

Sharon Historical Society Board Meeting Dec. 2, 2021 Minutes

The Board held its regular monthly meeting in hybrid zoom/in-person format at 7 PM on Thursday December 2nd 2021

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

After general conversation, the meeting was called to order at 7:06
A B&G report on the elevator was added to the agenda.

Historical Reflection: Shirley generated considerable interest and amusement with her account of a local nudist camp or Sunbathers' Association that was active in the late 1920s and early 1930s, run by a Sharon resident. It was located in the woods at the end of a cart path off East Street, now Abbot Ave. up to Gannett Terrace. It included a clubhouse and an open area. It was fenced and surrounded by trees, but close to Sharon golf club, and golfers could see over fence from some points on the course. During the 1940s the former clubhouse was being used by Sharon State Guard. The huge stone fireplace and ruins of the clubhouse became a party spot in the 1960s for teens, who sometimes had roaring fires in the fireplace. The area has since been developed into housing. This led to other stories of old sites in Sharon, including Joe Blansfield's account of Native American sites on Mountain Street that were considered sacred.

President's Report: Brad reported that in a team effort with Morey Waltuck and Carolyn Weeks, we finally got Paypal set up. He thanked Meg for the fundraising email message she crafted, and Don for the newsletter appeal. Carolyn noted that \$587.25 came in today from Paypal, but there is as yet no clear way to categorize the sums coming in as dues payments or donations. Brad and Carolyn will work on clarifying this, but it will need improvements to the website. He also reported receiving a positive email message from a member about how well we were coming together as a board, and encouraged us to keep on that path. He also brought up the need for long range planning and goal setting. Meg suggested a strategic planning workshop. As we shape and staff committees, we need to think about what our vision is for them, and where we want to see the Society in three years.

Treasurer's Report: Carolyn asked for questions on her previously submitted monthly report, which showed an opening balance of \$5434.83, with receipts of \$345.46 and disbursements of \$1321, leaving a checkbook balance of \$4459.29 and total funds balance of \$29,373.76. She added that since the report we received a \$300 corporate donation, plus a new member, Roger Porcaro of Roger's Barber Shop. Shirley reported that he displayed our newsletters and had requested member forms. Might any hairdressers also be interested? She also noted that any restricted donations should be tracked separately.

Secretary's Report : Beth reported that she found much useful information and inspiration at November's virtual NEMA conference; she already passed on a program idea to Gary and hopes to share her notes at some point. She asked for any additions or corrections to the Nov. 4 minutes.

Moved (Debby), seconded and voted (unanimous) to approve the Nov. 4 minutes.

Discussion of Committees:

Brad asked for expressions of interest in serving on Society committees, recognizing that we need to do some work on reviewing structure and functions of committees.

Paul noted that the current bylaws call for eight committees (Ways & Means, Education, Newsletter, Buildings and Grounds, Membership, Publicity and Social Networking, Program Arrangements for Quarterly and Annual Membership Meetings, and Technology), but these may not meet actual areas of interest or functional needs. Doug noted that some active committees like Archives aren't listed, and others aren't currently active but are needed, like Technology. Beth noted that we've clustered the functions of some of them together (with Newsletter falling under Communications), but the boundaries of responsibility aren't clear. Some committees may be temporary for special projects. It was generally agreed that Board members don't need to chair committees, but should take active roles in them. As long as at least one board member is represented on a committee, it could be chaired by any interested Society member. (Hana mentioned for example that Judy Bookbinder might want to chair a committee on displays.) Meg also encouraged the practice of having co-chairs to share the workload.

Hana suggested that we use the list of people who have expressed interest in volunteering. She also offered to poll board members about their interests. Beth suggested that once committees are working together they might choose their own chairs/co-chairs.

Where we seem to stand now:

Doug and Meg have agreed to co-chair Ways and Means.

Don is chairing Buildings and Grounds, with support from Jimmie and Debby

Gary Sullivan is chairing the quarterly meeting Programs, supported by Joe. Joe and Hana are both interested in general programs and education.

Facebook administration is being done by Shirley, Meg and Hana.

Brad is willing to work on technology and social media. Morey would like to continue work on improving the website.

Beth is willing to work on membership and chair or co-chair bylaws/procedures; several people have expressed interest in bylaws, including Barbara Dunham, Jean Zaniewski, Carolyn, Don, Paul and Shirley. Don has been handling the membership database; Kristin Slater is willing to take over organizing the database and co-chair Membership

Jimmy and Judy Bookbinder are interested in displays.

Paul would be willing to take part in a genealogy committee.

Hana may have more names to plug in based on her email solicitation to Board members.

Doug made the point that we need to look at the big picture first, figuring out our vision and priorities, then build committees around them. Joe noted that while a few basic functions like Ways and Means, B&G and Membership are essential and should be bylaw-defined, others should be structured by the Board as needed, based on what works and where the interest is. We agreed that the new year we need to make a new start, assuring that a few essential structures are in place and build from there. We'll return to this topic.

Ways and Means Report and Recommendations:

Doug reported for Ways and Means, endorsing Debby's idea of periodic craft fairs and flea markets, with vendors renting tables and the Society providing space and marketing support. Although planning time is short, the committee recommends Hana's plans for a holiday craft fair to take advantage of the season and attract a good crowd. Hana elaborated on the plan for a winter holiday market on Dec. 12 (rain date Dec. 19) with about 20 vendors, mostly craft tables plus three vintage tables including some Historical Society items, some family-friendly activities and a food truck. Debby noted that the beauty of it is that unlike at a yard sale, the vendors do their own setup and take everything away when done. We

will need some volunteers, including to keep the museum open during the event. Several people offered their help. We discussed a number of logistical issues, including hours, adequate volunteer staffing, safety, any needed permitting, and parking so as not to interfere with the churches' use of the public lot and street parking. Shirley was particularly concerned about inconveniencing the Congregational Church, which has been helpful to the Society, and whose services are held at 10AM. We agreed on a 10:30 start time so that any churchgoers will have spaces, and directions to vendors and encouragement to members to park elsewhere. We will contact the churches in advance to alert them, and will also promote the Congregational tree sale and food pantry. We agreed to end at 4:00 to allow everyone to clear out before dark. We also agreed that future fairs and markets would have more lead time for planning, publicity, and notification to neighbors.

Moved (Beth), seconded, and voted (12-0-1) to authorize Ways and Means to organize craft fairs and flea markets as they see fit, and report to the Board on their plans and results.

We agreed to proceed with the plan for a Dec. 12 Winter Market, led by Hana with support from Ways and Means members and other volunteers. Details will be worked out by the committee.

The second Ways and Means proposal, presented by Don, was to mail a fundraising appeal to Sharon town residents, about 6000 households according to the Council on Aging. Don estimates the cost at around \$2000 and that the cost should be easily covered or surpassed by donations. There was general agreement that such a mailing would be good for both fundraising and visibility in the community, with a number of logistical concerns and suggestions. We need to design a good online a print donation form and provide options for employer matches and memberships. Brad emphasized that before we can send out the appeal, we need to improve our website and have a better Paypal online donation structure set up so that we can distinguish member dues from donations and acknowledge them appropriately. Carol noted that based on her experience, businesses are more likely to give early in the year than at the end. Beth felt we should wait until we're fully ready and know we have an attractive product, and that end-of-year appeals can get lost in a flood of similar donation requests. Brad would like to wait until we have a stronger website in place.

Moved (Paul), seconded, and voted (unanimous) to authorize Ways and Means to proceed with planning for a town-wide appeal early in 2022. Don agreed to head the project.

Programs Report and Recommendations:

Joe and Don reported on preparations for a hybrid Quarterly member meeting on Thursday, Dec. 9, featuring brief President and Treasurer reports and a guest speaker on the Boston Molasses Flood. We will set up for a small group with the speaker on the main floor of the museum, with others attending via Zoom. Don will manage the remote connection.

Joe emphasized that we need to build a calendar of quarterly meetings going forward, so we can cast our net wide for speakers and program ideas and have plenty of time for advance planning and publicity. He Get calendar of when the meetings will be in advance. He requested that the Board come up with a 2022 calendar. Paul suggested that we pick four default dates on the spot. After consulting calendars, we agreed with Don's proposal of four Thursdays, **March 10, June 9 (Annual Meeting), Sept 8, and Dec. 8.** Joe will pass these dates on to Gary Sullivan. Our newsletter schedule will be based on getting notice out before these meeting dates.

Communications Report and Recommendations:

Don reported that about half of our members have an email address on file with us. Paul advocated for a transition to more frequent electronic communications to members and more email distribution of the Heritage Hunter, while still preserving a print version. He suggested that we need to proactively gather and confirm contact information, perhaps seeking a volunteer to take this on. Don noted that in the last

mailing, about 20 came back as wrong addresses. Brad would like us to regularly solicit email information and address changes in each newsletter. Hana noted that we should tell members that we'd like to do most of our communications online, but if you want to get newsletters by snail mail we'll still send a hard copy. Joe suggested that we tap a high school student to scrub and populate our email membership list, and that we cut back on the number of hard copy mailings.

Membership Committee Report and Recommendations:

Meg was unfortunately unable to be at the meeting to further explain and answer questions about the Membership Committee report circulated in advance, which recommends adopting the multi-function membership platform WildApricot. Hana noted that Kristin and Meg, who both have worked with multiple platforms agreed on WildApricot as the most useful and economical. At about \$60/month it's not cheap, but it does a lot and can make us more efficient and responsive, and Kristin has volunteered to take charge of the conversion. The committee will meet again Dec 23rd and bring recommendations to the next Board meeting.

Buildings and Grounds Report and Recommendations:

On matters of security and safety, the committee plans to meet before the next board meeting and discuss the guidelines and protocols suggested by Beth. Don feels we should review and perhaps upgrade the alarm system, and provide every authorized individual a unique access code. He also would like us to consider adding security cameras at the entrances.

He also noted that he plans to move some display cases from the Police and Fire Museum.

On the elevator, Don requested authorization to sign with Associate elevator to do an initial \$450 assess **Moved (Jimmie), seconded and voted (unanimous) to authorize Don to proceed and to fund \$450.**

Other business:

Hana would like to help organize a winter display on the main floor of the museum, and will bring a plan to the January meeting.

We discussed ways to memorialize Kevin Earley and dedicate something to him at the museum. One possibility is a tree or other planting; another might be related to technology, which he loved and was engaged in. Debby had seen information about an electronic signboard; Brad asked if she could bring back some particulars.

In interests of time, Brad suggested that we end the meeting at this point.

Moved, seconded and voted (unanimous) to adjourn at 8:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Elisabeth McGregor, Secretary