

Smith-Harris House Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 22, 2017

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

FILED

Mar 27 2017 AT 12:05 AM/PM
Sullivan ATC
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Also Present: Joanie DiMartino, Smith-Harris House Director
Donna Massung, President of the Friends of Smith-Harris
Chuck Massung
Kathleen Patterson, Collection Chairlady
Robert Patterson
Cheri Meier
Daniel Cunningham, Ex officio

I. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Lakowsky called the Smith-Harris House Commission March 22, 2017 Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Mr. Lakowsky asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the February 22, 2017 Smith-Harris House Commission Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Mr. Lakowsky moved to approve the February 22, 2017 Smith-Harris House Minutes, as presented.
Seconded by Ms. Odgers. (6-0) Unanimous.

III. REPORTS.

A. Public Delegations. Ms. Massung reported that Ms. Prokop and Ms. Sasso walked the house grounds and noticed the wrought iron chair was missing. Ms. Prokop informed the police.

Mr. Patterson reported he removed the sign by the lane, repaired it and it is now ready to be put back. (See attached report from Mr. Patterson).

When the sugar maple is planted, he suggested that it be placed in an area that would allow a 50' tree.

B. Ex-officio Report. Mr. Cunningham reported the Referendum on the school project, will be held on March 28.

In the near future we will have an official Police Department. We have been authorized to purchase a new cruiser for the Police Chief.

The Selectmen are working on an appointment of a new commissioner for this Commission.

C. Director's Report. See attached report.

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

MOTION: Mr. Lakowsky moved to add to this evening's Agenda, under Property Maintenance 2. Tree Trimming, 3. Vine Trimming and 4. Trees for Tomorrow. Seconded by Ms. Prokop. (6-0) Unanimous.

E. Chairman's Report.

Mr. Seifel had nothing new to report.

F. Financial Report.

1. Status Update. Mr. MacDonald reported as of today 63% of our budget has been spent. We have \$6,000.50 remaining in our budget.

2. Presentation of Bills. Mr. Patterson requested reimbursement of \$11.73 to Staples and \$30.25 noise makers for critters.

MOTION: Mr. Lakowsky moved to reimburse Mr. Patterson \$41.98 for materials for the house to be taken from Building Maintenance. Seconded by Ms. Prokop. (6-0) Unanimous.

3. Barn Rental. Ms. Prokop reported to date she has had no new barn rentals.

4. Budget Planning Committee.

a. Review Budget and Planned Expenses. Ms. Odgers reviewed the Smith-Harris 2016-2017 projected expenses in the total amount of \$2,293.20. The total balance available is \$2,428.35.

It was felt the hot water tank should be replaced with a newer and smaller one. Mr. Cunningham suggested identifying what the tank is costing monthly and that a quote be obtained for a new smaller one.

Ms. Massung agreed to purchase the safe and telephone.

G. Collections Committee.

a. Permanent Loan Policy to Other Historical Houses. Ms. Patterson reported we are going through drawers in the house and cataloging what we find. Some very interesting

historical pieces have been found. We discovered a Site Plan drawn by the Commission in the 70s indicating that there was a plan being considered to put in a cow area. The Commission was thinking of the house as a farmstead.

Ms. Odgers showed photo of the house before 1950 in the August 14, 1979, Day newspaper.

Ms. DiMartino suggested naming the collection space "Betty Morrison's Collection Space." Ms. Odgers felt it was a good idea to honor her. Ms. Morrison campaigned for the house to be part of Town property. She was the first Chairman of this Commission. She established the Friends.

H. Correspondence.

Ms. Prokop sent Mr. Cunningham a card.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Garden Fence and Maintenance. The garden fence and maintenance of it is on the plan for April 29.

2. Front Walkway. The front walkway is on the plan for April 29.

B. Museum Development

1. SStepCT Report. Ms. DiMartino will apply for a grant proposal.

V. New Business

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Porch Repairs. To date no bids have been received.

2. Tree Trimming. Mr. Lakowsky felt we should accept Mr. Cullen's proposal as long as he has no plans to remove any trees.

MOTION: Mr. Lakowsky moved to accept Mr. Cullen's proposal and that the Commission recognize his donation of services in writing for tax purposes. Seconded by Ms. Odgers. (6-0) Unanimous.

3. Vine Trimming. The Commission observed that the grape harbor has been cut.

4. Trees for Tommorrow. Mr. Lakowsky stated he felt the sugar maple will become too large for the property. It has been this Commission's intent to expand the upper orchard. He felt a fruit tree would be more appropriate. It was felt the Commission needs a policy of accepting trees.

B. Museum Development.

1. Nominating Committee. There was no discussion on the Nominating Committee.

C. Upcoming Events.

1. Bike and BBQ 2017. There was no Bike and BBQ 2017 meeting last month. A professional fundraiser has agreed to volunteer. A meeting with him will be held on March 27 at 9 a.m. A Bike and BBQ 2017 Meeting will be held on March 27 at 6 p.m. We expect to know if we have been approved to hold the event at Rocky Neck. If not, it will be at our site in October. It will be less expensive to be at our site but the routes would need to be changed. The Lions have agreed to prepare the barbeque.

2. Middle School Program. Ms. DiMartino reported the dates for the Middle School Program are: May 10, May 22 and May 24, with rain dates of May 31 and June 5. The cost will increase because we had to add a third day at the request of the teachers.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Lakowsky moved to adjourn the Smith-Harris House
March 22, 2017 Regular Meeting at 8:20 p.m.
Seconded by Ms. Prokop. (6-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary

Director's Report

Smith-Harris House, March, 2017

NEWS!

- The Smith-Harris House was awarded an "Award of Merit" from the Connecticut League of History Organizations (CLHO) for the program, "Spirit Voices: Victorian Mourning & Spiritualism." The award will be formally presented to Smith-Harris House at the CLHO Annual Meeting in Meriden, CT. We have been given a complimentary ticket to the luncheon.

STEPS-CT Grant

- After meeting and discussing the 3 proposals we received, we have selected consultant Kathy Craughwell-Varda for our Strategic Plan. We will be working with her as we develop the grant.
- We've had a meeting with our peer mentor Sarah Griswold, and a phone meeting with Liz Shapiro, to discuss how to approach the grant proposal application.
- We have also met as a group to review the grant application and divide the tasks so we can complete the process by the April 3rd deadline.
- The Friends have committed funds to the STEPS grant match.
- I have written a proposal to the Niantic Rotary Foundation to also assist with matching funds.
- We have some time left with our peer mentor; these will be used for grant work.

STEPS-CT

- We have officially completed STEPS-CT, and have earned 5 bronze certificates out of six. We will be working toward earning our final bronze certification in Landscape with the completion of a few policies.
- As STEPS is a self-study through the American Association of State and Local History, we will continue working toward earning gold certification over the next few years, utilizing the resources we are now connected to through participation in STEPS-CT.

Programs

- Moving forward with the middle school teachers on the field trip program.
- The teacher contact requested 3 days, since 3 teams are offering the curriculum. This may increase costs, but with an extra class added it is the best way to provide a solid educational experience for the students.
- At the quarterly joint program planning meeting, events were slated for the coming year, with room to add an occasional extra program if the opportunity arises. Current programs selected are as follows: Open-House Museum Day, a Teddy Bear Tea, a collections-related program (furniture was considered), "Explore History!", "Spirit Voices," and a holiday-related program with Belsnickel.
- Wil Reed has confirmed his class will visit for a tour of the House on Friday, March 31st.
- I have been in touch with Legends Trips and they are interested in returning, no date set yet.

Collections

- We have a new computer, and Past Perfect Software is up and running.
- An overview inventory has been developed, and members of the Collections Committee have started the long process.
- I recommend re-naming the room formerly named the “Betty Morrison Library” to the “Betty Morrison Collections Storage” to signify the new institutional use of the room, but still honor the memory of Betty Morrison.

Meetings Attended

- February 27th, at CT Historical Society, Hartford; STEPS-wrap up.
- March 3rd, consultant proposal discussion mtg.
- March 6th, meeting with teachers.
- March 6th, at the House; peer mentor meeting.
- March 8th, grant proposal meeting with Liz Shapiro and grant committee.
- March 10th, Friends of Smith-Harris House Board of Directors meeting.
- March 10th, quarterly program planning meeting.
- March 22nd, Smith-Harris House Commission meeting.

Upcoming Meetings

- April 11th, Friends of Smith-Harris House, ELPL, 2 pm.
- April 21st, STEPS/Strategic Planning meeting, location TBD, 2:30 pm.
- April 26th, Smith-Harris House Commission, Senior Center, 7 pm.

Submitted by:

Joanie DiMartino, Director

March 22, 2017

On Wednesday March 8, 2017 I met with Richard Cullen , a licensed arborist, of Tomorrow's Trees, to discuss trimming work on the tree encroaching the Christmas Tree near the corn crib. The Christmas Tree was planted around the time of the formation of the Smith-Harris Friends and Commission, I believe. The large tree next to it has two large branches growing through the limbs of the Christmas Tree and is causing damage. We would like those limbs removed.

While inspecting the tree, Mr. Cullen noticed cracks and damage to the tree. In his estimation in a few years that tree will be compromised. He also pointed out that limbs were hanging over the corn crib and affecting the roof area. Those need to be removed also. The apple tree in the center of the parking lot is not a fruit producer, but he feels with extreme trimming he could make it look much better. Hence no removal would be necessary.

Walking around the property Mr. Cullen noticed several trees needing extreme trimming, due to dead limbs and low hanging branches. His recommendation would be to address those limbs, eliminating a hazard to visitors to the grounds, thereby making the property safer to our visitors. Eliminating several branches close to the house would discourage squirrels etc. seeking refuge into the attic.

While addressing the corn crib area, Mr. Cullen said he would remove the two offending limbs at NO CHARGE to us. We could have the limbs cut to manageable size for us to use at a later date. Also, he stated, while on site he would trim, remove (if we did not want the wood), and chip the damaged and dangerous trees, limbs, etc., around the grounds, house, orchard area etc., also at NO CHARGE to us. A proposal with a dollar figure would be drawn up.

The proposal would include a dollar amount up to \$2000 for services to the site. A recognition letter on Smith-Harris letterhead stating we are non-profit, etc., and/or a certificate of services provided would be included.

I stated to him we would discuss his informal proposal at our next combined Friends and Commission meeting. If his services and proposal are approved, he would schedule the work when the site is not being used.

We would recognize his donation of services with a letter, certificate, or however the Friends/Commission sees fit.

In conclusion, Mr. Cullen feels we have serious limb hazards on the property, and its in our best interest to remove these hazards.

Robert Patterson
Secretary Friends of Smith-Harris