

Smith-Harris House Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2016

Present: Gary Lakowsky
Richard MacDonald
Barbara Odgers
Kathleen Sasso
Robert Seifel

FILED IN EAST LYME
CONNECTICUT
Mar 31 2016 AT 2:05 AM/PM
Kathleen Sasso, Clerk
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Absent: Maggi Prokop

Also Present: Joanie DiMartino, Smith-Harris Curator
Donna Massung, Friends of Smith-Harris President
Dan Cunningham, Ex officio

I. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Lakowsky called the Smith-Harris House Commission Meeting of March 23, 2016 to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Mr. Lakowsky asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the February 24, 2016 Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Ms. Odgers moved to approve the February 24, 2016 Smith-Harris House Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Mr. Seifel. (5-0) Unanimous.

III. REPORTS

A. Public Delegations. Ms. Massung reported on April 8 at 2 p.m. a Planning Meeting of the Friends and Commission members will be held at the Prokops' house.

The Friends want to know how to obtain permission to remove or prune the apple tree in the triangle, remove the stump, and replant two heirloom apple trees.

B. Ex-officio Report. Mr. Cunningham reported the Board of Selectman have been working on the budget. Mr. Lakowsky informed him he was not called in to the Selectmen Meeting to discuss the Smith-Harris House budget. He added normally he attends a meeting to discuss this Commission's budget. Mr. Cunningham replied only those budgets that the Selectmen felt needed to have discussion were called in.

He informed the Commission he is also Ex-officio of Historical Properties. They have been working on a Flow Chart.

C. Curator's Report. (See attached)

D. Agenda Additions. The Commission was asked for any additions to the Agenda.

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to add Discussion of the Apple Tree under Property Maintenance, item 2 of this evening's Agenda. Seconded by Ms. Odgers. (5-0) Unanimous.

MOTION: Mr. MacDonald moved to add East Lyme Bike and Barbeque to Upcoming Events of this evening's Agenda. Seconded by Ms. Odgers. (5-0) Unanimous.

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to add Barbara's List under Museum Development, item 1 of this evening's Agenda. Seconded by Mr. Seifel. (5-0) Unanimous.

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to add Internet Access to this evening's Agenda, under Museum Development, item 2. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (5-0) Unanimous.

E. Chairman's Report. Mr. Lakowsky reported on May 14 we will have a Legend Trip Ghost Tour.

He informed the Commission if a Commission member would like to have an item placed on the Agenda, please let him know by the Thursday before the meeting.

He reminded all commissioners to be sure the alarm is set prior to leaving the house.

Ms. Sasso suggested that Middle School students be allowed to wear period clothing and have a selfie station for them to take photos.

F. Financial Report.

1. Status Update. Mr. MacDonald reported there is \$8,291.46 remaining in the budget.

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

3. Barn Rental.

a. Cole Rhein Eagle Award June 4. Mr. Lakowsky reported boy scouts would like to use the barn on June 4 for an evening event. The youngsters may stay overnight and have a campfire.

MOTION: Mr. MacDonald moved to allow the boy scouts to use the barn on the evening of June 4 and

give them permission to stay overnight and have a campfire.
Seconded by Ms. Sasso. (5-0) Unanimous.

G. Collections Committee. Ms. Odgers passed out a list with recommendations that the Collections Committee made (see attached).

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to accept the Collections Committee Report on Acquisitions and accept the material in the Report. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (5-0) Unanimous.

Ms. Massung, on behalf of the Friends, agreed to accept the Collections Committee Report and its recommendations.

H. Correspondence. An email was received from Jim Littlefield, regarding the April issue of the Post Road Review. He interviewed Diane Sylvia, who is 71 years old, and is a relative of the Mungers. She was at the house when it was used as a farm.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Garden Fence and Maintenance. Mr. Lakowsky reported the garden fence will be painted on April 9.

2. Discussion of Apple Tree. Mr. Lakowsky suggested that the Friends seek an arborist to evaluate the apple tree in the middle of the circle.

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to give the Friends permission to seek an arborist to evaluate the apple tree in the middle of the circle. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (5-0) Unanimous.

3. Front Walkway. Mr. Lakowsky reported the front walkway will be taken care of on April 9.

B. Museum Development.

1. SStepCT Report. (See attached Director's Report).
 - a. Upcoming meetings. (See attached Director's Report)

2. Internet Access. An email was received from Bill Sheer regarding installing a wireless connection at the East Lyme Library. It is now possible to use it at the house.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Property Maintenance.

1. April 9. Mr. Lakowsky reported on April 9, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon the Lions Club will challenge the Rotary Club and the Leo's will challenge a school group. They will be given a list of items to work on.

B. Museum Development.

1. Barbara's List. (See attached)

C. Upcoming Events.

1. Report from Planning Joint Committee. A East Lyme Bike Ride and Barbeque with visits to each of the historical houses in Town. They would like a member of this Commission to attend their planning meetings. The next meeting will be held on March 29 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Parks and Recreation Office.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to adjourn the Smith-Harris House
March 23, 2016 Regular Meeting at 8:45 p.m.
Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (5-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Ghersi, Recording Secretary

Director's Report

Smith-Harris House, March, 2016

Upcoming Meetings

- STEPS-CT Collections Unit begins--9:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday AND Tuesday, March 28th & 29th, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, attending with Kathleen Patterson. Extra fee to add Friends Board/Commission members.
- Historic House Trails brochure meeting, Tuesday, April 10th, 10 am, Charter Oak Center, all welcome.
- Joint-Friends/Commission Program Planning, Friday, April 8th, Maggi's house, all welcome.
- S-HH Friends Board of Directors meeting, Tuesday, April 12th, 2 pm, all welcome.
- Town Professionals Survey for STEPS-CT; Tuesday, April 12th, 5:30 pm, Smith-Harris House Bran, invitation only.
- STEPS-CT Collections Unit continues--9:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday, April 25th, CT Historical Society, Hartford, attending with Kathleen Patterson. Extra fee to add Friends Board/Commission members.
- Historic Properties Commission meeting, Monday, April 18th, 7 pm, all welcome.
- Smith-Harris House Commission meeting, Wednesday, April 27th, 7 pm.

Programs

UPCOMING:

- Volunteer Clean-Up Day, Saturday, April 9th, 9 am to 12 noon. Open to public.
- Wil Reed's Class Tour, date TBD, 7:30 am to 8:45 am. Closed to public.
- David Rau's Class Visit, Wednesday, April 20th, 2 pm to 4 pm. Closed to public.
- David Rau's Class Tour, Wednesday, April 27th, 1:30 pm to 3:45 pm. Closed to public.
- We're all set for the May 14th Legend Trip Ghost Tour; it's already posted on their website: www.legendtrips.com
- IMPORTANT: "East Lyme Bike & Barbecue: Ride for Historic Places and Open Spaces" needs someone representing the Smith-Harris House to attend meetings:
 - WHY is this important? This preservation ride is a fundraising event to benefit all three historic houses and other East Lyme preservation efforts, i.e., Land Trust, et al. We will not receive a portion of the fundraising if we do not directly participate.
 - WHAT is needed? One or more people to attend meetings (they are now every other Tuesday; next scheduled for Tuesday, March 29th from 6 pm to 7 pm at the Parks & Recreation Office, and every other Tuesday evening until the event.
 - COMMITMENT: besides attending meetings, assisting in locating sponsors for the event, and other tasks as necessary, such as assisting with the barbecue, staffing a water table, etc. We will be a location on the "Preservation Ride," which is NOT a race (other races & rides will occur that day as well), but a leisurely cycle to the three historic houses in the town. Bikers will be able to rest on-site and even take a tour of the House. We'll need people available to give tours, and/or anything else we may want to offer on site that day.
 - EVENT DATE: Saturday, October 1st, 2016.

- Middle School Field Trip: Dates are 5/18 & 5/25. Currently in the process of creating the new schedule and confirming speakers.
 - New components requested by the teachers for this year:
 - longer lunch time, with period appropriate toys (hoops, graces, etc)
 - an art/creativity station as part of the round-robin schedule
 - keeping tours of the House to the Avery (1845-1865) time period only
 - hands-on, inquiry-based, sensory experiences as much as possible
 - New component requested by presenters (fine with teachers):
 - larger groups, fewer times to give same presentation

Collections

- The Angels Project was a resounding success! We documented, processed, preserved, and stored over 60 textiles items--and that's just a dent in the collection! We also learned about specialized vacuum cleaners, nomenclature, creating padded hangers and muslin bags, how to properly pack, document, and store items, photographing textiles, and discovered the difficult questions facing the collections committee regarding what to keep in our collection and why. We have our work cut out for us, and this is just textiles!
 - I am in the process of working with Susan J. Jerome to complete the grant's final report, and follow up on the rest of our commitments to this grant.
- Archaeology Update: I spoke with Brian Jones, the State Archaeologist on March 8th.
 - He said that since the Smith-Harris House and property is listed on the National Historical Register the Federal Government recognizes that we are a site of "higher sensitivity" and that digs should not take place without the oversight of a qualified archaeologist.
 - He plans to visit our site in either April or May; he has some concerns about care for the artifacts that have been excavated but not properly documented, interpreted, or conserved over recent years. I'm hoping he'll point us in the right direction to process and store them as well.
 - He is offering a class over the summer that Wil Reed is interested in attending; it's free, and I might sign up for it as well.
 - I explained that we wanted to allow students to have a positive experience, but still needed to maintain proper stewardship of the landscape. He understood, and his recommended solution was that we help Wil locate at private residence for his dig, and Maggi has offered her property. Wil has accepted, and is contacting her this week.

STEPS-CT/ADA Update

- Elanah Sherman visited with representatives of all three historic houses in East Lyme and then spent some time on-site at Smith-Harris House. Some key points from her talk that Commission and Friends Board members need to be familiar with are:
 - There are two sections of the ADA; we, as a Town Property, come under Title II, which has a higher level of obligation to provide some access.
 - We do not have to do everything; if it is an "undue burden" or "un-affordable," but a few opportunities for better access is a positive experience for many visitors.

- There are three alternative means of access: Communication, Facilities, and General non-Description (service animal, etc)
- We need to develop a statement about accessibility for our website/promotional materials; we should have a short policy in place; this can be developed by the STEPS sub-committee as part of our manual.
- Some suggestions for consideration for our site:
 - We should have a line-item in our next fiscal year budget for assisted listening devices/ ASL interpreters for events the Commission or Friends holds in the Barn.
 - We will need to approach the Town for an accessible portable facility, since not everyone can access the public bathroom inside the House. The Town accepts funds for the Barn rentals.
 - We need to measure and if need be install a better ramp (1 in 19 requirement).
 - The Barn is a great location if in the future we want to develop a more hands-on accessibility station for everyone.
 - We can add a small handrail to the porch, since it isn't historic and won't affect the integrity of the building, but will help provide access.
 - Images of the inside of the House could be incorporated into a binder for people to enjoy. [in progress]
 - Possible portable ramps, designated parking, walk paths to Barn and House.

Other

- I attended the Historic Properties Commission meeting; the members of that Commission are interested in having Smith-Harris House representatives on the Commission as well, now that the boundary lines are no longer in dispute. Gary Lakowsky, as Chair, will need to write a letter expressing interest in the Smith-Harris House having representation, and Luane Lange will then begin the process. It will take several months to finalize, during which it can be decided who will represent S-HH. Currently Maggi Prokop serves as an alternate.

Meetings Attended

- 3/4--meeting with Elanah Sherman for ADA with representatives of two other East Lyme Houses.
- 3/7 & 3/9-- Angels Project with Susan J. Jerome, textiles conservator, and members of Commission and Friends Board.
- 3/21--Historic Properties Commission.
- 3/23--Smith-Harris House Commission.

Submitted by:

Joanie DiMartino, Executive Director

March 23, 2016

Subject: SPECIAL USE

With the implementation of the Textile Closet the attic seems to be developing into a "Special Use" storage area.

Sections have been assigned for electronic equipment, games & crafts, costumes & reproduction clothing, linens, and holidays.

For the past few months the items being offered to the museum by local people would be considered "Special Use".

In order to capitalize on our special use collection we should consider "Traveling Trunks" and other methods of sharing our resources.

During the 80s and 90s wrap around skirts (made by Gayle Booth) and reproduction clothing were made available to students. There were also specific household items that were loaned.

In the 80s Sheila Reams' Fourth Grade Class researched and wrote biographies of famous people. The students surveyed the house for appropriate settings for them to read their papers to their classmates. Some dressed for the part and used props from the museum collection.

In the 90s Rose Ann Hardy brought her American History students to the Barn to read their research papers or perform before going on to State-wide and National competitions.

"Traveling Trunks" loaned to classrooms could spark interest with the students to come for a tour. The contents of the trunks along with descriptions of the items would provide enhancement to history lessons and also teach the students how to handle artifacts.

The schools offer a great chance for promoting the museum. Promotional material would need to be developed for distribution to the schools. Inventory controls are necessary.

AVERY, SMITH & HARRIS MUSEUM - POSSIBLE FUTURE EXPENSES

REPAIR WORK		PURCHASE
DRIVEWAY SIDE PORCH		APPROPRIATE ROPES WITH CLIPS FOR DOORWAYS
POSTS - REMOVE TRIM AT BASE, REPLACE ROTTED POSTS, PAINT		3 MORE BURNERS FOR ELECTRIC STOVE
INSTALL DOORBELL		SETS OF FILE DRAWERS FOR USABLE LINENS
FRONT DOOR - INSTALL FLAG HOLDER		PLASTIC COVERS FOR CLOTHING IN ATTIC
PANTRY SIDE PORCH POSTS - REPLACE POSTS, PAINT		SAFE
OUT HOUSE - STRIP PAINT, USE THOMPSON WATER SEALER		INTERNET
WINDOWS		WOOD TO BUILD RACKS FOR HOLDING FRAMED PIECES IN ATTIC
TOUCH UP PAINT, CHECK FOR STORM WINDOWS		ORDER BACK ISSUES OF AASIH TECHNICAL LEAFLETS
OUTDOOR SIGNS		
RENEW, REPAIR OR REPLACE		
ANGEL PROJECT - MARCH		HIRE PROFESSIONALS
40th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EVENTS		ASSESS THE ICE HOUSE AREA
PLANT SALE & OPEN HOUSE MAY 7		ASSESS THE EMBANKMENT BUILDING AREA
MUSEUM DAY OPEN HOUSE JUNE 11		RESEARCH THE MILK ROOM AREA
LACE WORKSHOP JUNE 18		REPAIR PUTTY & PAINT CHINESE CHIPPENDALE WINDOW
CT STORY TELLING CENTER (BY MAR 1)		