns or questions and offered assurances that we would not let any "side take over." His message was that we should start to branch out, connect with others, and pull together all the best resources, without fear.

### **Treasurer's Report and Financial Discussion:**

Carolyn reviewed the First Quarter 2021 Financial Report which was previously circulated to the Board (attached). She made a few minor updates to the report since its March 24 closing, noting that we currently have \$6388.19 in the checking account and \$21,480 in a CD, plus other smaller accounts. This led to a broad discussion of our financial situation. Asked about the 'burn rate' on our approximately \$30,500 in cash assets, Carolyn noted that we spend about \$19,000 per year on building and utility expenses, and that in our best year we took in about \$13,000. This deficit spending situation was recognized by all as problematic. Carolyn reported that we had to cash in half our CD to meet expenses, and that we once had \$120,000. Shirley expressed concern about protecting money given in memory of people; Maria said it should be separately filed or kept in a separate account if restricted to a particular purpose or to capital

expenses only. We recognized that we need to do active fundraising to avoid further depleting the CD and recover some of the deficit.

Meg asked whether we conduct an Annual Appeal, as many organizations do. Don replied that we send out an annual Corporate Appeal, which needs to go out soon; we should then look at a broader appeal. The elected board will need to look closely at the budget and develop a fundraising plan, and empower a strong Ways and Means committee (one of the committees required by the bylaws). Shirley expressed hope for launching another capital campaign in the near future.

We discussed what we could do in the short run to address the funding shortfall. Don suggested putting a funding appeal in the May newsletter, perhaps in the President's letter, and that we put a pin in the calendar for a couple of fall fundraising events like a yard sale and porch fest once the pandemic has subsided. Meg said there are opportunities for Covid relief and other grants, some with rolling submission deadlines, and offered to assemble a list of possible grants for our next meeting. Debbie suggested fundraising as part of a pandemic project display. Don raised the possibility of a community-wide mailing in the fall. Doug noted that the elected Board needs to establish a Ways and Means chair and committee as an early priority. Meanwhile, Carolyn, Maria and Doug agreed to form an informal fundraising committee. Maria said we will have a budget soon to determine our fundraising goal.

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

Beth circulated a narrative report on the March 25 Quarterly meeting, and asked about the protocol for minutes of quarterly meetings. Don replied that there should be minutes, even if just a summary or bullet points. Since the March 25 meeting was purely informational, Beth will recirculate the report with an added statement that no business was conducted. Once the Board approves the report, which we agreed could be done by email, it can be posted on the website.

Beth also expressed the goal of eventually collecting all the relevant information for the Board's use into a file of Google docs accessible to a Google group of board members. Kristin said the structure for that exists, and that she will share what we have on file, organized by fiscal year, with the group.

#### **Nominating Committee Report:**

Nominating Committee chair Marie Anderson, assisted by other committee members, reported on a productive March 30 meeting that worked out a voting process, who's eligible to vote, and forming a slate of candidates.

**Process:** After we receive all nominations by the April 26 deadline, the nominating committee will confirm willingness to run with everyone who has been nominated and prepare a ballot which will be approved by the Board. We will mail out ballots that provide an option to either choose the slate as a whole or select a name for each position, including a space for a write-in name. The ballot will be sent by mail and by email and can be returned either way. Carolyn and Beth will meet to collect ballots for a scheduled group counting supervised by an elections registrar and with at least two additional board members present. Emailed ballots will be

tabulated at the same time. We can also provide an opportunity at the annual meeting for anyone who hadn't voted yet before the final announcement of results.

**Eligibility to vote:** Anyone with membership ending in FY 2021 or 2022 or any Life Member is eligible to vote. If a ballot comes to a household, the current bylaws are somewhat unclear about whether both parties get an individual vote or share one vote between them, so in the very few cases of unclarity where both spouses haven't paid individual dues we will go with tradition and allow two votes.

Marie noted that she hadn't seen the bylaws on the website. Shirley replied that they are there, but you need to click in the right place to find them.

**Slate:** Well before the April 26 deadline for nominations, Maria will contact all current interim board members to see whether they want to renew in their current position or another one. The names of all those continuing will appear on the recommended slate.

### **Questions and comments:**

Brad suggested that we need a membership form on the website with a link to download and send in. Debbie suggested a reminder in the newsletter to pay at least 2021 dues before the annual meeting in order to vote. Maria suggested putting the reminder on Facebook too; Shirley agreed and asked for wording she should use.

Jan asked about the total number of officers and board members who would appear on the slate; Maria replied that there would be 15 positions.

Doug asked whether any nominations have been submitted in response to the nomination form in the last newsletter. Don replied that there have been some submitted but not many.

Kristin expressed concerns about the accuracy and completeness of the member database, noting that she, Jan, Brad and others had never received the last newsletter. (If three Board members out of 15 didn't get the mailing, that's a troubling mail failure rate.) She asked whether we could post the ballot on the website to make sure everyone can access it.

Don offered to check the database to make sure all known members are on it, with the right boxes checked. Those who have provided email addresses will also be able to submit votes by email, so if the problem is with the Postal Service rather than with the database they will still have a way to vote.

Brad asked exactly how voting at the Annual Meeting could be handled. Don proposed that the announcement be made near the beginning of the meeting, both verbally and in the chat, that those who haven't voted can either email or call Don with their votes during the featured speaker's presentation. He and Paul or another member will have the up-to-date member roster available with all those who have already voted checked off. (No new nominations or changing of previous votes will be allowed.) The previously received votes will have been counted before the meeting as a group, under supervision; any last-minute additions at the meeting will be added to the tally before the results are announced.

**Adoption of elections process:** Noting that the whole Nominating Committee was in agreement on how to carry out the elections, Paul moved to ratify the process as described in this meeting. The motion was seconded by Don, and approved unanimously with one abstention.

**Calendar:** Don reported that he had roughed out proposed dates for various activities that need to happen between now and the Annual Meeting, and will send out an updated version to board soon, along with a draft of the ballot form for comment. There were concerns about the tight schedule for circulating the newsletter and getting ballots in before the traditional annual meeting date of the first Thursday in June, which falls on June 3<sup>rd</sup> this year. The bylaws call for the first Thursday or another date as determined by board.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously approved to delay the Annual Meeting by one week until Thursday, June 10<sup>th</sup> pending the availability of the speaker. [Note: the speaker was later contacted and agreed to the new date.]

### **Using Website and Facebook:**

Paul asked whether we can put elections information and the nominations form on the website, and/or send out a follow-up email with an attachable form. Don offered to oversee putting a link to the nominations form on the website with the subject "Reminder: Nominations due," plus an email blast reminder. Facebook administration is handled by Meg, Shirley, Carol Gannon and Kevin Earley.

Brad reported that Kevin has done some good work on updating the Society's website and has sent Brad some permissions for access.

We returned to last month's conversation on reviewing and promoting, posting, or linking to social media materials prepared by others. Brad highlighted several Sharon Local History videos, some of which the Sharon Friends of Conservation had posted on their website. Debbie cautioned against blanket recommendations or sharing of other sites as a whole, noting some problems with the comments (more than the original postings themselves) on the 'You know you're from Sharon if...' group.

Meg recommended some social media policy guidelines espoused by NEMA. She respected cautiousness about putting unvetted content on our own page, but said it's safe to say that particular things are really good and to provide links, along the lines of 'This is really cool—have you seen it?' This sort of sharing is what social media is meant for, and is very effective in reaching and engaging people. Don thanked Meg for the policy recommendations, agreeing with Debbie that we should be careful about offering blanket approvals of other groups but members could identify particular presentations to recommend, and that we could ask permission of the authors to share videos on the Society's website, crediting the original author and site.

Marie asked whether anyone was asking directly for the Society's endorsement. Brad replied that we're in the process of healing and that he felt it was right and important to extend recognition to the good work of Society members on Sharon Local History.

Paul suggested that we need to activate the Publicity and Social Media Committee and charge it with setting social media policy. For now, could our ad hoc Communications committee (chaired by Don) or a subcommittee of that group determine our policy? Beth noted that for now we seem to have a consensus that it's permissible to endorse particular videos or articles on our website and Facebook page.

**Next Newsletter:** There is a lot riding on the May newsletter. Shirley suggested that the deadline for content submissions should be May 1; Don agreed that the majority of the

newsletter content should be in place by then, with the ballot insert to be approved shortly thereafter at an early May board meeting. Brad promised to meet that deadline with his President's letter, and Shirley agreed to provide the historical article, based on her talk at the March Quarterly meeting on the history of the Society. The goal is to have the newsletter in the mail and the PDF sent by email by May 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **Pandemic Memories Project Update**

The project has drawn strong support from acting School Superintendent Meg Dussault and the town offices, among others. Doug has volunteered to eyeball the form for donating or lending material to the Society for the project. Sharon Cable TV has offered its support, including the prospect of assisting with taping oral histories. Meg and Shirley taped an interview with Veronica Wiseman on Sharon Community TV on Monday evening, April 5, and the show will keep repeating on channel 22, also accessible at <https://sharontv.com/programs/view-all/> on computer for those who don't have access to Comcast local cable service. Flyers have been circulated to the various town departments and with the Sharon Pluralism Network, and already appears on Sharon Community TV. We are all encouraged to share the flyer with anyone else who might be interested.

**Next Board Meeting:** Scheduled for Thursday, May 6 at 7 PM

There being no further business, it was moved, seconded and unanimously voted to **adjourn** at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elisabeth McGregor  
Secretary