

Smith-Harris House Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 25, 2014

Present: Gary Lakowsky
Richard MacDonald
Maggi Prokop
Darlene DeLaura

FILED IN EAST LYME
CONNECTICUT
June 27²⁰ 14 AT 12:30 AM/PM
Brooke D. Flannery ATC
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Also Present: Joanie DiMartino, Smith-Harris Curator
Donna Massung, Friends of the Smith-Harris House

I. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Lakowsky called the Smith-Harris House Commission Regular Meeting of June 25, 2014 to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Mr. Lakowsky asked for additions, corrections or deletions to the May 28, 2014 Smith-Harris House Commission Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Mr. MacDonald moved to approve the May 28, 2014 Smith-Harris House Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Darlene DeLaura. (4-0) Unanimous

III. REPORTS

A. Public Delegations. Donna Massung, new President of the Friends, was welcomed.

She reported the Friends elected officers at its Annual Meeting. The expenditure for the carpenter for the Textile Closet was approved.

B. Ex-officio Report. Mr. Wilson was not present, and there is no report.

C. Curator's Report. (See attached)

D. Agenda Additions.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to add under Museum Development D. V, Five Rivers Consortium. Seconded by Ms. DeLaura. (4-0) Unanimous.

E. Chairman's Report. Mr. Lakowsky reported we are now able to open the house windows. An entrance sign for the front of the building is being made. It will be hung on Saturday.

The slate has been delivered. He asked that a note of thanks be written to Tom Malley of 5 Gun Shot Road, Waterford, Connecticut who donated it. Mr. Lakowsky will work with Dave

Putnam, Director of Parks and Recreation, on using a small backhoe. He asked that a thank you note be sent to Mr. Putnam for having the slate delivered to the house.

All signs have been received. He has put the sign up that the house is open for tours.

The Curator found a photo book, and it is now in the parlor.

F. Financial Report.

1. Status Update. Mr. MacDonald reported we have a remaining balance of \$2,654.01. We anticipate receiving bills for electric, Curator and secretarial services.

2. Presentation of Bills. Mr. Lakowsky reported we need to pay the Historical Society \$33 for our contribution for the use of the van during Open House Day. Mr. Lakowsky submitted two bills in the amount of \$6.14 from Gene Medley for water for Open House Day and for the School Program. Mr. Lakowsky submitted a bill in the amount of \$8.52 for a chicken. Mr. Lakowsky used money encumbered to have two keys made for the house and materials to make the entrance sign.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to pay the above bills. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald.
(4-0) Unanimous.

3. Barn Rental. Ms. Prokop reported to date she has not received any new barn rentals.

G. Collections Committee. Mr. Lakowsky reported we have received two boxes of artifacts from the dig. Wil Reed gave a talk about the artifacts.

H. Correspondence. Correspondence was received from students in the High School archeology class.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Garden Fence and Maintenance. Mr. Lakowsky reported he will need white paint for the garden fence. Ms. DiMartino would like to have a vegetable garden.

2. Tree Limbs. Mr. Putnam has agreed to have a crew take care of the tree limbs as time permits.

3. Front Walkway. Mr. Lakowsky reported the slate has been delivered.

B. Museum Development.

1. Educational Programs. There was no further discussion of educational programs.

a. Middle School Program June 3 and 4. Mr. Lakowsky felt the Middle School Program went well. The youngsters were curious and very attentive. Ms. Prokop took photos of the event. Mr. Lakowsky suggested putting them on the website.

b. June 14 Open House. Ms. DiMartino reported she was pleased that the flyers the youngsters brought home encouraged them to come back with their families on June 14. Tours were given every thirty minutes. Ms. Prokop made cookies for the Open House. Mr. Lakowsky stated sixty people signed the register. Jennifer Emerson did Open Hearth cooking. The youngsters enjoyed playing with the toys.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Barn Painting (grant?) Unfortunately we did not receive the grant. Mr. Lakowsky will speak to the First Selectmen about painting the barn.

2. Barn Roof. The barn roof is on the Town's Capital Improvement Plan.

B. Museum Development.

1. Educational Program Middle School. There was no further discussion on the educational program at the Middle School.

2. Textile Closet. Ms. DiMartino is waiting to hear from the carpenter.

C. Summer Events. Mr. Lakowsky has contacted Sally Rafanello who portrays the widow of Abe Lincoln. Ms. DiMartino will contact her to determine the dates she will be available.

D. Five Rivers Consortium. Mr. MacDonald attended a meeting of Five Rivers Consortium. Ms. DiMartino has been receiving emails from them. They now have flyers at the Smith-Harris House and library.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to adjourn the June 25, 2014
Smith-Harris House Regular Meeting at 8:10 p.m.
Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (4-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Ghersi, Recording Secretary

Curator's Report--June

Submitted to the Smith-Harris Commission

"I overheard a student say 'I thought it would be boring but I really liked it!' You and the presenters did a great job. Thanks so much." --Audrone Venduras, 8th-grade teacher, East Lyme Middle School. What better way to gauge our positive impact on the community, than by this statement from a young student, who not only had fun, but learned about history as well? As we open our doors for the summer season, let's continue to provide ways to convince our visitors that history is, indeed, anything but "boring!"

East Lyme Middle School Program

- Approximately 180 students, accompanied by teachers and chaperones visited the museum on Tuesday, June 3rd and Wednesday, June 4th. The weather held, all presenters offered great talks, and as can be seen from the above statement, the day was a successful learning experience for the students. I've received a few emails directly after the event from teachers thanking us for such a fine program.
- A thank you to all who participated: Gary Lakowsky, Dick MacDonald, Maggi Prokop, Carol Marelli, Hank Savin, Jennifer Emerson, Leslie Evans, and Rick Spencer. Also, thank you to the Friends of Smith-Harris, for providing the lunches to the presenters on both days. Both Gene Medley and Donna Massung stopped by to lend support and take in the day.

Open-House Day

- I had worked toward confirming any final events/people/tasks before the event; everything seemed to be completed and the event itself ran smoothly, from the reports that I've heard.
- Upon speaking with Liz Kutcha, I learned that the bus wasn't as utilized as we had hoped, and if we offer the bus to visitors next year it will be in a different format.

Collections

- I have purchased 12 pairs of curator gloves. I would like to request that from now on anyone who needs to touch artifacts to move or clean them will kindly use the gloves to protect the artifacts from the dirt and natural oils on our fingers.
- Contacted Andy Derr to inform him that we were accepting his proposal for the textile closet. Waiting for response.
- I have been reading many documents and materials on the Averys and Smiths, as I update and re-write our guidebook. I propose two small but significant changes in the interpretation of the house:
 - The room known as the "dressing room" be changed to the "sewing room." This room is missing two key features of standard "dressing rooms" in the 19th-century: direct access from the bedroom only, and no built-in cabinetry. I believe, given the location of the room (above the front door, and a large window for best light access) that this was a "sewing room." This also allows for the interpretation of technological changes happening in CT, and how those changes would impact small town farming communities. It also mirrors the pattern of the changes represented in the house, regarding the technological changes in cooking, from hearth to stove. I would like to move artifacts from the attic to the room, and move some of the artifacts in there presently to the bedroom. The cost should be minimal, if at all.
 - The room known as the "servery" I would like to change to the "office." As it stands now, we currently have an 8-room museum with 3 rooms specified for food consumption. That's nearly half the museum. I propose keeping the wall paper and rug the same; simply moving some furniture to illustrate more of the male-working space Mr. Avery would have used to manage his farm and lands.

This will allow for us to interpret more of what his world encompassed; where, without an outside office, he would have conducted his business. The blending of public and domestic spheres. We can also continue to talk about how the use of rooms change over time, even in our own homes, and that Mr. W. H. H. Smith may have used it as a “servery.” However, I think, given our interpretive time period of 1845-1865, we should present it as an “office,” and then talk about the changes from there.

Staffing

- Gary Lakowsky and I have met with Hank Savin about the possibility of taking on some summer tour hours to help us cover our open days.
- I will also be shifting my schedule to cover some Fridays as needed. Finalized schedule forthcoming.

Meetings Attended

- Meeting with East Lyme Historical Society and Samuel Smith House regarding Open-House Day; Friends of Smith-Harris also present, 6/2.
- Meeting with Kathleen Sasso to go over Open-House Day tasks, 6/11
- Meeting with Gary Lakowsky and Hank Savin regarding summer tour schedule, 6/25
- Commission Meeting, 6/25

Upcoming Initiatives

- The CT Library Assoc. has selected Kristin Kimball’s book *The Dirty Life: A Memoir of Farming, Food, and Love* as its “One Book, One Region” selection. I’ve scheduled a meeting in July with Tara Borden, Asst. Director of the East Lyme Public Library to brainstorm possible collaborative programming, since it’s such a fabulous connection regarding farming, family, and food.
- I have an upcoming meeting scheduled with Commission member Kathleen Sasso to move forward with the CT Humanities Council “Capacity Building” grant for the development of a five-year plan.
- I have an upcoming meeting scheduled also with Donna Massung, new President of the Friends of Smith-Harris, Inc, to discuss increasing volunteerism at the museum.
- Upon confirmation, working with Andy Derr regarding the textiles closet installation.
- Completing the new tour, which will include a training session for everyone interested.

Submitted by:

Joanie DiMartino, curator
June 25, 2014

CC: Commission Members and Friends Board