

Smith-Harris House Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 24, 2015

Present: Gary Lakowsky
Richard MacDonald
Maggi Prokop
Barbara Odgers

Absent: Kathleen Sasso

Also Present: Joanie DiMartino, Smith-Harris Curator
Donna Massung, Friends of Smith-Harris President

FILED IN EAST LYME
CONNECTICUT
June 29, 2015 AT 4:10 AM/PM
Kathleen Sasso
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

I. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Lakowsky called the Smith-Harris House Commission Meeting of June 24, 2015 to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Mr. Lakowsky asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the May 27, 2015 Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to accept the May 27, 2015 Meeting Minutes of the Smith-Harris House Commission, as presented. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. Ms. Prokop abstained from voting. (3-0-1) Motion carried.

III. REPORTS

A. Public Delegations. Ms. Massung reported the Honey Tea will be on June 28, 2015 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Mr. Dinsmore, President of the Connecticut Bee Association, will be the Friends' featured speaker.

She obtained a price of \$200 for all signs and a sandwich board.

The Motorcycle Show will be held on the Smith-Harris House grounds on August 9, 2015, from 10 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., rain or shine. Seven trophies are needed. She obtained pricing for tee shirts. If we order under fifty tee shirts the cost will be \$8 per shirt. If more than fifty people would like to purchase a tee shirt, orders can be taken. Kathleen Sasso has agreed to write letters requesting sponsors.

B. Ex-officio Report. Mr. Wilson was not present, and there was no report.

C. Curator's Report. (See attached)

D. Agenda Additions. The Commission was asked for any additions to the Agenda, and there were none.

E. Chairman's Report. Mr. Lakowsky reported he has cleaned out the corn crib and tool shed. He would like to have better lighting in it. He would also like to determine the dates of the tools. He has begun cutting away near the farm equipment and discovered a beautiful stone wall there. The Town has agreed to remove the cuttings. He asked Chuck Holyfield to have the holes in the driveway filled. Mr. Holyfield agreed to assign someone to take care it. Town employees have been offered wood from broken or fallen trees.

Ms. Odgers cleaned a picture frame with a memoriam plaque of Ann Beckwith.

The water bill seemed to be excessive, and a leak was found. Mr. Lakowsky took care of it.

Mr. Lakowsky informed the Commission Kathleen Sasso received an award from the Connecticut Educators' Computer Association.

F. Financial Report.

1. Status Update. Mr. MacDonald reported as of June 22 we have a remaining balance of \$1,123.62. We have encumbered \$500 for Hank Sarin and Leslie Evans.

Mr. Lakowsky received an email that there is a zero balance in the Curator's Account. We will transfer money from the Clerical Account into the Curator's Account. We had to also transfer from Clerical in order to pay the electric bill. We have not received an invoice from Kate Rushin for the June novel history program.

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

3. Barn Rental. Ms. Prokop reported she received a telephone call for a wedding on October 10. Her financé is away, and she would like him to see the barn before she confirms the date.

G. Collections Committee. Ms. Odgers reported we have surveyed the attic and developed a plan which she presented to Commission members. She took photos of the attic. Mr. MacDonald agreed to put trash barrels near the house. It was felt that books, postcards, linens and textiles should not be stored in the attic. An inventory is important in order to have them appraised, and this information should be stored at the Town Hall. She found a Landscaping Plan by Sandra Johnson, dated 1982.

H. Correspondence. Mr. Lakowsky received an email regarding the flag and agreed to take care of it.

Ms. Prokop reported String of Pearls would like to practice in the barn on Wednesday and they have agreed to give us a concert.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Garden Fence and Maintenance. There was nothing new to report on the garden fence.
2. Front Walkway. There was nothing new to report on the front walkway.
3. Lighting. The lighting for the house will be delayed until the next fiscal year.

B. Museum Development.

1. SStepCT Report. Ms. DiMartino informed the Commission on June 29 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 a.m. SStepCT in Hartford will discuss "No Lectures! Creating Meaningful Experiences @ Historic House Museums and other Cultural Sites." There will be an Open House on July 27.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Barn Roof. The barn roof has been postponed to 2016.
2. Bushes. The bushes have been taken care of.
3. Trees. Ms. Odgers distributed photos of trees on the property. In honor of Senator Formica Trees for Tomorrow will allow \$600 for trees for the Smith-Harris House grounds. The Curator suggested heirloom trees be planted in the orchard area.

B. Museum Development.

1. Curator Title. Mr. Lakowsky reported the Curator is acting more like a Museum Director of planning and directing events at the house. Ms. DiMartino was asked to write a job description for herself.

C. Upcoming Events.

1. Antique Motorcycle Show. Mr. Lakowsky set a meeting in mid-July with the Friends. He asked Ms. Massung to let him know how many Friends will commit to helping on August 9 and to set up on August 8. Ms. Massung agreed to ask the Leos and Boy Scouts if they are also willing to help. Those coming to the event will be stamped in. Ms. Massung agreed to purchase the needed stamps and tattoos for youngsters. Mr. MacDonald agreed to order one regular and one handicapped porta potties. The PA system and snow fence will be provided by the Lions.

Packets will be needed for the Show Bike entrance, as well as a tag for each bike, an evaluation form and People's Choice ballot sheet. At the vendors entrance an evaluation form will be needed. Six volunteers are needed at the gates and two people will be needed to help vendors, as well as two people to help the bikers. Twenty individuals will be needed for two shifts.

The display of bikes will begin at 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Robert Foster and his group will provide music from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. for \$250. The Parks and Recreation Department will cut the lawn and prepare the lines. The Lions will help. Mr. Lakowsky is working on the layout.

Ms. DiMartino asked do we need to have the second floor of the house open? There was a consensus of the Commission that only the first floor will be open.

Mr. MacDonald asked if any money needs to be encumbered?

Mr. Lakowsky reported First Selectman Mark Nickerson asked if the Smith-Harris had land for a community garden.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to adjourn the Smith-Harris House
June 24, 2015 Regular Meeting at 8:45 p.m.
Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (4-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Ghersi, Recording Secretary

Curator's Report--May, 2015

Submitted to the Smith-Harris House Commission

Upcoming Meetings

- STEPS-CT full-day for AUD session with Donna Massung on Monday, June 29 from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm in Hartford. Featured talk: "No Lectures! Creating Meaningful Experiences at Historic House Museums and Other Cultural Sites." Added attendees can participate at \$10 per person.
- Friends Meeting, Tuesday, July 7, 1 pm at the East Lyme Public Library.
- STEPS-CT sub-committee meeting, Friday, July 10, at 10 am at the Barn.
- CT Historical Society "How CHS can benefit Small Museums" brainstorming session followed by "Secrets of Professional Fundraising" workshop, Monday, July 20, 1 pm at the Slater Museum in Norwich.
- Commission Meeting, Wednesday, July 22, 7 pm in the senior center.
- Additional meetings scheduled throughout the month TBD.

STEPS-CT

The current STEPS-CT Sub-Committee: Donna Massung, Kathleen Patterson, Kathleen Sasso, Maggi Prokop, and curator Joanie DiMartino met throughout the month to continue with STEPS-CT work.

- We have completed our Code of Ethics; both the Commission and Friends Board will be viewing it for signing. Please spend the month reviewing it, and be prepared to discuss any questions or concerns followed by signing at next month's meeting.
- Next month I will have the suggested Commission by-laws to review for a vote in August.
- We have drafted a Conflict of Interest policy, which will be put forward for your perusal next month, and will now be working on "Trustee" job descriptions. Please email me your list of tasks, preferably before July 10th. Members of the Friends Board can email their task list to Donna, also by the same date.
- As per the "Audience" sessions of the program, we have begun identifying community focus groups to interview. I've been in touch with the teachers at the middle school to attend one of their planning meetings in either Sept. or Oct. of the new school year.
- I have also created a visitor sign-in book for better data collection; and also revised the "in-house" data collections book for gathering visitor information. PLEASE remember to fill it out anytime we assist visitors on-site, from school programs to barn rentals.
- As we work toward planning fall programs, we are charged with developing pilot programs and tour schedules to be open more often, or during different times (such as evening hours or vacation days); to make our site more accessible to visitors, so we hope to be open for national holidays such as Columbus Day and Veteran's Day.

Programs/Education

June was/is an extremely busy month for educational programs; we offered 4 programs in the first two weeks alone, and the Honey Tea scheduled for the end of the month.

- The school program (6/1 & 6/3) was a success, despite the rainy weather on Monday! We had, including teachers and chaperones, just under 300 visitors on site (294 to be exact). A big thank you to everyone involved!
- The “Novel History” program held its third session (6/10); 16 people attended the discussion led by professor Kate Rushin. Ms. Rushin, poet and scholar, led a wonderful talk about the poetry collection “Native Guard” by former national Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey, which then led to a sensitive, respectful discussion on current race issues today.
- Museum Open-House Day, (6/13) was also a success. About 76 people visited and toured the museum. We had a passport and basket giveaway with the Thomas Lee House and the Samuel Smith House. Maggi Prokop premiered her Mrs. Elizabeth Avery Henderson character, and we plan to add to her character as we discover more history about Elizabeth. Also, we had two high school volunteers assist with the children’s games on the lawn. The only glitch was that we advertised “refreshments,” and none were provided. In the future we’ll need better communication so that we’re offering what is advertised. Otherwise, it was a great day--many thanks to everyone involved, and special thanks to Maggi for her first-person interpretation!
- The Honey Tea is moving forward as planned, and should be a lovely Sunday afternoon. I’m awaiting information from Steve Dinsmore, President of the CT Bee Association, and our featured speaker. Mr. Dinsmore will also offer a honey tasting, and we’re just putting the final touches on the program. Donna, Maggi, & I will have a final meeting this Friday, (6/26).
- Along with being open on national holidays, I’ve contacted Mike McDowell to plan to add our folklore storytelling to the Trick or Trunk program again this year. Start thinking of creepy (but not TOO scary) stories to tell. I’ll need 3 storytellers for this event.
- We are in the planning stages with the East Lyme Historical Society and Samuel Smith House for “Spirit Voices,” a dramatic historical (non-scary) cemetery tour, scheduled for Friday, October 16th, and Saturday, October 17th. Cost will be \$15 per person, \$40 for families. Times TBD. The starting point of the tour will be the Smith-Harris House, which will feature 19th-century funeral traditions.
 - What is needed (collaborative between all 3 Houses):
 - people to portray the “spirits” at the cemetery
 - people to assist with ticket-taking, etc the days of the program
 - What is needed (Smith-Harris House only):
 - the parlor, front door, and hallway decorated for a funeral, including coffin
 - people to talk informally to visitors in the parlor about 19th-century funerary traditions.
- Other collaborative programming between the 3 houses was also discussed; ideas are being considered for 2016, in particular, hosting scholar and curator emeritus Jane Nylander for a talk on 19th-century bedrooms.
- I will be scheduling a holiday program-planning meeting in early July. I’ll notify everyone by email; all are welcome to attend.

Summer Tours

- I am pleased to announce that we have hired Mindy Morris as a Saturday tour guide over the summer. Mindy is working on her master's degree in business administration, and is interested in entering the museum field. She has already had previous internships with museums, and spent a summer at Mystic Seaport in the gift shop, so she brings a measure of experience in the field with her. Welcome, Mindy!
- The new tour flow pattern appears to be a success; I have given the tour on Fridays, and was pleased with how well the new format works. If anyone has any questions about the tour script itself, the flow pattern, collecting donations/souvenir sales, the new visitor guest book or collecting visitor data please let me know. I'm happy to meet to go over specific details.
- Please see the attached sheet; we still have four dates left to fill for the summer. Kindly let me know ASAP if you're available for any of those days.
- I will be putting together a research binder, consisting of copies of all the materials I used to create the new tour. Please feel free to peruse while you're in between tours of the House. Also, there are some museum field & history-related magazines and journals in the modern kitchen: American Association of State & Local History magazine, Civil War Times, CT Humanities Explored journal, etc. Please peruse as your interests guide you.

Collections/Landscape

- I will be asking our Collections Committee co-chairs to call a meeting shortly; we have had several donations that need to be considered and brought to the Commission.
- Barbara Odgers has begun the difficult work of cleaning and organizing the attic. She has created a guide for re-organization, which will be useful as we move forward. She plans to work on the attic every other Friday; if you're available and able to assist, we could use some extra hands.
- Ron Bence has taken care of the two holes in the roof, which critters were beginning to use as an entrance to the attic. Many thanks to Ron and his staff for handling the structural issue in so timely a manner.
- I will be rescheduling the photo shoot with Craig Woody for sometime in July, based on both our schedules.
- I plan to visit the blinds place this week to discuss repairs.
- I'd like to request a flag holder be attached to the porch so that we can hang the American flag when we're open, and also at special events, exact location TBD.

Meetings Attended

- 5/28- STEPS-CT sub-committee meeting for MVG.
- 5/29- collaborative program meeting with ELHS & Samuel Smith House.
- 6/8- Interviewed Mindy Morris with Gary Lakowsky.
- 6/11- STEPS-CT sub-committee meeting for MVG & began AUD.
- 6/24-Commission meeting.

Professional Development

- 6/24--NEMA webinar: "Creating a Major Gift Program in a Small Shop"

Submitted by:
Joanie DiMartino, curator

June 24, 2015