

Watchung Historical Committee
Minutes of the February 16th, 2022 Meeting

Attendance: John Malchow, Chris Vander Fliet, Stephen Pote, Maureen Greenbaum, Tim Logan, David Scharf, Fred Hayeck

Absent: Christine Ead (Liaison), Rick Stomber, and Bob Mayers

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

Motion made to approve the minutes from the January 26th 2022 Historical Meeting (Scharf) and seconded (Logan). Minutes were unanimously approved.

CHAIRPERSONS REPORT – C. Vander Fliet

Vander Fliet made a mention of the need for two people to volunteer to sign up for each of the various weekends throughout the year, during which time the Texier House is open. Vander Fliet said he would continue to circulate the sign-up sheet (Pote and Titus covered February weekends). Additionally, Memorial Day Opening and the October weekend Event at the Texier House Museum need coverage. He mentioned that the Weekend Journey Through the Past (October Event) would be a large event that would require as many volunteers from the committee as possible. The dates of this October event are still to be announced.

Vander Fliet mentioned that the Garden Club (Marta Blumberg, Vonnie Mott, and Ann Departo) has been working on researching Tiby Wotherspoon so the display on Tiby at the Texier House can be updated and enhanced. The Garden Club plans to meet Vander Fliet the night of February 23rd to donate some of the artifacts they have from Tiby and also share some of the research and findings they have.

Vander Fliet mentioned that the basement of Texier House was cleaned. Pete Martino has been in touch and followed up on this task from last year following the flooding from Ida. The artifacts that remain in the basement are reported to be in good shape.

VICE CHAIRPERSONS REPORT – J. Malchow

No Report.

LIAISON'S REPORT – C. Ead

No Report.

PROJECTS/NEW BUSINESS

Legend of Watchung Mural:

Vander Fliet provided an update from Art Conserver, Jason Crafts, from Cape May. He mentioned that the restoration/preservation of the face of the mural was completed and that the final conserving that must be done to the mural will be completed once a location for the mural has been chosen. Mr. Crafts said he would provide the required services to

install the mural, and will provide a cost estimate once a location is agreed to and he has visited the chosen site.

Vander Fliet gave an overall approach to the committee on gaining council approval for the next steps the committee should take related to finding a home for the mural. He mentioned that a report outlining information including the story of the mural, pictures of what has been done to save the mural, donations previously made, future costs, and recommended locations should be included in the report. The report would conclude with the council providing the committee with details of the next steps that should be taken to approach recommended locations.

There were no updates on the protective shield for the mural if it were to be installed in an exterior setting. The committee generally felt an outdoor location for the installation of the mural, while conceptually a good idea, should be a last resort as it would be very expensive to protect, and even then its installation outside would put the mural at increased risk in the elements, even with best efforts to protect it.

Thanks to a donation from Seritage, as well donations through GoFundMe and other private donations, the work to date on the mural has been paid for. There looked to be approximately \$1,000 of residual funding in the account, but verification of this amount needed to be confirmed with the Borough. Additional fundraising will be required once decisions are made on location and subsequent decisions are made on “stretching” and framing of mural. The mural will not be attached to the wall as it was originally installed at the Sears location. FYI, the mural is 16’ long and 10’ high, and it can be safely transported by the Art Conserver.

Bayberry School, Valley View School, the Police Station (Courthouse), movie theater, borough hall, or outside, are ideas for possible location. Vander Fliet said he visited Bayberry School but really did not see any location. He thought the auditorium at Valley View School (wall opposite the stage) looked like a good possibility; in this case, nothing would be obstructed from view.

The committee will work on a plan and required materials with which the potential location could be approached. Information regarding size, potential recommended locations, installation specifics, thoughts on historical value, potential education curriculum goals, costs, etc., needs to be summarized in a draft report to the Council (for eventual approval), before meeting with potential recipient. Vander Fliet, with help from the committee, will start to create this draft report in March, accessible for committee updates and hopefully ready for potential draft submission to Council in late March.

The original gold plate and wood backing were recovered when the mural was taken down at Sears. They will be restored and will accompany the mural when it is reinstalled.

All agreed on the need to push forward on the next steps. The committee is universally very excited about the potential to have this mural, a treasure of Watchung, installed, in advance of the Borough’s 100-year centennial.

Veterans Banner – Guidelines for Approval:

Steve Pote provided a starting point (see attached word document: Pote Recommendations for Veteran Priorities) for the recommended prioritization that should be given to Watchung veterans as it relates to the creation of banners. The discussion on guidelines for qualifying for a Veteran Banner started with honoring and recognizing those who are currently living from our earliest war conflicts. There was concern that we may not be able to find photos of some of the older veterans.

The committee felt that one must be a resident of the Borough of Watchung to qualify; those who work in the Borough, but do not live in Watchung should be honored by their respective hometowns. No branch of service should be restricted. There was a belief, however, that there should not be requirements placed on how long a person is to have lived in town to qualify, unless it is absolutely necessary in order to further prioritize potential recipients.

There was thought and discussion about whether those who are currently living and also those who gave the ultimate sacrifice should be honored first.

There was discussion on whether lawn sign type signs of Veterans could be temporarily installed if there was no room for the potential backlog of requests for veteran banners. This as a last resort, as some may feel “slighted” by not being represented on a banner.

There was discussion about a potential cap on the number of veteran banners that can be displayed both initially, and potentially each year thereafter, based on the limited number of current spaces for veteran banners. It was discussed that each banner could potentially be used for two veterans (one on each side); it would be helpful to discuss this with how other towns approached this. There are 32 existing lamp posts that can be used, potentially providing 64 spots to begin the program.

The committee felt that there was a need to speak to local Veterans on if those in the reserve (who only served in the reserve and who never had “active” status) should be included in the potential candidates for the Veterans banners.

The committee believed that Steve Pote’s approach (in attached word document) makes sense, and is a good starting point. This pyramid approach expands group eligibility as you work down the pyramid. Steve explained that he had accidentally omitted World War I in this pyramid structure chart he provided.

Additionally, there was the idea that a banner or banners be used to remember those who are buried in Gods Acre, who served during either the Revolutionary War or Civil War.

A request has been made to further research resident families with more than one family member having served during conflict(s), e.g., multiple Blackadar family members

having participated during World War II. It was suggested that the Department of Defense might be able to provide information on this. It also was suggested that we review scrapbooks in Texier Building which have articles, potentially on multiple siblings serving in conflicts. Online ancestry sites may be able to help as well.

AARP Grant is to be discussed at the next meeting in more detail.

Vander Fliet mentioned the ongoing Texier House Museum Displays currently being updated, and this included the Lions Club Display, Sports Display, Tiby Witherspoon Display, and Old Signs Display.

Vander Fliet also said that we need to discuss Historical Committee ByLaws in the near future.

Tim Logan asked if there were any plans for the Outhouse located on the Texier House Grounds to be painted. Logan mentioned that it might be best to have it painted at the same time that the Carriage House is painted (following the Carriage House repairs). He mentioned that not much more additional material would be required to have it painted if it was painted at the same time as the Carriage House. Vander Fliet mentioned he would send an email to the Borough on this request.

Vander Fliet said he would provide (offline) new members with the required security (FOB) key and codes in order to gain access to the Texier House. Vander Fliet also reminded the committee to make sure they had submitted the Oath of Office with original signature. Vander Fliet is pursuing what is required to be submitted for Emeritus Status for Betse Titus.

PUBLIC PORTION

No comments during the public portion. No members of the general public attended the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 pm.

Submitted by: Stephen Pote (Secretary)

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday March 16th @ 7 pm.

Attachments: Pote Recommendations for Veteran Priorities (Word document)

Recommendations for Banner Creation Priorities

Priority	Group Eligible	Commentary
1	World War II Veterans (alive) All Veterans Killed in Action (all conflicts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This should be THE top priority to complete as soon as possible. - Currently living in Watchung or - Family of deceased (killed in action Veteran) still living in Watchung
2	Veterans of Other Conflict (alive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Priority to (in order): Korean Conflict, Vietnam War, Cuban Missile Crisis, Persian Gulf, War in Afghanistan, and Iraq War Veterans. - Currently living in Watchung
3	Veterans During Peacetime (alive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although they have not served in combat, if they were “active” military they are considered Veterans - Currently living in Watchung
4	Veterans (alive) who recently (last two years) moved out of Watchung but who still have family residing in Watchung	
5	Veterans who are deceased but who lived in Watchung and who still have family residing in Watchung	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Includes all deceased veterans, including World War I Veterans - Family still resides in Watchung
6	Veterans of Conflict who have passed but who lived in Watchung at one time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lowest priority for banner - Should make sure they are remembered on Memorial Wall
Do Not Qualify At This Time	Currently Actively Serving Military Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currently actively serving in the military do not fall under the category of “Veteran” status at this time.

- Priorities 1 through 6 describe the order in which “Group Eligible” Veterans are included on banners. This in effect is a draft recommended prioritization of Veterans for whom banners should be created.

Recommendations for Banner Creation Priorities

- Separate Effort: ensuring that all Veterans having served during a conflict are on the “War Memorial” outside of Texier Building
- We need to be able to find photographs of those who qualify
- “Cutoff” of those for whom initial banners are created depends on number of posts available for banners
- Other Consideration: Watchung Veterans Killed In Action (during WWII or more recently) should be given special consideration.