

BROOKSIDE FARM MUSEUM
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 28, 2004

Present: Robert Seifel
Cheri Meier
Richard MacDonald
William Follett
Wanda Stazick

Absent: Maggi Prokop

Also Present: Donna Massung, President of the Friends
Annah Perch, Curator
Jason Debble, Ex officio

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EAST LYME, CT
2024 MAR -4 P 12: 48
Caulfield
TOWN CLERK

- I. **CALL TO ORDER.** Ms. Stazick called the February 28, 2004 Brookside Farm Museum Regular Meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
- II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES.** The Commission was asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the November 15, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Brookside Farm Museum.

MOTION (1): Ms. Stazick moved to approve the November 15, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Follett. (5-0) Unanimous.

The Commission was asked for additions, deletions of corrections to the January 3, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes of the Brookside Farm Museum.

MOTION (2): Ms. Stazick moved to approve the January 3, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes of the Brookside Farm Museum as presented. Seconded by Mr. Follett. (5-0) Unanimous.

- III. **ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2024.** Ms. Stazick presented the following slate of officers:

Cheri Meier, Chair

Wanda Stazick, Vice Chair

William Follett, Treasurer

MOTION (3): Mr. Follett moved to accept the positions as presented in the slate of officers. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (5-0) Unanimous.

- a. **Suggested change in time for meetings.** Mr. Seifel checked with the library staff and was informed the library meeting room is only available at 9 a.m. on Friday mornings. Ms. Stazick suggested checking into a different location and a different day of the week before noon.

- IV. **REPORTS**

- a. **Agenda Additions.** There were no additions to the Agenda.
- b. **Public Delegations.** There were no guests.
- c. **Ex Officio.** Mr. Debble informed the Commission he is a teacher in Old Saybrook and would like to get the school involved. He also is a musician and would like to see musical events at the house. He will share these meetings with the Selectmen.
- d. **Curator.** See attached Curator's Report.
- e. **Chairman.** Ms. Meir had nothing new to report.
- f. **Financial.** Mr. Follett asked Ms. Perch for a report on all grants.
- a. **Status Update.** Mr. Follett had no report.
- b. **Presentation of Bills.** There were no new bills received.
- c. **2024-2025 Budget.** There was no discussion on the budget.
- g. **COLLECTIONS.** There was no discussion on new collections.
- h. **CORRESPONDENCE.** No new correspondence was received.

V. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **PROPERTY MAINTENANCE**
 - 1. **General Maintenance Report.** It was noted the roof is leaking. Mr. Follett suggested having a cedar roofer inspect it. Ms. Perch agreed to contact Joe Bragaw, Public Works Director.
 - 2. **Painting.** The painting of the house is in the General Government budget.
- b. **MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT**
 - 1. **Events.** The following events are planned:
 - The Five Churches event will be held on February 29 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
 - Plant Sale on May 4 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
 - Spring Tea on May 19 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. \$10
 - Victorian Lady June 2 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. \$15
 - Museum Open House Day, June 8 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 - Tea June 12, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.\$10
 - Children's Tea, July 17, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. \$5
 - Irish Music with the Clan O'Leary Band August 18 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
 - Trivia Night September 21 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
 - Slightly Scary Stories & S'Mores October 20 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
 - Holiday Open House December 11 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Barn Rentals.** On May 17 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. by the Barn for Artistic Youth. Ms. Meier reported she has been contacted by someone about having Yoga in the barn.
- b. **Historical Properties Commission.** Ms. Massung reported plaques noting the date a house was built are being sold for a cost of \$110.

She added the Samuel Smith House would like to work together on Open House Day.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION (4): Ms. Stazick moved to adjourn the Brookside Farm Museum February 28, 2024 at 8:20 p.m. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (5-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary

Curator's Report
draft as of Feb 28, 2024

Wrote three grants:

2024 Environmental Grant, Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, \$45,000 over three years for the implementation of Homegrown National Park.

2024 General Grant, Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, \$15,000 for the development of an exhibit surrounding the Christian Freeman Newspaper.

CT Humanities, for a second preservation assessment grant, focusing on the objects in the archives. **COMMITTED**

Writing one grant:

CT Humanities for \$15,000 toward the planning of the interpretation of the interior of the house. Due April 1, 2024.

Met with Dan Cunningham and Kevin Gervais about next year's budget proposal.

Investigated a great deal about the house painting project. I am moving forward with securing a Historic Structures Report (this will be available in our budget come July 1 but I am also going to try and get one funded by SHPO so we don't have to wait that long).

Began work on the Homegrown National Park initiative by partnering with the library and the East Lyme Pollinator Pathway. The launch date is April 21. Book Club will start in May.

I propose \$1,000 from Friends of Brookside to become a partner organization with the HNP. I could also get that from the Community Foundation grant if we get it. Becoming a partner gets us a little more attention as a HNP site.

I researched how to start the preservation process on the Christian Freeman newspaper and will be sending it off to the Northeast Document Conservation Center on 2.29.24.

Brookside hosted a great specialized tour of the house on Sunday, 2.25.24 to share the Christian Freeman newspaper with the public in honor of Black History Month. The event hosted a small but very mighty group of black history historians including Joanie DiMartino, Jennifer Rycenga, Nicole Thomas, and Tom Schuch, who were all very excited about the discovery of the newspaper and the promise for a future exhibit about abolitionism in CT.

Thanks to Bill Follett's introduction, I was lucky enough to get to tour the house with Joshua Torrance, the Executive Director of the Florence Griswold Museum. He is an incredibly knowledgeable person in the field of museums historic house museums and history in general. My biggest takeaways from that information-packed visit were:

- A professional advisory committee of museum professionals who agree to meet once per year or more to guide Brookside in its development.
- Obtaining a Cultural Landscape Report (Martha Lyons from Northampton MA was one recommendation). This is similar to a Historic Structures Report and will guide what to do

moving forward (not very expensive and similar to a report we have had in the past but that was a long time ago).

- As an aside, he is the second museum professional to recommend that we not allow archeological digs on the property. “See SHPO Guide to archeological digs on historic property.” At the very least we should ask Wil to please fill out a DHPO form that informs the state what we are doing so they can weigh in on best practices.
- A CAP assessment from IMLS to inventory the contents of the house. It’s on a first come first serve basis and guaranteed to get the assessment at some point. He felt our object collection did a nice job of portraying what a Greek revival middle-class farmhouse would have looked like. He found the Rufus Porter replica mural to be concerning. I'm not sure why exactly, but it was along the lines of representing Rufus Porter when it is not. FloGris has other Rufus Porter paintings in their main dining room (not murals).
- Check out Windsor Historical Society, Douglas Shipman executive director. The historical society worked with a place called CT Woodworking Reproductions to outfit the entire house in period replicas that people could touch sit on and use.
- He found the Christian Freeman newspaper to be very interesting and agreed that an exhibit about abolitionism in and around 1865 and that stories' contribution to the town of East Lyme's history is important. He recommended talking to the CT State Library and the CT State Historical Society about whether there are other copies of this edition of the newspaper. He said anything we can do to cater to diversity, equity, and inclusion is an essential part of being relevant now. It's what people and funders are interested in.

Joshua said there are too many historic houses and agreed with me that most people are not interested in history. He felt we should move away from the standard guided tour (because not many people are interested) and become an educational site or sorts that uses agricultural history to inform people about sustainable agricultural and gardening practices today. We talked a lot about historic houses that have little to nothing in them other than exhibit space including Prudence Crandall and President Lincoln's Cottage (<https://www.lincolncottage.org/visit/exhibits/>)

He very much agreed with clearing the house of the archives that are of no relevance to the house. He agreed that the house will not be able to have correct environmental conditions to safely store archives and the library and the historical society is the best place to put those things so that people can use them.

UConn’s School of Landscape Architecture contacted me to inquire whether we would be the right site for its students to work on for its studio project. After a Zoom meeting, the professors and I agreed that it would be a great project to partner on. The students visited by bus. It will result in some proposed plans by the students for the landscaping around the house that will be enhanced by suggested programming related to the outdoors as well. The professors have led this program at Nathan Hale Homestead and other important sites. We are lucky to have them as their work can inform grant applications, public presentations, and all sorts of plans moving forward.

I had a great meeting with Jason Deeble, our liaison to the Board of Selectman. Jason made some important introductions to the public schools (I have not followed up yet).