

**BROOKSIDE FARM MUSEUM
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JULY 26, 2023**

Present: Robert Seifel. Chairman
Cheri Meier
Richard MacDonald

Absent: Maggi Prokop

Also Present: Donna Massung, President of the Friends
Annah Perch. Curator
Jan Larson

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
EAST LYME, CT
2023 JUL 31 A 9:18
Cunningham
TOWN CLERK

I. CALL TO ORDER Chairman Seifel called the July 26, 2023 Brookside Farm Museum Meeting at 7:05 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Mr. Seifel asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the Brookside Farm Museum Regular Meeting Minutes of June 28, 2023.

MOTION (1): Ms. Meier moved to approve the June 28, 2023 Brookside Farm Museum Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (3-0) Unanimous.

III. REPORTS

- a. Agenda Additions. There were no additions to the agenda.
- b. Public Delegations. Ms. Larson informed the Commission she lives in town and visits commissions to see how the town runs.
- c. Ex-Officio. Mr. Cunningham was unable to be present and there was no report.
- d. Curator. (See attached report).
- e. Chairman. Mr. Seifel reported Bill Follett has been appointed to this Commission.
- f. Financial
 - 1. Status Update. The balance in the Brookside Farm Museum budget as of July 26, 2023 is \$10,013.56.
 - 2. Presentation of Bills. No bills were presented.
 - 3. 2023/2024 Budget. The 2023/2024 budget for this Commission is \$14,173.56.
 - 4. Collections. There were no new collections.
- g. Correspondence. Ms. Meier send a letter of thanks to Lynne Brown.

Brookside Farm Museum

Curators Report as of 7/26/23

- Applied to be part of the Connecticut Collections program, which is a way of cataloging the collection. Will use Past Perfect as mailing and donations database.
- Began researching curriculums for providing education about the historic house.
- Met with Aris Stalis from, Aris Land Studio who is conducting the feasibility study for the East Lyme Community Center.
- Met with Penny Heller and Terri Yuhas from the Ag Commission to brainstorm about how the outdoors can best be used to represent the history of farming and present agriculture in a mutually beneficial way. Would like to invite Terri to speak at the next meeting.
- Meeting the curator for the Collections Assessment on August 2 at 9 a.m. All are encouraged to attend.

- Did not find the Barn Rental Agreement in order to update it.
- Next month I would like to work with the Friends group on fundraising.
- Would like to ask Friends or Commissioners to follow up directly with librarians to seek new commissioners or Friends.
- Follow up directly with Terri Yuhas and Wanda and invite them to become Friends and share 10 addresses of other people who would become friends.
- The Friends of Smith-Harris House augment town financial support through fundraisers.
- membership numbers are higher

- o Creation of committees
 - ✦ Fundraising & Program committees would be a good place to start – these committees would meet with Joanie and then report their recommendations to their respective boards – plans not made at board meetings
 - ✦ Need Nominating/Governance committee to plan to diversify both boards. Don't limit recruitment to fill board seats – recruit volunteers to vet them for future roles with greater responsibility

- Meet with board members of ELHS and Thomas Lee House to lay the foundation for future collaborations
- Barn has no running water and no heating
- Unreliable internet connection
- Aging volunteers
- Non-diverse and non-representative board and volunteer composition
- Heavy dependence on town funding
- Open only on weekends in summer
- Weak fundraisers (plant and wreath sale)
- Programs not mission driven

- Generic house interpretation
- Poor internet and social media presence
- Not charging for school programs without underwriting
 - By the third year most organizations need to revisit their plans and input any changes that have taken place. This will most likely be the case for Smith-Harris House.
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 - The Director, Commission members and Friends board will review the strategic plan, identify who will work on each action step and determine the cost and impact on the SHH budget.

Goals:

- To enhance the visitor experience at SHH by providing quality visitor services, engaging exhibitions and period rooms, audience-appropriate programs.
- To assure the sustainability of the SHH by providing an effective Commission and Friends group with good communication, working committees, viable succession and recruitment plan, strong and growing membership, and financial security.
- Work collaboratively with other cultural heritage organizations in East Lyme and the area, as well as other non-profits to promote the mission of SHH, conserve resources, and expand services.
- To preserve the buildings, collections and grounds while providing physical and intellectual access.

Actions:

Some action steps support more than one goal.

- Rename and rebrand Smith-Harris House
- Improve fundraising, membership income to meet and exceed diminishing town support
- Begin implementation of new interpretation of Smith-Harris House
- Develop temporary exhibition gallery and exhibit schedule
- Develop orientation gallery and exhibit galleries
- Move director's office to Mr. Avery's Office
- Develop and install outdoor signage to engage visitor's when the site is closed
- Develop new furnishing plan for period rooms
- Develop a strong volunteer base
- Recruit new, more diverse members of Commission and Friends group
- Develop staff, Commission and Friends succession plans
- Right-size educational programs and collaborate with other organizations to expand audience reach.
- Work collaboratively to identify and manage preservation needs of house, outbuildings and grounds
- Develop 5-year preservation and maintenance plan for buildings and grounds

Additional Information for Strategic Plan to be Provided by SHH Boards:

The following information regarding the implementation of the Strategic Plan needs to be decided upon by the SHH executive director, Commission and Friends Board:

- Who is responsible for which action steps?
- When will the action steps be worked on (i.e. generate a timeline)?
- How much time will be budgeted for each action step?
- How much will the action cost and how will it be funded?
- How will success and progress be measured?

Next Steps:

- The members of the SHH Commission, Friends of SHH and Executive Director need to review and discuss the Strategic Plan. No plan is perfect, and all plans should be viewed as a work that is reviewed and revised regularly.
- The governing authority must approve the Strategic Plan.
- Celebrate and share what you've accomplished! Communicate regularly and effectively to both boards, members, stakeholders and community representatives about your plan, what stage of the plan you are working on, what happens next. Make sure that you are out front with what you are embarking on before gossip bursts your bubble!
- This is a new strategy. The Strategic Plan will not be successful if you continue to do things the way they have always been done. A new strategy means new priorities and new activities.
- Consider if the current structure of the organization will align with the new goals and action steps. If not, what changes can and should be made.
- The Commission, Friends and staff must understand the Strategic Plan and be prepared to be actively engaged in its implementation for it to succeed.
- Recognize that a Strategic Plan involves change. Change can be difficult, and people often resist change. Accept that this could be a challenge and work together to address the challenges and to implement the changes that will benefit the organization.