

Smith-Harris House Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
September 28, 2016

FILED

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

October 3 20 16 AT 9:50 AM/PM
Jellie, ATC
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Also Present: Joanie DiMartino, Smith-Harris House Director
Donna Massung, Friends of Smith-Harris President
Sarah Griswold, Peer Advisor for STepCT
Daniel Cunningham, Ex officio
Bill Clarke

I. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Lakowsky called the Smith-Harris House Commission Meeting of September 28, 2016 to order at 7:05 p.m.

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

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to approve the August 24, 2016 Smith-Harris House Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Ms. Odgers. (6-0) Unanimous

Mr. Lakowsky asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the September 22, 2016 Special Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to approve the September 22, 2016 Special Meeting Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (6-0) Unanimous

III. REPORTS

A. Public Delegations. Ms. Massung reported the Friends are thinking about having name tags made and wondering if the Commission would like to also have name tags made. The cost of each is \$10. She felt the cost may be reduced when more are purchased.

Ms. Massung informed the Commission the Friends have purchased A Wheel Within a Wheel by Frances E. Willard which the speaker's performance at the Bike and BBQ on October 1 is based on.

She stated the Tea was very successful. Twenty-five people attended and everyone enjoyed it. Most attendees came with a quilt. Mr. MacDonald asked if it was better to have it in the house rather than the barn. He was informed it was better in the house.

Sarah Griswold, SStepCT mentor, stated she was in attendance to see how this Commission works. She was also present to commend the Commission on its work on SStepCT. She felt it is an important part of what you have to do as an organization. She was also present to answer any questions the Commission may have about SStepCT.

Ms. Griswold felt adding the Avery name to the Smith-Harris House gives the Commission an exciting opportunity and sets this Commission apart from other museums in the state. With the Avery-Smith-Harris House you can discuss East Lyme and Connecticut history during different periods. She wished to encourage the Commission to incorporate this change into its strategic planning. She sees it as an opportunity to break barriers in historic houses. She feels this Commission could win an award. She is in attendance as a resource. Ms. Odgers asked if Ms. Griswold could give examples of breaking the barrier? Ms. Griswold replied you have three different families and you can talk about social, economic, conflicts and issues that common people were facing at different times. Mr. MacDonald stated right now the house focuses on the 1860s. Ms. Griswold replied we are looking at the complete history of the house. Decorations are representative of the people who lived there. This is a way of rethinking. She is promoting a unique story that can bring in more people.

Mr. Lakowsky added it is the Town museum. Ms. Griswold felt it should show the factors that changed the Town from agricultural to the bedroom community it is now. She stated you have the benefit of telling the story in a very particular way.

Ms. Griswold encouraged everyone to go to the NEMA Conference on November 9, 10 and 11.

B. Ex-officio Report. Mr. Cunningham reported the Board of Selectmen did not meet in September. At a Town Meeting funding to demolish the gas station on Main Street was approved. A survey of what is underneath will be done. Mr. MacDonald asked if there was any reason that restrooms cannot be at that location? Mr. Cunningham replied it may be possible.

Mr. Lakowsky informed Mr. Cunningham we changed the map of the Smith-Harris property and submitted it to the Board of Selectmen and have not received any comment on it. Mr. Cunningham replied it came before the Board of Selectmen, and he agreed to check into it and report back to Mr. Lakowsky.

C. Director's Report. See attached report.

D. Agenda Additions. The Commission was asked if they had any additions to the Agenda.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to add Discussion of Name Change to the Agenda, under New Business, item B. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (6-0) Unanimous.

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to add under item F. Financial Report, Presentation of Bills, a. Funds for Conference for Ms. DiMartino. (6-0) Unanimous.

E. Chairman's Report. Mr. Lakowsky reported he attended the Boy Scout Eagle Scout Ceremony for Paul Ryan. He was impressed. Mr. Lakowsky gave Paul Ryan his 1951 handbook for the purpose of comparison.

Another scout wishes to become an Eagle Scout.

Mr. Lakowsky spoke to John Cooke, the District Leader, regarding the condition of the bench. He agreed to inform the scout leader that it is his troop's responsible to maintain the bench.

Mr. Lakowsky stated he met with the electrician who is willing to donate his time to install a motion sensor for the house and fluorescent lights in the attic. The sensor will cost \$133.63.

Mr. Lakowsky plans to be on vacation on October 17 and will work on finishing the split rail fence. Messrs. MacDonald and Massung will help him. Bob Rhein has volunteered to clear the trees in the back woods. Mr. Lakowsky will speak with Mr. Putnam next week about keeping the area near the wall trim.

Mr. Lakowsky informed the Commission he is unable to continue being Chairman of this Commission in 2017 and asked members of the Commission to consider being Chairperson.

F. Financial Report.

1. Status Update. Mr. MacDonald reported we have \$12,532.31, including encumbrances, remaining in our budget. We have spent 30% of it.

2. Presentation of Bills.

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to authorize the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$150 for supplies to install the outside sensor light and the attic lights, said amount to be taken out of Building Maintenance. (6-0) Unanimous.

a. Funds for NEMA Conference for Ms. DiMartino.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to approve the expenditure of \$230 to send Ms. DiMartino to the NEMA Conference, said amount to be taken out of Museum Programs. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (6-0) Unanimous.

3. Barn Rental. Ms. Prokop reported she received a telephone call from Heidi Trees to request that they be allowed to sell trees on the Smith-Harris House property. If they are allowed to they will give a donation of \$1,000 to the Friends. Ms. Massung will discuss it at the next Friends meeting.

MOTION: Mr. MacDonald moved that the Smith-Harris House Commission approves the use of its

property for Heidi Trees to sell its merchandise, contingent on the Friends accepting their donation. Seconded by Ms. Prokop. (6-0)
Unanimous.

G. Collections Committee. Ms. DiMartino distributed copies of the Deed of Gifts to the Commission.

H. Correspondence. Ms. Prokop had no correspondence. She would like to send a thank you to Dave Putnam, Ron Bence and Bill Sheer for their help.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Garden Fence and Maintenance. It was felt this could be an Eagle Project.
2. Front Walkway. It was felt this could be an Eagle Project.

B. Museum Development.

1. SStepCT Report. Sarah Griswold, Kathleen Sasso and Robert Seifel attended a SStepCT meeting. There are many items to work through to obtain the basic certificate level. We need to develop policies and do research to maintain the historic structure and landscape. The work is done based on historic research on what occurred. How was the land used in the past. Town records, old photos, correspondence and newspapers can be researched. She suggested taking advantage of professional expertise. To maintain an historic property, there is a higher standard of care required. The last section is on interpretation.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Porch Repairs. Mr. Lakowsky reported with the information on the grant letter, we need to determine the cost of the porch repairs and how it will be done. He stated we need to have boards and the poles replaced. The roof seems to be in good condition. The bottom of the porch needs repair. Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Lakowsky and Ms. DiMartino agreed to seek quotes. Ms. Massung suggested having a temporary fix. Ms. DiMartino suggested that it be ADA compliant.

2. Bat Removal. It was felt the light and sound is working.

B. Museum Development.

1. Discussion of Name Change. Mr. Lakowsky would like Commission members to determine what it would cost to change the name and the benefits of it, and bring their findings to the next Commission meeting. Ms. Sasso stated she is available in December. Ms. Massung agreed to ask a member of the Friends to work with Ms. Sasso.

C. Upcoming Events.

1. Bike and Barbeque October 1. Ms. DiMartino reported Emma Palzere-Rae is scheduled to perform "A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I learned to Ride a Bike" from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. She has asked for \$200. The Friends have committed to \$100 and asked that the Commission to pay \$100.

Mr. Lakowsky suggested a poster be made on her performance at the house. Refreshments will be served. The three historical properties will benefit from the bike rides. Each will have a table at Rocky Neck.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to approve \$100 to pay one-half of the cost for Emma Palzere-Rae's performance to be taken out of Museum Programs. Seconded by Ms. Odgers. (6-0) Unanimous.

2. Spirit Voices October 22. Ms. DiMartino reported details are being finalized on Spirit Voices.

3. Trick a Trunk/Folk Tales October 26. Storytellers Valerie Kibler and Gary Lakowsky will tell their tale.

The next meeting of this Commission will be held on October 19 in the Art Room of the Senior Center.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to adjourn the Smith-Harris House September 28, 2016 Regular Meeting at 8:45 p.m. Seconded by Ms. Odgers. (6-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Ghersi, Recording Secretary

Director's Report

Smith-Harris House, September 2016

Upcoming Meetings:

- Collections Webinar 9/29, 2 pm
- Collection Webinar 10/04 2 pm
- Friends of Smith-Harris House Board of Directors meeting; Tuesday, 10/11 at 2 pm at the East Lyme Public Library; all are welcome.
- STEPS-CT sub-committee meeting; Friday, 10/14, 2:30 to 3:30 pm, East Lyme High School Library; all are welcome.
- Commission Meeting, 10/19, 7 pm. Senior Center, all are welcome.
- other meetings TBD

Programs

- Bike Ride—we have Emma Palzere-Rae scheduled to perform “Wheels” from 11 am to 2 pm. based loosely on Frances Willard’s 1895 memoir “A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I Learned to Ride a Bike.” The Friends are selling copies of this memoir the day of the program.
• I need to know who is available to help at the House that day, just giving tours, I believe.
- Wil Reed’s class is taking a tour October 13 at 7:30 am. Maggi has offered to assist.
- The “Quilting Tea” was quite a success! It worked very well in the House, and we had a great response. 24 people attended.
- Things are shaping up for “Spirit Voices” on Saturday, 10/22 from 3 pm to 6 pm. We have confirmed use of the Burial Ground for tours, and also Nick Fulton has committed to our display of a 19th-century hearse. The local Spiritualists would like to be involved; I have made contact with them, and they’re trying to find someone local to participate. I have located someone to read “tea leaves.” We’re just finalizing details.
- “Slightly-Creepy Tales” the Friends will make a sign, so that folks participating in the “Trick or Trunk” know the House is open as well. Current storytellers include: Valerie Kibler, Gary Lakowsky, and need one other.

Collections

- Kathleen Patterson & I have put together a draft of a collections scope, and will be presenting it to the STEPS sub-committee at our next meeting to be revised, then brought to the Commission & Friends.
- We have had several donations come in; there will be a collections committee meeting scheduled soon to decide what to recommend to the Commission to accession. Let me know if you’d like to attend, and I’ll add you to the list.
- We now have a Deed of Gift for when items are accepted into the collection, and will shortly have a “conditions governing gifts” guide for potential donors as well.

NEMA Off-Site Workshop

- The meeting at the Old Stone Church Burial Ground was well attended; myself, Bob Patterson, Liz Kuchta, Eleanor Ashburn, Nick Fulton, & Ruth Shapleigh-Brown.

- We discussed properly conserving Elizabeth Avery Henderson's headstone, and the upcoming workshop.
- a second meeting will need to take place with Nick Fulton and his team who will handle the actual process of stone conservation; if they're not comfortable working with an historic tombstone, Nick has offered to donate toward the hiring of preservationist professionals.

NEMA Conference

- a decision needs to be made regarding who from the Commission will be attending the NEMA conference this year in Mystic. The lower trustee rate applies for Commission members. \$200 by 10/05
- It will cost \$230 to cover my registration by 10/05
- The Friends are assisting with the cost of sending two people.

Landscape

- I oversaw with Ron Bence the removal of the contemporary furniture from the barn that was no longer wanted/needed.
- I've forwarded a grant opportunity from the 1772 Foundation to apply for funding to have the porch reconstructed.
- Thank you to Gary Lakowsky for adding the hyphen on the entrance sign; please add it to the two other signs on the property, and I think we'll be all set!

Meetings Attended:

- 8/31—tombstone repair/NEMA workshop meeting
- 9/9—private tour with former donor; meeting with Barbara O. & STEPS sub-committee mtg.
- 9/13—phone meeting confirming Emma Palzare-Rae for "Wheels" presentation
- 9/13—Friends of Smith-Harris House meeting
- 9/14—Quilt Tea meeting
- 9/27—special Commission/Friends meeting to resolve barn bat infestation
- 9/23—library display case meeting
- 9/23—collections scope meeting with Kathleen P.
- 9/27—library display case meeting
- 9/28—peer advisor meeting with Sarah Griswold
- 9/28—Commission meeting

Professional Development:

- Webinar: "Condition Reporting for Collections Care" 9/15/16
- Webinar: "Managing Previously Unmanaged Collections" 9/22/16
- Webinar: "Writing to Publish for Museum Professionals" 9/28/16

Submitted by:

Joanie DiMartino, Executive Director

September 2, 2016