

Sharon Historical Society Board Meeting Oct. 7, 2021 Minutes

The Board of the Sharon Historical Society met remotely via Zoom on Thursday, Oct. 7 at 7 PM.

Present: Brad Larson (Pres), Don Williams (VP), Beth McGregor (Sec'y), Carolyn Weeks (Treas), Doug Southworth (Chief Archivist), Maria Anderson, Joe Blansfield, Marie Cuneo, Debby DeBassio, Carol Gannon, Hana Jenner, Jimmie Keating, Paul Lauenstein, Shirley Schofield, Meg Winikates

Brad called the meeting to order at 7:04, offered greetings and reviewed the agenda.

Historical Reflection: Shirley offered a portrait of Post Office Square area (then commonly referred to simply as the Square or uptown) as it was in the 1940's, when Sharon before World War II was a town of 3000, growing to 5000 postwar. In the vicinity of the square in the 1940s, with both parallel and angle parking, there were three chain grocery stores (First National, A&P, and Economy Grocery), two meat markets, two hardware stores, two barbershops, a hairdresser, a restaurant, Bendinelli's variety store. Mackay's stationery store, Billy's supermarket, a cooperative bank, medical, dental and law offices, a tailor and a piano studio. The Bendinelli family lived above their store. Everything anyone needed could be found in the town center, except that one had to go to the next towns for entertainment like movies and bowling. Residents all found shopping and services in the same area and thus tended to know each other, fostering a sense of community.

Changes to the area due to changing demographics, transportation, and shopping resources were exacerbated by a fire that destroyed the Pettee block in 1966, taking out three stores, and by the rearrangement of the Square to accommodate traffic lights in the 1980s.

Comments in response to the talk included appreciation for both what's been gained and lost, and the challenge of how we can help foster a sense of community in a larger, more diverse town of 18,000 where there aren't the same central places where 'everybody goes.'

Officer Reports:

President: Brad expressed his surprised delight at the Annual Meeting turnout and stressed the importance of taking advantage of the interest, reaching out to new members, and engaging the other Board candidates in committees and activities. He also expressed gratitude to the officers and volunteers who had managed the registration and ballot distribution and to Marlene Chused and her crew for their ballot counting efforts.

Treasurer: Carolyn invited any questions on her previously circulated report and added that we received 7 new memberships and \$180 in sale of books and posters at Sharon Day.

Secretary: Beth reported that she had spent the entire Annual Meeting at the front desk and thus was unable to take minutes. She asked those who had given reports to share their notes with her. Doug also

suggested looking to Sharon Community TV for its recording of the meeting. She has saved the voting registration and ballots (131 cast) for the record.

Vice President/Buildings and Grounds: Don offered to share his meeting notes and a link to SCTV. He noted that there were about 20 new members in September. Also that five people joined the meeting remotely on Zoom; he plans to check with them about their experience. On the problem of improving the clarity and accessibility of the membership database, he reported that he had contacted an IT specialist who can transfer the old MS Access data into a spreadsheet format.

On B&G, he noted that the lawn will be mowed and the hanging sign repaired. He received a second repair proposal from the elevator company that services the town buildings, which seemed more friendly to work with than the company that did the inspection. Neither company will do anything without a signed contract. Don will get two or three bids and send them to the Board.

Ways and Means/Archives: Doug reported that the Ways and Means committee had one brief meeting and plans to meet every other Thursday evening, beginning the Thursday after the Board meeting.

On Archives, he reported that Dave Nelson expressed interest in joining the committee, and that he planned to connect with Dave and the Bookbinders, who had also expressed interest.

He also reported a conversation with Town Clerk Mark Hogan about the binders of old school records at the Society, with concern that they contained students' personal information and thus perhaps should be held by the town government. Hana noted that people enjoyed looking themselves up in them, but Doug was concerned about legal issues around privacy. He will pursue further.

Shirley reported that a member at Sharon Day had donated a very old chain found in a wooded area off Moose Hill Street, along with information about it.

Doug inquired about where the Microsoft suite the Society paid for is installed—on the Society's laptop currently held by Don? Anywhere else? Unclear, needs follow-up.

Review of Minutes: Moved (Don), second (Carolyn) and voted (10-0-1) to approve the Sept. 21 Board minutes (with minor typo corrections).

Proposed Board Guidelines: Brad, stressing that participation in the Society should be enjoyable, rewarding and productive, called on Paul to suggest guidelines for Board member conduct.

Paul gratefully noted that we have overcome divisions, and that for the good of the Society we need to look forward not backward, bury the hatchet, and have a way to deal constructively with disagreements. He made several suggestions:

Abide by a rule adopted from Town Meeting practice of not allowing personal attacks.

Be mindful of the Society's original statement of purpose in the Articles of Organization ("to promote the research, study, dissemination, discussion, publication, and recording of the history of the town of Sharon, Massachusetts"), and to adhere to the provisions of the Bylaws.

Have a policy on official communications of the Society, involving Board consent. He suggested that the Communications Committee should monitor this, and bring issues to the full Board if necessary.

Meg noted that NEMA has a number of recommended policies and agreements that she could share. We'll develop and formalize this further at a later meeting.

Board member expressions of Interest in serving on Committees:

Based on her experience with other boards and committees, Meg recommended having co-chairs for committees of volunteers when possible, as more efficient and helpful to people with busy lives.

Joe expressed his willingness to serve in various capacities wherever most needed—education, curriculum, programs and activities, bylaws, policies and procedures, etc.

Ways and Means: Doug and Meg co-chairs, Don, Maria, Carolyn(?)

Bylaws and governance: Beth (chair), Paul, Carolyn, Don, Meg. Jean Z also interested.

Communications: Don (chair but happy to turn over role to someone else), Paul newsletter (willing to manage layout with content contributed by others), Debby, Shirley; Jason Phelps will help with website.

Newsletter as subcommittee of Communications? Beth suggested approaching Paul Bookbinder or Dave Nelson for history articles; Carol offered to share an article written by Jim Zuis.

Membership: Currently no committee in place. Don who currently manages it is willing to maintain the member database. Brad suggested that Kristin Slater is very knowledgeable about membership software and could be asked for help. Jean Z has expressed interest. Debby felt that Ways and Means should study the issue of dues. Meg suggested that Membership could become a subcommittee of Ways and Means. Needs to be addressed further at a later meeting.

Education: Debby suggested that Docents should not be included under Education but be a separate group, and noted that Joanne Douglas has led education and should be approached.

Question raised of whether Education should be combined with or be a subcommittee of programs and activities.

Programs and Activities: Gary Sullivan currently chairs Programs, with a focus on the Quarterly member meetings. Hana offered to co-chair with Gary, with primary focus on other programs and activities.

Buildings and Grounds: Don (chair), Jimmie, Debby, Carol; Joe will see if his wife is interested.

Yard Sale:

We agreed that we would hold a mini- yard sale on Saturday Oct. 23 (rain date Oct. 24), focusing on tables of items that have accumulated in the Society's closets and carriage house, plus a few donations. Meg suggested that we call it a "Pop-Up Yard Sale." Maria suggested that anything valuable should be held out for online sale on Facebook Marketplace or another venue; Hana noted that some recently received framed pictures fall into that category, and Debby agreed. We can take Saturday drop-offs of items, but Debby specified no electronics, large furniture, clothes or junk. Hana was concerned about the short timeline and the amount of volunteer work required for little income; Doug felt that even if we made little it was good for publicity to show we were active. Ways and Means will discuss plans for the Yard Sale at their Oct. 14 meeting; all who are interested are invited to attend.

Support of SREA Native American program:

SREA, which collaborated with us on the Douglass program, requested support of a Nov. 2 speaker on "Settler-Colonist Ties to Thanksgiving and Columbus: The Indigenous Perspective." We had voted in September to offer them logistical, publicity and unspecified financial support, and subsequently received \$200 in personal donations earmarked for the program. Carolyn noted that we had some

funds left over from the Douglass program, so it was agreed that we would give \$300 as a supporting organization. There was general agreement but no formal vote recorded. Carolyn will send a check.

NEMA Conference:

Meg advocated for board member participation in the upcoming NEMA conference November 15-19. It's designed primarily for museum professionals but also serves volunteer staff and trustees of member museums. The Society has a volunteer member organization so as board members we're entitled to the member registration rate, and there are also scholarships available. (It includes programs on many relevant topics like membership, community engagement, digitization of collections, financial management etc, and there are also free resources on NEMA's website and YouTube channel.

Trunk or Treat participation:

Beth requested permission, as a part of community presence, to participate in the Recreation Department' 'Trunk or Treat' festival of Oct. 24, 3-5 at Camp Everwood, if she can come up with an antique car. No cost is involved. Hana offered to help and suggested checking with Jason Phelps. There was no objection to our taking part. [Note: Willing car owner found, Beth registered to participate.]

Proposal for Sunday open hours:

Hana proposed holding Sunday hours in the Carriage House this fall, with a farming exhibit. She and Carolyn would staff it, with six interested volunteers. Doug supported the idea; Shirley felt it needed to wait until after the yard sale, Deb felt it could wait until spring, and there were various questions about planning, building security, interest, and payback for effort involved. There was general sentiment that having Sunday hours was a good idea but that we shouldn't rush into it. Carol suggested tabling the proposal until the next Board meeting. Brad took a non-binding straw poll which showed near unanimous support in principle of beginning some form of Sunday hours at some point this year.

Moved (Beth), seconded (Debby) and voted (12-2) to support Sunday hours, with details to be worked out at a later date.

Veterans' Display:

Jimmie explained the traditional veterans' exhibit in November, including memorabilia of Sharon veterans of various wars, an evening reception for veterans at the museum, and participation in Veterans' Day events.

Moved (Debby), second (Jimmie) and voted (unanimous) to hold the Veterans' Exhibit for the month of November.

Future Meeting Dates: All board members were fine with continuing regular monthly meeting dates of the first Thursday of the month (with other meetings called as needed). No vote taken.

Meeting Adjourned 9:10 PM Next Meeting: Thursday, November 4, 7 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Elisabeth McGregor, Secretary