

Smith-Harris House Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
October 29, 2015

Present: Gary Lakowsky
Richard MacDonald
Maggi Prokop
Barbara Odgers
Kathleen Sasso

FILED IN EAST LYME
CONNECTICUT
Nov 2 20 15 AT 3:20 AM PM
Kathleen Sasso, Jr.
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Also Present: Donna Massung. Friends of Smith-Harris President
Ken Avery

I. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Lakowsky called the Smith-Harris House Commission Meeting of October 29, 2015 to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Mr. Lakowsky asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the September 23, 2015 Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to approve the September 23, 2015 Smith-Harris House Commission Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. Mr. MacDonald abstained from voting. (4-0-1)
Motion carried.

III. REPORTS

A. Public Delegations. Ms. Massung reported the Friends received a \$250 grant from the Rotary for past perfect software.

B. Ex-officio Report. There was no report.

C. Curator's Report. (See attached)

D. Agenda Additions. There were no agenda additions.

E. Chairman's Report. Mr. Lakowsky reported he attended a Selectmen's Meeting with the map of the Smith-Harris property. They agreed to put it on the Agenda of a future meeting.

Mr. Lakowsky repaired the weed whacker, and put it in the tool shed. He also planted a boxwood plant in memory of Cindy DeHahn. He suggested purchasing a plaque for it.

Ron Bence agreed to plug the holes in the barn.

Ken Avery arrived.

Mr. Lakowsky reported he picked 75 apples from the orchard and delivered them to the New London food pantry.

F. Financial Report.

1. Status Update. Mr. MacDonald reported \$13,427.95 remains as of October 26 in the Smith-Harris House budget.

2. Presentation of Bills. There were no bills presented for payment.

Ms. Odgers would like to purchase drip pans and a burner for the upstairs electric stove. She informed the Commission there are many clothing items in the attic and suggested hanging them on the long rod and storing them in plastic bags to protect them.

MOTION: Maggi Prokop moved to authorize Barbara Odgers to purchase drip pans and a burner for the upstairs electric stove and plastic bags to protect clothing items in the attic for an amount not to exceed \$60. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (5-0) Unanimous.

3. Barn Rental. Ms. Prokop reported the barn is closed for the season.

4. 2016-17 Budget. Mr. Lakowsky asked for suggestions for the 2016-2017 budget. Ms. Sasso suggested increasing Ms. DiMartino's salary.

Ms. Odgers suggested increasing the amount for the Recording Secretary since the Town increased her hourly wage.

G. Collections Committee (See attached report)

H. Correspondence. There was no correspondence received.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Garden Fence and Maintenance. This will be taken care of at springtime.

2. Front Walkway. The front walkway will be done at springtime.

3. Lighting. Mr. Lakowsky received two estimates on the lighting.

B. Museum Development.

1. STepCT Report. See Director's Report.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Avery reported Ms. Prokop invited him to come to this meeting to discuss the possibility of renaming the Smith-Harris House.

Mr. Avery understood the only issue with changing the name of the house may be with the IRS. He is willing to look into it. He informed the Commission that he is related to the Averys who lived in the Smith-Harris House. He asked that the name be changed to the Thomas Avery house. Mr. Lakowsky felt many changes would have to be made with the name change. The last residents of the house were the Smith and Harris families. It was known as that. The house is on the historical registry as the Thomas Avery House.

Mr. Avery reported he attended an Avery Memorial Associations Meeting in July, and it was well attended. There is a wealth of knowledge about the Avery family. Thomas Avery built the house, and he felt it should be recognized for what it is. The house was built in 1845. Children were buried in the cemetery. He agreed to provide the house with a set of the Avery clan's books.

Mr. MacDonald asked when did Thomas Avery live in the house? Mr. Lakowsky replied he owned the house from 1845 and lived in it until his death in 1869. He felt the house should be shown through the ages and eyes of the different families who lived in it. The Smith and Harris families were related to the Averys. We are a Town Museum and we should show the history of the house from when it was built in 1845 until 1955. Ms. Odgers agreed. Mr. Lakowsky felt the name of the house is not as important as much as the museum.

Mr. Avery suggested having the history of the house placed in a frame under glass and hung at the entrance of the house. Ms. Odgers asked if he would consider naming the house the Avery and Smith Harris House? Ms. Massung stated she was not against changing the name of the house. Mr. Avery reported when they have the Avery Memorial Association Meeting, they have it at the Avery house in Groton.

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Barn Roof. The roof will be done at springtime. Mr. Bence agreed to fill in the holes in the wall of the barn.

2. Split rail fence. Mr. Lakowsky will take care of the split rail in spring.

3. Eagle Scout. Mr. Lakowsky met with an Eagle Scout who would like to build a trellis and will need material.

MOTION: Mr. MacDonald moved to encumber at True Value an amount not to exceed \$200 from the Landscaping Budget for material to build a trellis. Seconded by Ms. Sasso. (5-0) Unanimous.

B. Museum Development.

C. Upcoming Events.

1. November Events. There was no discussion of November events.

a. Open November 28. The house will not be open on November 28.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to adjourn the Smith-Harris House
October 29, 2015 Special Meeting at 8:20 p.m.
Seconded by Ms. Sasso. (5-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary

Director's Report--October, 2015

Submitted to the Smith-Harris House Commission

Upcoming Meetings

- Friends of Smith-Harris House meeting, Tuesday, November 10th, 2 pm, East Lyme Public Library.
- Historic Properties Commission Meeting, Monday, November 16th, 6:30 pm, at Town Hall.
- House decorating for the Holiday season, Tuesday, November 17th & Thursday, November 19th, 11 am both days.
- Smith-Harris House Commission Meeting, Wednesday, November 18th, 7 pm in the senior center.
- StEPS Open-House at Colchester Historical Society, November 30th, 1-4:30 pm.
- Additional meetings scheduled throughout the month TBD.

GRANTS

The latest update is that we've received partial-grants to cover beginning initiatives in our collections management, to allow us to both generate a significant basis for our inventory, but also allow us to extend our knowledge to our visitors. Currently, we've heard from two organizations:

- Niantic Rotary Foundation, granted us \$250.00 toward \$1000 for the purchase Past Perfect software (\$1004.00, with our AASLH member discount);
- Chelsea Groton Bank granted us \$250.00 toward \$1050.00 to cover the \$150.00 honorariums for a local conservationists to lead a series of seven "Preserve Your Past" workshops from April through October 2016 for the general public on how to best care for their own family heirlooms and antiques.
- We are still waiting to hear back from the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation regarding our Angels Project grant.

While we did not get the full amount we requested, receiving grants does underscore that these organizations and businesses view us as having a vital and important role in the community.

STEPS-CT

The current STEPS-CT Sub-Committee: Donna Massung, Kathleen Patterson, Kathleen Sasso, Maggi Prokop, and director Joanie DiMartino will begin meeting again in November to continue with STEPS-CT work.

- We will need to pay for our second year of AASLH & CLHO memberships at the end of this year, as part of our STEPS-CT obligation (and NEMA).
- **The Friends of Smith-Harris House have paid for the first 3 sessions of STEPS-CT; the Commission will need to pay for the final 3 sessions (one will be in this fiscal year [Collections--March, 2016], and two will be in the next fiscal year [Historic Landscapes--July, 2016 & Interpretation--November, 2016], so we have time to plan the budget. The cost is \$100 each session.

Collections

- Craig Woody has taken photos of the House; we'll be creating a folder of the second floor for visitors unable to climb the stairs, which helps us meet accessibility requirements per StEPS.
- He will shortly be photographing the Parlor decorated for a funeral for us as well.

Programs/Education

- Maggi & I took Wil Reed's students on a tour of the House on October 1st; 18 students total.
- Most of my October was spent in researching, writing, publicizing, and organizing the "Spirit Voices: Victorian Mourning & Spiritualism," which took place on October 24th:
 - The program is now in place to run annually or bi-annually.
 - although our turnout was small, 15 people, they were very engaged. Everyone took a tour of the Burial Ground, as well as visited the House, and staff ended up staying an hour after, due to visitor interest, which is another mark of a successful program.
- "Explore History!" took place on October 12th:
 - 42 visitors attended; this includes groups of adults who had never visited our site, as well as families with children.
 - Visitors took house tours, children made "hankie dolls," played historic games, added their creative talents to a painted "mural," and enjoyed the day!
- "Slightly-Creepy Tales/Trick or Trunk" has been postponed until this evening, Thursday, October 29th, 6 pm to 8 pm.
- I met with the East Lyme Middle School Social Studies teachers in early October; it was a great meeting! We outlined some key points for the 2016 school program:
 - Teachers have asked to keep the topics set to the Civil War time period; we should focus on the Avery family, and not the Smith/Harris families, since that better aligns with their curriculum (the local focus is best; town, state, region, in that order).
 - They very much prefer the "round robin" format, and want to keep it the same, although we might have larger groups and less speakers/stations as
 - a longer lunch time was requested, with games on the lawn for the students to expend a little energy in between listening; the second break this year worked well, too, and
 - an arts-related station is preferred. The teachers felt that the students would benefit from a creative segment to the program, also
 - as much hands-on learning as we could offer, some special use or reproduction items in the House that the students could touch to make a sensory connection to the past.
 - They particularly liked the "Civil War Medicine" talk and the "Inventions" talk; the House tour should focus on the Averys, and the "Abolitionist" talk should feature more about the individuals and less about economics, which they learn about in class.
- The teachers were very supportive of the program, and for me it was good to know that we're offering an educational program that is supporting the curriculum, and we just need to tweak it a little to improve it.
- I'll be in touch over the next week via email to plan for the Holiday programs; we have the Open-House on Saturday, December 5th from 9 am to 1 pm. We'll need people to staff the rooms and historic-inspired treats to offer. No Belsnickel on the 5th, because we're offering him on the 17th, 6 pm. We're already getting requests from the press for information on this event! Gary--you'll need another story to tell; Donna & I are working on the craft, and Judy's performing carols again; we're pretty much all set, and fliers have been made.

- It's that time of year when we need to begin considering program options for January through March/April 2016. I'm open to suggestions, especially any ideas on how to recognize and celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Smith-Harris House.
 - I'll be sending out an email sometime next week to have a meeting to discuss Jan-Apr programs.

Meetings Attended

- 9/28 & 9/29-StEPS MGMT introductory sessions (full-days).
- 10/2- meeting with middle school teachers.
- 10/6- Spirit Voices meeting.
- 10/13- Friends of Smith-Harris, Inc. meeting.
- 10/19- represented the Smith-Harris House at the EL Historic Properties Commission meeting.
- 10/20- meeting to decorate House for Spirit Voices; final meeting & organizing.

Submitted by:
Joanie DiMartino, executive director

October 29, 2015

OCTOBER 2015 COLLECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

There was no meeting held in October.

The Time-Life Civil War books are still awaiting a decision from the High School Library.

As mentioned in the September report I have switched my attic focus to ensuring that all textiles currently in the attic are conveniently arranged near the stairs for the Regional Angels Grant program scheduled in March.

There are five tubs of textiles so far: Infant, Child, Young Girls Clothing – Women's Clothing, Special Use - Women's Vintage Dark - Women's Clothing Whites – Bedding & Table Cloths - plus a small box of Sun Bonnets and a mob cap.

Above the grouped chairs in the attic there is a long clothes pole where I have hung some heavy men's clothing and long women's items. The clothes rod seems to work well but the garments need to be protected. I would like to find some inexpensive clear plastic bags about 30" Wide by 36" long to cover each piece of clothing individually. In the second floor bathroom there are about a dozen items hanging on the shower rod that could be brought up to the attic clothes rod also. Most of these articles of clothing are Special Use and no doubt would be useful for programs at the house. We are building a supply of hats, straw and felt.

One of the boxes of ephemera in the attic has a copy of the first Smith-Harris Cookbook. The cookbook was created when the niece of Lula Smith and Florence Harris gave Betty Morrison some of the ladies' recipes. To fill up the booklet, recipes from Miss Leslie's Cookbook (1857), Eliza Acton (1845), and Louisa May Alcott were added to the booklet and members of the original commission contributed some of their own family recipes. As we go through old records we will surely find the date these booklets were put together (c. 1977-80) and sold for \$1.00. Perhaps we could consider a revised edition for our sales table. Both Joanie and I have collections of antique cook books where we could cull some more vintage recipes.

Also found in a box of miscellaneous papers were 162 East Lyme Town Museum Smith-Harris House Post Cards. The picture is the same as that on the First Day Stamp issue. These cards could be placed at the door for sale. The Post Office sells plain post cards for 39¢ and the Dollar store sells generic New England cards for 2/1.00.

A sturdy desk has been acquired for the attic. If we are able to get it into the attic the desk will be used for filing photographs.

As we approach the Holidays the decorations scattered in the attic will also be brought forward away from in front of the attic window for easy access.

The attic window is in need of repair so it is important to clear away the clutter. Joanie has suggested there might be a grant that would cover restoration/maintenance.

Sincerely, Barbara B. Odgers