

**Watchung Historical Committee  
Minutes of the June 15th, 2022 Meeting**

**Attendance:** Chris Vander Fliet, Stephen Pote, John Malchow, Bob Mayers, Tim Logan, Maureen Greenbaum, and Christine Ead (Liaison)

**Absent:** David Scharf, and Fred Hayeck.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm.

Vander Fliet stated that it is a requirement now to record meetings, even if all are present in person.

Motion was made (Vander Fliet) to approve the minutes from the April 20<sup>th</sup> 2022 Historical Meeting. Seconded (Logan). Malchow abstained. Minutes were approved.

Motion was made (Vander Fliet) to approve the minutes from the May 18<sup>th</sup> Historical Meeting. Seconded (Pote). Minutes were unanimously approved.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – C. Vander Fliet**

Vander Fliet began the meeting by mentioning that all meetings going forward will be hybrid – meaning that we can have them in person, but would additionally have to set up the computer to record them.

Vander Fliet once again mentioned the October Weekend Journey Through the Past event which would take place on (**Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>**, 10am to 5 pm & **Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>** Noon to 4pm) and we will need coverage by all committee members, even if that coverage is staggered. A schedule will be sent out for members to sign up for specific time slots for the Weekend Journey event.

Vander Fliet reminded everyone that at the May meeting, it was decided to close the museum for the September 4<sup>th</sup> and October 2<sup>nd</sup> Open House dates. September 4<sup>th</sup> is Labor Day Weekend, and October 2<sup>nd</sup> is right before the Weekend Journey Through the Past event which is a significant time commitment for our members.

Vander Fliet thanked those who volunteered for the recent Open Houses and reminded everyone that we would have a presence at the Harvest Festival in the fall with Bob Mayers doing a book signing. The book signing would support our mural preservation efforts.

There was an update on the Tibby Wotherspoon display and that the Garden Club worked before Memorial Day to nearly complete the display.

Vander Fliet said that everyone should be getting emails from Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Committee at this time.

Vander Fliet was pleased to announce that a total of twenty-two Watchung - Images of America books were purchased with the \$300 dollars that was voted upon at a previous meeting. The committee was able to maximize on a sale with the published and purchase the books for \$13 dollars rather than the \$22 dollars they were originally listed for.

Vander Fliet said he would defer the discussion on the Legend of Watchung mural to later in the meeting.

Vander Fliet indicated that a form was submitted and insurance received regarding the October event. Council Liaison Christine Ead explained that she had this in place. Prior to the October County event (a week or two before) someone needs to pick up signs, pamphlets; they need to be dropped off at local businesses; there are 28 participating sites.

### **LIAISON REPORT – C. Ead**

Council Liaison Lead indicated that the bricks were there for the sidewalk repair. She said the sensor lights outside should now be working. She said the painting of the carriage house and outhouse are on the list to be completed.

As for the basement, a hanging dehumidifier was added to the basement, along with a sub pump.

To date, there has been good feedback on the banners. They will be up again (and flipped to better view other side) for Veterans Day. Requests for additional banners are still being accepted.

Pote asked about the status of the fountains on the lakes. Christine explained that the lake fountains were in worse shape than originally detected. There have been supply chain delays on getting parts for sprinklers. They are very expensive to repair or replace.

9/11 Memorial Update: It was stated to Council Liaison Ead that the Historical Committee is not responsible for maintenance of 9/11 Memorial.

### **VICE CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – J. Malchow**

No Report.

### **PROJECTS/NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Gold Award for local Girl Scout:**

Helena Ruta has been in touch with the Watchung Historical Committee about updates to the school display in support of her Gold Award project. Vander Fliet mentioned that the most important update to the school display at this time would be the creation of a timeline with pictures of the history of all schools, and their locations, throughout the Borough's history.

Vander Fliet had spoken to Betse Titus about the project and Betse Titus said she had preliminarily met with Barbara Diem and they started to discuss the history of the schools. Bob Mayers mentioned that he could get in touch with Bruce Ryno, from Scotch Plains, who might have a picture of the property that Valley View School now resides at before the school was built.

#### **Legend of Watchung Mural Report Discussion:**

Vander Fliet provided an overview of the June 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting with the Board of Education (Board) which was attended by Vander Fliet and Pote. He mentioned that he gave a quick overview of the report and that the Watchung Historical Committee was looking to have the mural installed at Valley View School. He followed up that there were some comments from the Board of Education (specifically one or two members) that the mural depicts a racist and violent past. Others said the mural represents much more about the presence of Lenape Indians in Watchung. The Board ultimately decided that before they make a decision on if they would accept it at the schools, they would like to hear from Leni-Lenape tribes and their thoughts on the depiction in the painting. Vander Fliet mentioned he had a contact for someone who has studied Leni-Lenape history and he (Greg L.) would almost certainly be able to provide some contacts for us. Vander Fliet also made a statement that he originally misunderstood the Boards question on if the Watchung Historical Committee had been in touch with Leni-Lenape tribes in the past. He wanted that clarified for the record – specifically that the Committee had not been in touch with the Leni-Lenape tribes.

There was an open discussion amongst the Committee on whether anyone knew of any additional contacts or possible leads to the tribe. Tim Logan remembered one group in Suferin NY, Bridgeton, NY – but they appeared to be a bit militant/standoffish when approaching their area. Maureen Greenbaum mentioned Waterloo Village – but it is believed to have been closed down.

#### **Bylaws Discussion:**

In the past, Diddy Addario and the Committee at the time provided initial creation of Historical Committee bylaws, and the ordinance was reshaped several years ago by the Council. The bylaws call for 9 members and 2 alternatives. The committee needs to get to full membership. The bylaws and ordinance call for one-year terms. The group present liked the idea of three-year terms, as it provides members more of a chance to get educated and to contribute towards Committee projects and goals. But the three-year terms needed to be staggered so that all knowledge capital isn't lost at once.

The idea of an “auxiliary” member was discussed; these would be members who may not, at the current time, live in Watchung (or live any longer in Watchung) but who, because of their vast, in-depth experience and knowledge, may provide invaluable contributions to the group in order to pursue certain projects. Sue Tucker is someone who would fit this description.

It was raised that there are over 50 historical societies in New Jersey, and only one historical committee (in Watchung). The question was raised as to whether this should change or if there was a constraint or reason why this should remain.

There was a quick discussion on Emeritus status and how this status should become a part of the bylaws. There was strong support for designating 10 years as the timeframe for Emeritus status eligibility. This discussion then raised the question by Pote as to whether Betse Titus had yet received Emeritus Status. Vander Fliet mentioned that he sent an email to the mayor last November asking for this request to be fulfilled, and he had additional discussions with Pete Martino following the email to the mayor. Pete Martino had asked Vander Fliet last year if there were any specific dates on which Betse might like to be honored. When Vander Fliet spoke to Betse Titus, she did not have any particular dates in mind. Pote said this honor is long overdue given Betse's long-time involvement and contributions; Betse's work and continued willingness to support when asked just exemplifies why she should be given Emeritus status along with Barbara Diem, Diddy Addario, and Betty Jean Titus.

It was discussed that there needs to be an appointment of someone who could handle the role of Financial Manager. The committee had someone in the past (Mary Ann Webber) who did a great job managing (in a timely fashion) donations, the administration of received funds and distributions, providing monthly reports, goals status, etc. While discussing finances, the group also believed that the Historical Committee Chairperson should be allowed to make up to \$300 purchases without first seeking committee approval.

The idea of an executive committee (three members) was discussed, who would make decisions in an emergency. The group felt comfortable to permit the committee leadership to make emergency decisions when they had to be made; however, it was expressed that the first course of action should be an attempt to call for an emergency full committee meeting, where a quorum (of five) could be gathered to discuss the issue on hand. If this is not possible, it was suggested that permission should be granted for committee leadership to take action on behalf of the committee.

In summary, the Committee voted on the following changes to be made to the bylaws, as motioned by Chris Vander Fliet and seconded by John Malchow:

- Change qualifying Emeritus Status of Committee member to 10 years.
- Identify the position of a financial manager on the Historical Committee.
- With chair approval, all committee members can make purchases not to exceed \$300.
- The Historical Committee member terms should be three years, but staggered where possible.
- Identify possibility of having "auxiliary" members who meet above-mentioned criteria.
- The Historical Committee does not maintain the 9/11 memorial.

Malchow will make these edits to the bylaws.

**Loose Ends/Other:**

**Publicity for Open Houses Discussion:**

Vander Fliet discussed the need for better publicity for the Texier Open House Events. He went on to say that other members and himself have previously discussed the idea for having local dignitaries and community volunteers attend the Open Houses including, but not limited, to Rescue Squad, Fire Department, Boy/Girl Scouts, Athletes, Actors, Authors, and Mayors. John Malchow mentioned the idea of Tea Parties.

He mentioned that Maureen Greenbaum has been helping with getting the word out on events through social media (e.g., town website). Maureen followed up to state that she has been publishing information on the Open House events on Eventbrite, the Echoes Sentinel, and the Madison Eagle but felt that the most publicity would come from posting more on the Borough of Watchung website. Bob Mayers also mentioned that the Facebook posts he makes for his book signings reach thousands of people and felt those Facebook posts could help get the word out for our events as well.

Christine Ead brought up the idea of a backpack flyer that could be distributed to the schools as well to help get the word out. Ead also suggested some sort of scavenger hunt for the kids could be beneficial as well to get them interested in some local history and places. Vander Fliet mentioned that a Girl Scout made a scavenger hunt for Watchung History a few years ago that has been used in the past and could be used again if needed.

Maureen mentioned that there is good support at the Food Truck Fridays and that she would distribute the Scavenger Hunt document to kids if it was provided. She did not give any specific dates, but would try to attend a few of them in the future to hopefully help spark some interest with the kids in Watchung History.

**Borough 100 / Centennial Birthday 2026**

Pote mentioned it was Borough's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday coming up. We need to think about how the Historical Committee is needed and can help.

**Display Updates:**

Vander Fliet mentioned that display updates throughout the Museum have been given at past meetings, and has no further updates at this time.

**Wellbrock Bench:**

Vander Fliet mentioned that during Ida a bench which sat outside of the carriage house which was restored last year by Vander Fliet was swept away by the floodwaters. New signage which dedicated the bench to Dr. Wellbrock and his son is at the Texier House, but a new bench to replace the old one is needed. Ead mentioned she may have an idea to replace this bench.

**Open House Schedule:**

Vander Fliet provided the following revised open house dates through the Weekend Journey Through the Past Event:

**June 19th - 2pm to 4 pm**

**July 17th - 2pm to 4 pm**

**August 21 - 2pm to 4 pm**

**September 4th - CLOSED**

**September 18th - 2pm to 4 pm**

**October 2nd - CLOSED**

**October 8th - 10 am to 5 pm**

**October 9th - 12 noon to 4 pm**

**PUBLIC PORTION**

There were no comments from the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Submitted by: Stephen Pote (Secretary)

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday August 17<sup>th</sup> @ 7 pm.**

Attachments:

1. September 2022 - Draft version of the Bylaws