

**Watchung Historical Committee
Minutes of the June 21st, 2023 Meeting**

Attendance: Chris Vander Fliet, Stephen Pote, Terri Pavlak, Tim Logan, Don Monetti, Maureen Greenbaum, Michael DeParto, Bob Mayers, Keli Leunes, and John Guzman.

Absent: Fred Hayeck, Paul Fischer (Council Liaison)

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm.

Motion to approve the minutes from the May 17th, 2023, meeting was made by Chris Vander Fliet and seconded Don Monetti and approved.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – C. Vander Fliet

Vander Fliet thanked everyone who attended the Museum Tour training session with Sue Tucker as well as those who continue to volunteer for the open houses throughout the year. The video on Diddy Addario (providing a detailed tour of Texier House) has not yet been uploaded to YouTube, but there is hope to do so soon.

Vander Fliet thanked those who were in attendance at the Memorial Day ceremony and those who helped with the open house that day immediately following the ceremony. The Borough (with coordination from Linda Monetti) provided photos of the Blackadar family and those who served at the open house. These framed photos were gifted to us for use at the Texier House Museum. Steve Pote assembled the current Blackadar family and took pictures of them.

June 4 Open House had 6 volunteers in attendance.

There was another reminder that Weekend Journey through the past would occur on October 7th 10am-5pm & October 8th Noon to 4 pm; all Committee members needed. Somerset County has not received the certification of liability insurance yet from the Borough. Don Monetti promptly worked with the Borough to submit the insurance form after the May meeting. He will be following up with the Borough on this in a few days on the same item. The Open House tracking list was updated with a “2023” Weekend Journey” tab, and Vander Fliet asked all those who can participate to please populate the excel file with the hours of availability.

It was reported that the replacement benches on the back outdoor patio of the Texier House Museum have arrived and that they still need to be secured by the Borough, so they do not float away in another rain event.

Vander Fliet reported that the historical committee's presence at the June 6th Watchung Board of Education meeting was not needed. It was noted that the Board of Education was supposed to vote on whether the mural would be accepted to hang in Valley View Middle School. The Board of Education reached out to the Borough of Watchung to ask

if the mural would be insured. No vote was taken at the most recent Board of Education meeting in June.

990 Somerset Street Hearing at June 8 Board of Adjustment meeting

Vander Fliet thanks Steve Pote for his prompt review of the 990 Somerset Street Hearing. The site is located in what was a mixed-use area. After much Board of Adjustment and applicant discussion, it was decided to have three apartments, one of which will be an affordable housing unit.

Steve Pote presented at the June 8 Board of Adjustment meeting, representing the Historical Committee. He discussed the height variance being requested by the applicant, as well the overall feel of the building to be put there. Pote explained that this is part of the entry into the center of town, and that this building will get great visibility. Board and applicant agreed that great care will should/will be given to retain the “look” or “character” currently established by the building there. Steve Pote also reported the Historical Committee’s concern regarding a height variance. The applicant agreed that, if requested, the height will remain at 35 feet.

Interview with Tim Jones

It was reported that an interview with Tim Jones was completed on 6/14/23 at his home. Tim Jones was a Watchung resident who lived for years on Stirling Road, starting in the 1960s. The video, once edited, will be added to the film collection that the Historical Committee has been working on.

Other

Resident Laurie Wood was provided a list of places in the Borough that could be used as ideas for the 2023 ornament program.

The video on Tiby Wotherspoon was processed by Walmart and will be added to our video archives.

Vander Fliet reported that Tim Jones donated ice cutting tools and devices to the Historical Committee. They will go on display at the Texier House.

He also reported that Denise Soppas (Watchung resident) donated 1970’s tax maps to the Historical Committee.

VICE CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

Tim Logan reported on dismantling of the school display and providing history on the Ness property.

School Display: Tim Logan will be coordinating with Chris Vander Fliet on the removal of the current school display to make room for the new school display that is being worked on by Helena Ruta as part of her Gold Award Project.

Ness Property: Tim Logan reported that he will work on some historical notes related to the Ness property for a future display or website.

LIAISON REPORT – P. Fischer

Paul Fischer was not present; no report was provided. Comments regarding current issues needing resolution:

1. Key Fobs are still under review; comment made that this technology was expensive and that the Borough was looking at pricing. Alarms at the Texier House also continue to be investigated by the Borough. Steve Pote stressed the urgent need to get improved security at Texier House.
2. Historical Website/Digital Archive: Jim D'Amato (Borough Administrator) continues to review various videos of historical value. He is not finding any problems with what is being recommended be uploaded and made public for viewing.
3. Bylaws: sent to Paul; expectation is that Paul and Christine (former liaison and Council President) will finalize the Council's review of this so that we can move forward with a couple of suggested and important committee changes.

PROJECTS/NEW BUSINESS

Tim Logan volunteered to take on the Vice Chairman position. Don Monetti motioned, and Bob Mayor seconded. Unanimous vote in favor.

Digitalization of Photos/Scrapbooks:

We need to speak to the town and vendors about how to most cost effectively and methodically get this done. Pote suggested that prioritization of pictures, scrapbooks, etc. has to be done first.

Emergency Preparedness Seminar:

Steve Pote reported on the seminar he attended on Emergency Preparedness. The program touched upon an Artifact Assessment Program which includes an inventory of what is in the museum, identifies risks, and prioritizes protection of artifacts in the Museum. We need to have an emergency plan in place in case bad weather is expected to protect what we have. We would need someone in charge of moving materials in case of an emergency. We would also need containers for storing materials. Steve needs to discuss with committee next steps as it relates increased preparedness and conditions under which NJ State might provide support and a critique of Texier House.

Interview with Bruce Ryno:

Need someone to assist with a pre-interview. Don Monetti and Bob Mayers have expressed interest in sitting in this interview.

Historical Website Discussion:

The website needs to be totally operational, so that content can be organized online and made accessible to the public. Bob Mayer stated that we have the most to offer in terms of content, but we need to make this material available to the public; this website has to be up and running. It should be a link off of the Borough website. We should spend budget money on support for Maureen in efforts to get the website up and running, and to pull together various museum items. The committee agreed, especially in light of the upcoming Centennial Celebration.

ISP Mentor Project:

Terri Pavlack reported on ISP Mentor Project. The committee needs to identify a list of potential projects that can be offered to students in the next school calendar year.

As part of this discussion, there was an interest in performing interviews with other longtime residents including Don Monetti (on Rescue Squad), Tim Logan (on Ness Property), and Alice Olear (Steve Pote Contact).

Loose Ends/Other

School Display updates will be initiated in July timeframe.

At a future meeting, publicity for open houses could be highlighted through participation by guest participants, e.g., Members from the Rescue Squad, Fire Department, Police Department, Boy Scouts, Anthony Volpe (and other athletes), Laura Prepon, various authors.

Vander Fliet mentioned that he would try to schedule a cleanup date in the summer for cleaning up the upstairs work room at Texier House.

There was a brief discussion on the Jimmy Roselli House (located off of Orchard Road). Mike DeParto mentioned he would look into some history of this house. We also found Vinyl disks with music from Jimmy Roselli.

Open House Schedule:

Vander Fliet provided the following open house dates through October:

August 20th

September 17th

October 1st

October 7th and 8th - Weekend Journey

PUBLIC PORTION

(None)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Submitted by: Stephen Pote (Secretary)

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday August 23rd @ 7 pm.

Attachments:

1. No attachments.