

Sharon Historical Society Board Meeting Nov. 4, 2021: Minutes

The Board of the Sharon Historical Society met on Thursday, Nov. 4 at 7 PM, in hybrid mode, some in person at the museum and some remotely.

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:07.

President: Brad expressed great satisfaction both with all the efforts to pull together the Veterans' Exhibit, and with the Claudia Fox Tree lecture that we joined in co-sponsoring. He noted that museums are increasingly moving toward this sort of collaboration with others, and felt that our participation was beneficial in expanding and strengthening our presence in the community. He sees our most important challenge as the need to focus on visioning. We should ask ourselves: Where do we imagine our organization in 5 years, how will we become more connected to the community we serve, and how do we get to where we aspire to be?

Buildings and Grounds: Don identified B&G needs that include a fall outdoor cleanup, treating algae on the carriage house shingles, and repair of the back door. AirTemp did an assessment of basement HVAC conditions and will offer some recommendations. Hana expressed appreciation and suggested that Don also consult with Jean Zaniewski, who had worked extensively on the basement.

Elevator repair: We have a quote from 3Phase, and Associate Elevator, which does the town buildings' elevators, is willing to send a technician out to do a proposal, which appears to be about half the cost of 3Phase. Rate is \$225/hr including quarterly service; an annual inspection costs \$1400. Don recommended Associate, but noted that nothing can be done without a contract. Discussion followed on how much we use the elevator, whether we can mothball it for now, whether we're required to have an elevator, and whether/how long we can wait to sign a contract. Hana suggested that we check state agencies about requirements for ADA compliance. Doug suggested that we defer and begin fundraising for the elevator. Don will explore and report back at our December meeting.

Treasurer: Carolyn asked in there were any questions about her Treasurer's report, circulated before the meeting, which showed an opening operating balance of \$5428.88, receipts of \$1210 (including \$671 for yard sale), and disbursements of \$1204.05, for an ending balance of \$5434.82, and total assets of \$30,272.71. There were no questions.

Brad reported that he hadn't quite gotten to completion in setting up Paypal on the website because of the existence of a previous accounts, but that he intended to follow up promptly and make it happen.

Secretary: Beth asked for review and approval of the minutes of the Sept. 30 Annual Meeting and the Oct. 7 Board meeting (previously circulated), so she could get them posted on the website.

Moved, seconded, and passed (unanimous) to approve both sets of minutes.

Archives: Doug reported that the digitization project was doing well, and that Judy Bookbinder had agreed to help with cataloguing the items for digitization.

He raised the question on whether to accept the donation of snapshots of World War II taken by Mr. McPherron, a town resident. There was discussion of their quality and relevance to a local story, and it was suggested that we take them temporarily for review, accept them with the proviso that we can do

with them as we see fit (which is allowed in our current donation paperwork), scan any that were worth saving, and/or suggest other donation venues. No final vote taken, but Doug will pursue based on that general guidance.

Ways and Means: Doug concluded that based on review of financial records, we spend about \$30,000 a year on just basic operation and maintenance of the building, and thus need to raise at least that amount every year. He reported that the Ways and Means Committee had met, and discussed several suggestions, including a Spring yard and craft fair and/or perhaps several flea markets, encouraging people to donate nice furniture and antiques for sale online with some or all of the proceeds going to the Society, offering some unaccessioned pieces owned by the Society for online sale, and sending out an end-of-year annual appeal, which hasn't been done before.

Discussion followed, focused primarily on the size, cost and likely return on investment of an annual appeal. Paul thanked Don for asking local businesses to donate, and suggested starting with a smaller targeted mailing to members and likely donors rather than a mass mailing to every household in town, and using Facebook to reach others. Hana suggested putting an appeal letter in the next Newsletter (Don has a draft ready), and also tying the appeal to the holidays. Deb asked if there were any significant tax liability for selling items; we were not aware of any. Shirley suggested checking about bulk mailing costs and addresses with Milly Worthley of the Council on Aging, which does large-scale local mailings. Brad noted that the website needed to look good and have an option for online donation by the time we make our appeal. He and Beth noted that online 'Giving Tuesday' is the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, and we might do an online appeal then as well as a physical mailing later.

Moved (Beth), seconded (Shirley), and voted (unanimous) to empower the Ways and Means Committee to carry out any of the plans in their report, including sale of Society-owned items approved for sale

Paul recommended that we keep photographs of Society-owned items that we sell. Doug said the Ways and Means Committee would meet again the following week to continue working.

Programs and Activities: Hana reported that Gary and Joe are at work on lining up programming for the quarterly meetings, and that she's working to integrate these with other programs via a Programs, Activities and Education committee, which might also integrate educational displays. Hana, Carolyn, Judy Bookbinder, Jean Zaniewski and perhaps others hope to meet and work on this in the next month or two. Maria inquired about the possibility of celebratory open house events like an opening night party for new exhibits. Brad felt that major indoor events at the museum, while a good idea, should probably wait until after Covid dies down.

Membership: Don noted that we currently have 273 active members, 70 of whom are life members, and have added 30 members since the beginning of September. We need to work on upgrading to a more functional, accessible member database. Hana reported that she had reached out to Kristin Slater, who has a lot of database experience, as well as Carolyn, Meg, Jean and Don, and they will arrange for a membership committee meeting as early as Nov. 14. Meg expressed willingness to co-chair with Don. The possibility was raised that Membership function as a subcommittee of Ways and Means. Maria stressed that it was important to invite members not on the Board to serve on this and other committees. Don confirmed that this would be the case with Membership and that both Kristen and Jean had been invited.

Sunday Museum hours: Brad opened discussion of the logistics of expanding museum hours to include Sundays. Hana has recruited three members, Carolyn Weekes, Jean Zaniewski and Marcia Tranovich, to assist on Sundays and would like to start opening while the Veterans Exhibit is still on display; the hours Hana is available are 4-6 PM. Brad noted that Sunday hours had good public relations value and showed

responsiveness to the Jewish community. While there was general agreement that having Sunday open hours was probably a good idea, the scheduling of the opening and the proposed late afternoon hours raised some logistical issues and concerns. Debby noted that the downstairs and carriage house were both in disarray and in need of cleaning, and it might be better to wait until January when all spaces would be ready for the public. Hana said that only the first floor would be open until other spaces were ready. Several people expressed reservations about the later hours, particularly in the coming months due to darkness and competition with the Patriots, plus a preference for consistent hours on Saturday and Sunday. Shirley suggested starting with one Sunday a month. Paul suggested we start with the 4-6 PM hours every Sunday, when Hana is available, let the public decide if they work, and re-evaluate after trying them. Don noted that Buildings and Grounds should review our safety and security procedures before expanding hours, and that committee wouldn't meet again until December. Jimmie confirmed that in terms of safety all the indoor and outdoor lighting was working. Maria noted that the same open hours policies should apply to Saturdays and Sundays, with no double standard. Beth offered to recirculate her memo on safety and security precautions, incorporating comments that had been raised in response. Hana expressed the hope that Sunday afternoon hours would be another good time for committees to meet, when the building would be open to members beyond the Board. She also noted that she had been locked out last year and that she would need a new key to open the museum.

Moved (Beth), seconded (Paul) and approved (8-3-2) to start Sunday hours on the first floor [as soon as feasible] as of Nov. 7, depending on review of exterior lighting and safety, and at a later point evaluate how it's going. Hana offered the friendly amendment from "as soon as feasible" to "as of Nov. 7", which Beth accepted the amendment and re-read the motion as amended before the vote.

Veterans' Activities: Don shared that the Veterans' Exhibit would include an Open House on Wednesday evening November 10th, and that parts of the display would be set up outside Town Hall for the Veterans Day commemorations 11 AM-1 PM on Nov. 11. Also that the ceremony would include the dedication to Shirley Schofield of a replica of the original fountain in the Square on the Town Hall lawn.

Moved (Hana), seconded, and approved (unanimous) to approve a Veterans evening open house on Nov. 10th and the removal of collections items offsite to Town Hall on Veterans Day.

Veterans Heritage Grant: Jimmie reported on a Mass Humanities grant application he and Meg would like to submit, the general outline of which is due in 2 days. It would add to our resources for the annual Veterans' Exhibit, including folding tables, helmet stands, pipe and drape sets, cordons, Tyvek garment bags, a garment storage rack, and display mannequins. The grant application would be for up to \$6500 in matching funds, which applicants can match through cash and/or in-kind labor and donations. If we can bill our labor and donations, it ideally would not cost us any cash funds.

Moved (Jimmie), seconded (Beth) and approved (unanimous) to proceed with the grant application.

Possible Acquisitions from Police and Fire Museum: Don reported that J.J. McGrath needs to move the Police and Fire collections out of its current building, and that some Sharon-related items and display cases would be available to the Society. Doug and others will meet with J.J. in the coming week. Shirley expressed particular interest in the telephone booth. Beth offered to join Don and Doug as needed in reviewing potential acquisitions. Don noted that some items are on loan from others while some are owned by the Police and Fire Museum. Hana stressed that we need to document accessions and loan transfers well.

Moved (Paul), seconded (Debby) and voted (unanimous) to authorize Don, Doug and Beth to accept relevant items from the Police and Fire Museum, using appropriate forms.

Other business:

Brad is looking for help on upgrading the website. It was noted that Jason Phelps had expressed interest in working on the website and Brad should contact him; we should also reach out to other potentially interested members.

Don reminded us that Communications Committee had agreed on a Nov. 8 deadline for submissions to Paul for the newsletter, with the goal of mailing it out on Nov. 22. Also that the Quarterly Meeting would be hybrid, with audience both at the museum and online via Zoom.

Due to lack of time, discussion of suggested Board protocols and behavioral covenants, circulated in advance by Brad, was deferred to a later meeting.

It was also suggested that in interests of time, at future meetings we would try to circulate and read routine informational reports before the meeting and group them together in a consent agenda.

It was agreed that we would proceed with acquiring an upgraded telephone and answering machine system with four handsets, as approved by a previous Board and requested again by Shirley. Hana suggested that many people are moving away from land line systems and we might be able to get a good one secondhand; if not we can buy one new. Don and Hana offered to acquire the new system.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 PM

Next Board meeting: Thursday Dec. 2 at 7 PM

Quarterly membership meeting: Thursday, Dec. 9 at 7 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Elisabeth McGregor, Secretary