

Watchung Historical Committee
Minutes of the January 24th, 2024 Meeting

Attendance: Don Monetti, Stephen Pote, Maureen Greenbaum, John Guzman, Chris Vander Fliet, Michael DeParto, and Karen Jubin. Mayor Ron Jubin was present for the first part of the meeting.

Absent: Emily White, Keli Leunes, Tim Logan, Bob Mayers, and Paul Fischer (Council Liaison)

The meeting was called to order at 7:01PM. 7 members of the committee were present for a quorum.

OATH OF OFFICE – Mayor Jubin

Mayor Ron Jubin attended the beginning of the meeting and had all members reiterate the Oath of Office.

He also provided a brief report on a resident in Watchung who celebrated their 100th birthday recently. Mayor Jubin was considering the idea of the Watchung Century Club for those residents who reach the age of 100. Possibly these individuals can be interviewed.

He reminded the committee that we have a new administration person in the Borough offices named Colleen Long who can help with any social media efforts we need help with. He also asked that he, Jim DeMato, and Edith Gil be included in any emails to the Borough about events/ideas/etc. which the historical committee is considering.

Mayor Jubin also mentioned that he plans to organize a 100th Anniversary Committee in the spring, maybe April. Ron would like to be invited to any Historical Committee meetings that discuss 100th Anniversary ideas.

Mayor Jubin also provided a brief report on the Legend of Watchung Mural. There were still ongoing discussions about where its final home would be. The Borough Hall option and a new potential location were discussed.

Library renovations were discussed by the Mayor; more to come in the weeks ahead. There is hope that a significantly renovated library could be completed during 2026, front and center as part of Watchung's 100-year celebration.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Elections of officers were as follows:

Chair – Christopher Vander Fliet (motion by Steve Pote; second by Don Monetti)

Vice Chair- Tim Logan (motion by Chris Vander Fliet; second by Mike DeParto)

Secretary- Steve Pote (motion by Chris Vander Fliet; second by John Guzman))

INTRODUCTIONS

There were brief introductions from each of the members present with a brief discussion on their interests for the year and serving the committee and community. This included two new members Karen Jubin and Emily White.

Motion to approve the minutes from the December 13, 2023, meeting was made by Chris Vander Fliet and seconded by Don Monetti and approved.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – C. Vander Fliet

Vander Fliet thanked everyone who continued to Operate/Open our Museum to the Public/Open House and update the Open House schedule document.

Vander Fliet reported that resident Laurie Wood will once again be making a donation to the Historical Committee. The Historical Committee is usually the beneficiary of a donation from Laurie for some of the money made in the selling of these ornaments. 2023's ornament was Watchung's zip code 07069. The 2024 ornament will likely be focused on the schools and more specifically the two-room schoolhouse/Art Center.

There are 2 more years before Watchung's 100th – there will be a lot that will be expected of the Watchung Historical Committee over the next couple of years and we need to be ready for this special anniversary. The committee needs to establish a prioritized list of things that need to be done.

Vander Fliet reported that Bob Mayers helped Jeff Baldwin from Somerset County on some history on Bonnie Burn Road.

Vander Fliet submitted the budget form to the Borough and requested \$15,000 for the 2024 budget, as the committee has several projects that need significant funding including the following:

1. Video tour of the Texier House Museum
2. Additional film and editing services
3. Additional display buildout at the Texier House
4. Digital picture frames for the Texier House Museum
5. Misc. Expenditures/operating costs to support events at the Texier House/special outside consultants.

Vander Fliet reported that Bill Hance sent an email to him that a vendor will be coming tomorrow (1/25) to program Key Fobs for the door at Texier House. Vander Fliet will need to follow up with Bill on the number of fobs required (one for each member and alternate by name). Key Fobs should be distributed in February.

Chris Vander Fliet asked that all members select two Sunday dates to be available at Texier House during open house Sundays.

VICE CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

No report

LIAISON REPORT – P. Fischer

Paul Fischer was not present. Vander Fliet reported on behalf of Paul. Paul provided Vander Fliet a text message with updates and included the following:

1. Key Fobs/Door Lock: Details under Chairpersons report.
2. Alarms at Texier House: Paul was not sure what the issue is. It was discussed at the meeting that the alarm cannot be set and not hooked up to the Police Station.
3. Bylaws: No report provided by Paul, but the committee would like to see their passage in order complete committee membership (including auxiliary members) and expanded terms.
4. Securing Benches on outdoor patio: To be brought into the Texier House if a flood is predicted. There are concerns over how the benches can be anchored/secured.
5. Texier House – Routine Cleaning: Before special events and to be scheduled with Bill Hance. It was reiterated that this needs to be done at least every two months.
6. Gods Acre Sign: Paul said the sign was ordered. It was reiterated by Vander Fliet that if this sign was ordered that it was not discussed with the Committee on what should e included. Paul is to provide clarification on this at the next meeting.

PROJECTS/NEW BUSINESS

Emergency Preparedness

Steve Pote discussed that he reviewed with Chris Vander Fliet an application to the New Jersey Historical Commission, to request that the State assist Watchung (Watchung Historical Commission) in providing an “Artifact Assessment” to identify at the Texier Building areas of strength and areas of need for improvement as it relates to how well the Watchung Borough is disaster ready and its artifacts are properly stored and protected. Steve Pote submitted the request to the New Jersey Historical Commission and is hopeful of a response from them in several weeks.

The committee felt that filming the Texier House and supplementing the filming with tours from the members might help us to be able to have more information that we can provide as it relates to inventory. It will also help us to better prepare for what might be required for Emergency Preparedness. This video would be professionally filmed. Vander Fliet reached out to Strix media and is awaiting a proposal for the work. The proposal will be presented at the next meeting.

School Display Completion

Vander Fliet will set up a date with the committee in early February to finish the School Display.

Digital Picture Frames

The purchase of two digital picture frames was discussed. These frames would be technology enhanced, providing the ability to be motion-censored; plugged in, touch

screen capable in order to edit, change, and enhance content that appears in these frames. It can be used in conjunction with PowerPoint displays. One of these digital frames would be on display as part of the school display downstairs. This first display would be a 10" unit (\$220-\$250), which would display additional pictures of the schools, as well pictures of students, teachers, etc. Related to Watchung's school system over time.

The second display would be 17-19" display (\$375) which would display Veterans and Watchung's involvement during wartime periods.

After discussion, Chris Vander Fliet motioned the purchase of these units; John Guzman seconded. Motion approved.

The idea for a digital screen in the library to showcase Whispering Leaves articles (scanned by Don Monetti) is still in the works. Don has still not yet heard back from the Baumgartner family.

Historic Website/New Additions

Maureen continues to work on the website. As stated previously:

Maureen Greenbaum is willing to bring anyone interested up to speed in the website's development process. Maureen continues to make good progress on developing a structure for the website. Interested parties will be able to access segmented videos, and then "tag" them so that in the future they can be requested by name, subject, etc. Maureen said that a lot can be learned in 20 minutes. Vander Fliet reminded everyone on the committee to begin writing about a subject on Watchung history that interests one so it can be added to the website, e.g., O'Connors. There was a lot of expressed interest in collecting photographs of specific items and events.

Watchung 100th/Coloring T-Shirt

Maureen Greenbaum is looking at possible design of T-Shirt, whose focus is on children who will be working on T-Shirts. They will focus on the Texier Building, as part of 100th anniversary celebration. Steve said we should be coordinating anything dealing with 100th anniversary with the Borough. Chris suggested that Deblyn printers should be contacted for pricing, once we know what we are doing/asking for.

Borough History Videos

Vander Fliet continues to upload to YouTube, edit, and provide timings in YouTube video descriptions that are part of the historical video collections. Remaining segments that need to be completed are two teacher interviews (part of Helena Ruta Gold Award Project), the revised segment on the flood, interview with Al Ellis (some remaining edits), and War of the Worlds. The interview with Bruce Ryno will also be uploaded once it is completed.

Whispering Leaves/Contacting Family Updates

Don Monetti has not heard back on a letter he sent via mail to the relatives of the Baumgartner Family (original authors of the Whisper Leaves articles). He will report back to the committee if he hears back from them and possible next steps.

Mt. Saint Mary's Involvement

No update at this time.

Jimmy Roselli House Display/Information

Mike Departo will again try to reach out to Jimmy Roselli family.

Community Archiving Day/Flyer for Community Involvement

Keli L. provided a draft flyer for the committee and Maureen G. provided comments.

Workroom Cleanup

Related to above (archiving day announcement), tentative dates in March and April were discussed for volunteer help. It was decided that first there is a need for the committee to meet and understand exactly what we are expecting from volunteers. Steve Pote said we need a firm process in place, and we need to understand exactly how volunteers will be used. We also need to be sure that we have all the equipment (e.g., scanners, copiers), supplies, etc. which are needed during these volunteer days. It was decided that the committee is needed in March (March 3; 11 AM), and the student volunteers possibly in April (April 14). We need to maximize at 4-5 volunteers the number of students we invite. We also need to set goals for the day. Mike also suggested we need to separate materials we want the Texier Building to keep, versus other materials we do not believe we need.

PUBLIC PORTION

(No comments)

Announcements

(No announcements)

SCHEDULE FOR TEXIER HOUSE OPENINGS (through April is as follows)

February 4,18

March 3, 17 (closed)

April 7, 21

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 PM.

Submitted by: Steve Pote (Secretary)

NEXT MEETING: February 21, 2024.

Attachments:

1. No attachments.