

**Watchung Historical Committee
Minutes of the October 26th, 2022 Meeting**

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

Absent: David Scharf

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

Motion was made (Tim Logan) to approve the minutes from the September 21st 2022 Historical Meeting. Seconded (John Malchow). Minutes were approved.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – C. Vander Fliet

Vander Fliet thanked those volunteers who participated in the Open House. There were 4 visitors in mid-October Open House.

Vander Fliet provided a quick recap of the Weekend Journey Through the Past event. Saturday's attendance was lighter than normal, but there was excellent attendance on Sunday the 8th.

Vander Fliet reported that the Historical Committee received a total of \$348.00 in donations to the Museum. Of this total, Bob Mayers donated an additional \$110.00 to the Historical Committee on the sale of "Historic Tales of Watchung" books.

There was committee appreciation extended to the Borough for repairs to the Museum in preparation for Weekend Journey (painting, internet, cleaning, landscaping, lights). As well as Traffic and Beautification/Garden Club for decorating outside of the Museum in preparation for Weekend Journey.

The Hayeck family picked up the materials and signage that was required for the Weekend Journey event, and the Feedback Evaluation form (post event) was submitted back to the County. There were thanks extended to Sue Tucker and Pete Martino for food pickups.

Vander Fliet mentioned that the Bylaws were submitted to Christine Ead and the Borough for their review/approval. Christine Ead felt the ByLaws may be discussed at the November 3rd meeting, but that was to be verified at a later time.

Vander Fliet provided a quick recap of the Harvest Festival. He thanked those who participated and helped. Bob Mayers provided a donation of \$80.00 to the Watchung Historical Committee through his sale of "Historic Tales of Watchung" books at the Event. A table with historical artifacts from the Museum was also on display. It made for great conversation by many. A "green sheet" was passed out at the Harvest Festival. The document was created by Bob Mayers and Vander Fliet for the Harvest festival to

educate the public on what volunteering with the committee entails, as well as our mission statement. It was positively received at the Festival.

Vander Fliet provided a quick recap of the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission event that recognized Jason Ng on 10/19 with the young historian award for his work on the War displays.

Vander Fliet mentioned that the vintage sign obtained by Paul Ost was copied and is hanging in the Museum for the sign display.

Hunting for History Scavenger Hunt – Fall Event and approval from PTO obtained from Jackie Pike. A report on the progress of the scavenger hunt cards was to come at a later time in the meeting.

No updates on the School Display with Helena Ruta, but Vander Fliet thanked John Malchow for volunteering to help open the Museum for Helena as needed once the project kicked off.

Vander Fliet was happy to announce that new signage was installed throughout the Museum and adds a significant amount of history and clarification to the current displays. The printed pink sheet (“one pager”) made available to all visitors to be used to navigate throughout the Texier House/museum, was very well done and well received by visitors.

Vander Fliet mentioned that the Reflections of Watchung film project was now in the hands of the Administration and Attorney for Review. The ultimate goal is to have the videos placed on YouTube for public viewing.

It was announced that Betse Titus will receive the Emeritus Historical Committee award on November 3rd, for her long-time dedication to the town, including the Fire Department, Cheer Leader Squads, and Historical Committee (among other activities).

LIAISON REPORT – C. Ead

Council Liaison Ead indicated that the bricks were installed in the area of the Texier House Museum (same bricks that were washed away during Storm Ida). Sidewalk has been repaired. Outside lights are now working. The outhouse, carriage house, and Texier House were freshly painted in early October in time for Weekend Journey.

It was confirmed that maintenance of the 9/11 memorial is not the responsibility of the Historical Committee. A sealcoat was applied to the memorial; coordinated by Seth Alexander with help and assistance from the DPW. Directions will be created by Seth Alexander as to what specific maintenance to the memorial is needed, going forward, and at what frequency. Steve Pote will talk with Seth about the status of the plaque, long

discussed to be installed as a thank you to significant contributors of money, materials and time in support of the design and creation of Watchung's 9/11 memorial. Arborvitae will be planted behind the 9/11 memorial.

For security purposes, per Pote suggestion, the video surveillance of the Texier Building (inside and outside) was saved for the period of time the Weekend Journey Through the Past took place. The video will be saved so that it can be accessed later if needed. A few specific items were moved to the upstairs. Key fobs for entering the Museum are still being coordinated with Bill Hance. The fob numbers would be recorded based on member, and a list of the members and their corresponding numbers would be recorded. The code pad on the door also needs to be replaced; numbers pushed get stuck.

The front steps and railings need repair/replacement in spring of 2023. The railings need to match those in the back. Three benches were lost during Ida; two of recycled plastic will be dedicated to Dick Wellbrock for many years of service; and in memory of his son William. Motion was made (John Malchow) and seconded (Fred Hayek) to purchase 48" benches (\$359 each) out of Historical's budget, to be processed through the borough.

The creation of a scarecrow was completed for the Texier House, representative of the Historical Committee. The Scarecrow contest was held on the 21st; October 22nd was the Harvest Festival and playground ribbon cutting.

The basement was mentioned because it should be checked for wetness following recent rains. A subgroup volunteered to take a look, and found that the dehumidifier was not on and should have been, given the evidence of moisture there. DPW will be contacted to assess the humidifier and adequacy of hosing to the outside.

VICE CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – J. Malchow

No Report.

PROJECTS/NEW BUSINESS

School Display:

Vander Fliet had spoken to Betse Titus about the school project/display 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 North Plainfield, who might have a picture of the property, where Valley View School now resides, before the original school was built in 1948.

Historic Sign Obtained:

Paul Ost and Chris Vander Fliet copied and hung up at the museum the vintage Watchung sign discussed during September meeting. Paul mentioned that he did not have any context or history on the sign; the group will have to research to learn more about the sign that reads "Have a Ball Visiting Watchung in the Winter".

Other Items

Chris Vander Fliet recommended that Historical Committee purchase 25-30 copies of various DVDs, to have them available for historical purposes. It would cost about \$400. Chris motioned for purchase, seconded by Fred Hayek.

It again was discussed that the “Whispering Leaves” newsletter from the 1960s is a fascinating source of information about Watchung during this time period. Don Monetti, a resident in town, has spent a great deal of time reading through these newsletters.

It was discussed that some combination of Steve Pote and Chris Vander Fliet will pre-interview or interview Bruce Ryno from North Plainfield. Bruce has extensive knowledge of not only North Plainfield, but Watchung and its roots. He also has great understanding of the American Revolution as it relates to this area’s involvement. Vander Fliet felt that the interview should be filmed for preservation purposes.

The concept of “disaster management” was raised by Pote and discussed: in the event of a potential, e.g., “300-year storm/event”, there should be some prioritization given as to what artifacts from the museum are either a) raised to “higher ground” within the building; or b) removed from the Texier Building altogether and, by procedure, stored in a specific, safe alternative location. After Ida, some mud was in the main lobby. It was suggested that possibly Watchung apply for a grant with County Historical, to possibly provide resources to implement specific procedures designed around safeguarding invaluable items the museum today houses.

In the immediate future, there is good reason to pre-purchase a supply of sandbags that can remain on Texier House premises (basement or in the carriage house), to be used as a first line of defense, implemented well in advance of the event. There are several projects that can come from this (e.g., scanning of pictures and newspapers) which could use help from responsible high school students. There was also a suggestion to prioritize what needs to be done at the Texier House in the meantime to prepare for the next weather or disaster event.

To attract more visitors, it was discussed that maybe the Historical Committee should sponsor special tours and guest speakers at the Texier House, e.g., Anthony Volpe (upcoming NY Yankee short stop).

It was discussed that there is a Warren battle ground from the Revolutionary War. There was interest by some in visiting this before it is completely developed.

It was mentioned that there are major changes being made to Mobus Field. The change in playground, and redevelopment of what was the Mobus Field needs to be captured by historical. It was also discussed that folders of pictures of Borough events, as well Council minutes and agendas on the Borough website, in excess of two years, are being removed by Borough Administration.

Maureen continues to work on interactive website, to capture Watchung Historical artifacts and history. Scavenger Hunt cards, depicting aspects of Watchung, are being well received by the committee.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The committee expressed a need to have a financial manager again. This person can assist with better estimating, management, work with Bill Hance, etc. It was also mentioned that more help is needed to sort things on the second floor.

Open House Schedule:

Vander Fliet provided the following open house dates for the remainder of the year:

November 6th 2-4 pm

November 20th 2-4 pm

December 4th 2-4 pm – Tim Logan volunteered to do this Open House with John M.

PUBLIC PORTION

There were no comments from the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 pm.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday November 16th @ 7 pm.

Attachments:

1. No attachments.

Submitted by: Stephen Pote (Secretary)