

Minutes of Sharon Historical Society Annual Meeting Sept 30, 2021

The 2021 Annual Meeting of the Sharon Historical Society was held on Thursday, Sept. 30 in the ballroom of the Sharon Community Center, with approximately 120 people attending in person and 5 remotely. Members checked in with the Secretary and other volunteers at the front desk, paid dues if not current, and received ballots to vote on the size and membership of the Historical Society Board of Directors to serve until the June 2022 Annual Meeting. (In recognition of Covid concerns, it had been announced that members were allowed to check in and vote without remaining in the hall for the meeting, and a minority chose this option.)

President Brad Larson called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM, welcoming the crowd and offering a brief review of the agenda and meeting rules, procedures and decorum. He then provided an update on progress made in the past year and offered his thanks for good work done by the Interim Board in collaboratively navigating a host of challenges. He also explained that ballots would be counted by former Town Clerk Marlene Chused and four volunteers chosen by her, and the results announced at the end of the meeting, after the featured speaker's presentation.

He then called on Society officers for the following brief reports.

Treasurer: Carolyn Weeks called members' attention to the Treasurer's report for the past 12 months that had been distributed to attendees on arrival. The report showed receipts for the year of \$7816.88 and expenses of \$28,568.42, including \$13,188 in legal costs, with a total funds balance as of Sept. 30, 2021 of \$29,098.84 She invited questions on the report; none were raised.

Secretary: Beth McGregor offered a brief summary of Society activities since she took office as part of the Interim Board. She highlighted some successful programs, including launching the Pandemic Memories Project, the Antique Car Display and Porch Fest, and the first-time community event "Reading Frederick Douglass Together," with a panel discussion by community members of the relevance of Douglass's words today, presented at Memorial Park beach on July 5th, supported by a Mass Humanities grant. She also summarized some of the Board's efforts to recover from past problems caused by both internal disputes and the Covid pandemic, and to make up for losses and move on to more positive ground. She noted that there would be collaborative opportunities for members to consider proposed bylaw revisions. Also, after some website difficulties during the year, she said that minutes of Board meetings were now available on the Society's website, www.sharonhistoricalsociety.org.

Nominating Committee: Paul Lauenstein explained the extensive effort that the Nominating Committee, chaired by Maria Anderson, had put into preparing for a fair and transparent election process. The ballot offered the opportunity to vote on the size of the Board to be elected, from 12 to 15 members, and proposed a slate of 12 members of the current Interim Board of Directors who chose to stand for re-election, or the alternative option of voting individually among 19 candidates, including current officers and Directors, self-nominated or nominated by others, with options for write-in candidates. (Brief biographies of all candidates had been provided in the August *Heritage Hunter*.) He asked if there were any questions about the ballot, which had been distributed to members upon entering. There were no questions, and no additional nominations were offered from the floor.

Chief Archivist: Doug Southworth reported that the Archives Committee, which includes Joanne Douglas, Jean Zaniewski, Jim Zuis and himself, had resumed in-person meetings at the Museum every other Monday evening earlier this year. They have returned to the process of accessioning donations which had continued to come in during the pandemic. Joanne recently completed the processing of the Curtis Family collection, which had come in with the materials from Cliff Towner. The Society has also been approved for having collections digitized as part of the statewide Digital Commonwealth program, and various volunteers are preparing photographs in the collections for digitization.

Vice President: Don Williams expressed his appreciation to members for their attendance at this very important meeting. He offered a brief report on Buildings and Grounds, one of his main responsibilities as VP. Due to the pandemic, the Museum was closed for most of last year and through this winter and most

of the Spring. However, a few people made regular checks of the museum to monitor its safety and ensure that the heat and dehumidification were working, thus avoiding the problem of a sister historical society (Norton) that had not taken similar precautions and developed a mold problem that is costing them \$30,000 to mitigate. He noted that the grounds were in good shape, and thanked the Sharon Garden Club and a number of Society members for coming in and helping with clean-up and readying the museum for a gradual re-opening. He also shared that the AmeriCorps volunteers had helped to clean up the grounds and support the September Porch Fest and Antique Auto Display. On a more problematic note, he reported that during our annual elevator inspection it was determined that a service and repair was needed for a hydraulic pump unit. The elevator cannot be operated until repairs are made. The estimated cost for repair is over \$10,000, and we are seeking alternate quotes and options.

Gary Sullivan introduced the featured speaker, Dr. Robert Martello, Professor of the History of Science and Technology at Olin College and a published scholar on Paul Revere. Dr. Martello offered a fascinating presentation on a little-recognized dimension of Revere's achievements, as a pioneering maker, metallurgical engineer, entrepreneur and early leader in American industry. Martello focused on Revere's many activities in Sharon and Canton, where bells cast by Revere and Sons hang in two Sharon steeples. Using local water resources, primarily the Neponset River and its tributaries, for power, Revere and his sons produced and sold cannon, bells, and other foundry-cast metal goods. Revere also revolutionized metalwork in the United States by developing methods for rolling sheets of silver and copper, using technology taken from England and sharing it freely with others. He actively engaged in both civic service and lobbying, won government contracts for copper sheathing of Navy ships, including the USS *Constitution*, and gained in both status and prosperity, overcoming the humble beginnings as a craftsman that had initially kept him out of the gentlemanly upper circles of power.

The presentation was warmly received by the members, a number of whom offered many questions and comments. Dr. Martello expressed his delight with the depth of interest and knowledge reflected in the questions, and said that he was learning new things about Revere and his enterprises from them.

After the presentation was completed, President Brad Larson reviewed upcoming Society events and activities, and announced that due to the surprisingly high turnout of voters the ballots were still being counted. The meeting adjourned at around 8:45 without announcement of final results. Most members had left by 9:15, when the following results were certified by Marlene Chused:

The size of the 2021-2022 Board was set at 15.

The incumbent officers were re-elected:

Brad Larson, President

Don Williams, Vice President

Beth McGregor, Secretary

Carolyn Weeks, Treasurer

Doug Southworth, Chief Archivist

The following Directors were elected (*=incumbent)

Maria Anderson*

Joe Blansfield

Marie Cuneo*

Debbie DeBassio*

Carol Gannon

Hana Jenner

Jimmy Keating*

Paul Lauenstein*

Shirley Schofield*

Meg Winikates*

The individual vote totals (of 131 total ballots) were as follows, in order of number of votes received:

Board Size: 15-54, 12-43, 13-3, 14-1

President-Brad Larson 122

VP-Don Williams 118 (1 write-in)

Sec.-Beth McGregor 123
Treasurer-Carolyn Weeks 123
Chief Archivist-Doug Southard 122
Directors:
Shirley Schofield 117
Marie Cuneo 115
Meg Winikates 115
Maria Anderson 114
Paul Lauenstein 106
Jimmy Keating 83
Debbie Debassio 78
Joe Blansfield 72
Hana Jenner 61
Carol Gannon 59
Sandra Bailey 57
Jason Phelps 49
Jean Zaniewski 48
Paul Bookbinder 35

Respectfully submitted,
Elisabeth McGregor, Secretary