

Sharon Historical Society Board Meeting, March 3, 2022 Minutes

The Board met in hybrid format, remotely via Zoom and in person, on Thursday evening, March 3, at 7 PM (its usual meeting time, the first Thursday of the month).

Present: Brad Larson (Pres), Don Williams (VP), Beth McGregor (Sec'y), Carolyn Weeks (Treas), Doug c (d Archivist), Joe Blansfield, Marie Cuneo, Debby DeBassio, Carol Gannon, Hana Jenner, Jimmie Keating, Paul Lauenstein, Shirley Schofield, Meg Winikates; Kristin Slater (Membership Co-Chair), Gary Sullivan (Programs Chair). Absent: Maria Anderson

Brad called the meeting to order at 7:05 and led a brief overview of the agenda.

Historical Reflection: Shirley read from a letter to the Selectmen written in 1893 by Solomon Talbot proposing a town seal for Sharon, which was adopted and is still in use. It included in the left quarter an outline of Moose Hill, in the field Lake Massapoag, in the right quarter the Gunhouse of the Sharon Artillery Company founded in 1751, a crest of two cannons and some cannon balls, representing the local industry that created the first cannons made in America, and a belt surrounding it with the dates of 1740, when Sharon became a separate 2nd precinct of Stoughton, and 1765, when it was incorporated as a town.

Plans for Annual Meeting: Gary offered a list of possible programs. His first choice was a panel of 3-4 participants in the Antiques Road Show giving behind-the-scenes insights into the show, which he felt required an in-person meeting. Other program possibilities included a historic munitions expert around Lexington and Concord, a speaker from Norton on King Philip's War, and the producer of a new film on Blanche Ames, along with a viewing of the film. Since the library had recently presented the Ames film, it was suggested that it should wait until the fall and perhaps be accompanied by a related tour of Borderland.

Moved (Don), seconded and voted to arrange for a program on the Antiques Road Show at the June annual meeting. Gary will work to get the show's permission and set it up.

President's Report: Brad recognized and thanked the Saturday and Sunday crews staffing the museum and their service to the public. He spoke about the need to institute and follow best practices for historical societies and museums, citing the STEPS program of the AASLH as a model. He plans to speak with Katie McDonald of the Old Colony Museum, who is also active in the Massachusetts History Alliance. He spoke of his professional work gathering stories of various groups and refugees, and would like to see us involved with similar efforts here. He offered to donate his time and equipment to record stories gathered by the Sharon Pluralism Network. We would like to work with them, and Don noted that would be great to have recording equipment at the museum that we could use to gather oral histories an any time.

Treasurer's Report: Carolyn asked for any questions or comments on her previously circulated monthly report, which showed an opening balance of \$3257.83, receipts of \$412.44, a transfer of \$7000 from the Sharon Credit Union CD, disbursements of \$1359.55, a closing operating balance of \$9310.72, and total cash assets of \$197, 323.04. A question was raised on how memorial donations are tracked. She said that they are earmarked and tracked to any specific wishes of the donor but are kept in the same accounts as other funds. However, if a major donor specifies that the donation be kept in a special account, we can set that up. Brad suggested that the Finance Committee bring a proposal to the Board developing specifics on handling memorial donations; Carolyn replied that they are already discussing it.

Secretary's Report: Beth reported on her efforts to clean up the office and organize the files, particularly Board records, saying she is careful to consult others before discarding anything. She also encouraged other Board members to take the opportunity offered by NEMA to become associate members and take advantage of their emails and programs. She asked for any questions or corrections on the February minutes; there were none.

Moved (Don), seconded and voted to approve the minutes of the Feb. 3,2022 meeting.

Vice President's Report: Don reported for Buildings and Grounds that the elevator is ready for inspection, and that we have solicited quotes to repair the doors of the museum and carriage house. The DPW helping us move cases from Police Museum. He praised the outstanding job done by Hana, Carolyn, Beth and others on the Dr. Griffin display, which complements our March program. He noted that both the Ways & Means and Membership committees have met and discussed potential increases and restructuring of membership dues.

Membership Report: Don reported that 10 emails in our last all-member message failed due to a bad address; that some may have involved small errors, and we will follow up by phone with those whose addresses failed. Kristin as Membership Co-Chair explained the position of the Membership Committee that we should delay dues increase until we've given members a chance to enjoy some great programs, which we weren't able to offer in the past year or two, so they'll feel they're getting something more for their money. She also explained that in Wild Apricot, family members at the same address are treated as a 'bundle', with one identified as administrator. We can limit the number in one bundle and make rules about family member votes. The system can send three reminders of dues payments due before suspending a membership; suspended members are still kept on the database.

Brad asked how Wild Apricot keeps track of whose memberships are due for renewal and when they're renewed. Kristin explained that while we should write the appropriate messages rather than simply use the template provided by WA, the system automatically tracks when such notices should go out and when renewals are completed. The WA system also tracks donations

and automatically sends receipts, although again we should tailor the wording of the receipts rather than just using the bare template provided.

Website: Brad showed a template for a website provided by Wild Apricot. He had some trouble because it doesn't use Wordpress, but they do provide good tech support, and while not the most sophisticated it provides good features like online purchasing and payments and is better than what we have. He will continue to work with it.

Our free trial period is almost over. We had previously authorized payment for three months, but prepaying for one year at \$99/mo. saves 10%; prepaying for two years would save 15% over the monthly rate. Hana asked if the data could be exported if we decided to leave the system; Kristen said yes, it could be exported to Excel.

Moved (Paul), seconded, and voted to subscribe to Wild Apricot for one year Brad and Don will coordinate on payment using the Society's credit card.

Donnell Family Trust: Shirley reported that she had received a message from Chuck Farrington, the Trustee for the Donnell Trust, that the house sale is contracted for \$1,000,000, and that we should be hearing from him shortly. Fees to the lawyers, realtors etc. will be paid from the proceeds, and the rest divided among four groups; amount not known but should be sizeable.

Ways & Means Report: Doug reported that the committee met in January and February. They are committed to raising \$650 in matching funds for the Veterans grant we received, through a targeted appeal and a booth at the two spring markets, Hana's May 1 crafts market and a later flea market. They'll explore cooperating with Sustainable Sharon on a joint event. They are planning ahead for the gift shop, possibly adding new items, and are ordering 10 new copies of the red book. Debbie will set a date to complete an inventory of the gift shop stock. They discussed potential income from building rentals, but the building isn't fully ready and they tabled the rental discussion for now. They proposed a dues increase to \$25 for an individual membership, \$35 or \$40 for a family membership, possibly adding a lower-rate junior/student member category, and no longer offering Life Memberships, although those already holding them would be 'grandfathered' in.

Plans for March 10 Quarterly Meeting: The meeting will be hybrid, with attendees both in person at the museum and remotely on Zoom. Joe and Don are coordinating the setup. Don had a phone conversation with the speaker, Bill Dudley of Foxboro. Bill suggested that he speak about Dr. Griffin for about 25 minutes, then open up the floor for audience members to add their memories and comments. The talk will be accompanied by photographs that he would like to show on the screen. In the announcement to all members, we will both share the Zoom link and encourage people to register in advance to attend in person, so that we can set up the space accordingly.

Archives Committee Report: Doug reported that they are ready and still waiting for Digital Commonwealth to take the photograph collection we have processed for them. They have cleaned up all the donated items that had lined the stairs. For the next meeting, he would like to see some policies that would set up a sort of triage process, scaling down the volume of donated items that we're unlikely to want or need to accession.

Youth hike on Rattlesnake Hill: Joe shared his plan to lead a history/nature hike on Rattlesnake Hill this spring for 12-15 middle school youth. After that walk, he'll evaluate and potentially offer a later walk for members and families. Much interest in that possibility.

Committees: There is still some uncertainty about the membership, leadership, and responsibility of several committees. Brad would like us to clarify the committee structure and membership soon. [for google doc version of current list see <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EyfpUhws4cHI13gvNA7VnHGnFrUJMjt1iLitySSx1g/edit#heading=h.cqdb3z43de4w>]

Nominations: Brad noted that the bylaws ask him to appoint three board members to serve as a Nominating Committee, but he felt that last year's committee of 5 did an excellent job and would like them to do it again. They are Maria (chair), Paul, Don, Beth and Carolyn.

Moved (Paul), seconded, and voted to expand the committee to 5 members. All five have indicated their willingness to serve.

Other business:

Finance Committee did not meet in February because Peter Raskin was out of town.

Shirley reported that we have copies of the full text of the Donnell trust (75 pages) which we can keep on file and is happy to share it if anyone is interested.

Don reported that there are people in Sharon with ancestral or other strong ties to Ukraine who would be willing to share their stories via zoom or in a hybrid program at the museum. He asked for permission to set up a supplemental program, which was approved without vote.

Brad called for adjournment at 9:04 PM.

Next meeting is April 7 at 7 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elisabeth McGregor, Secretary