

**Watchung Historical Committee
Minutes of the May 17th, 2023 Meeting**

Attendance: Chris Vander Fliet, Stephen Pote, Terri Pavlak, Tim Logan, Don Monetti, Bob Mayers, Keli Leunes, John Guzman. Sue Tucker, Helena Ruta and Wendy Ruta were in attendance as guests.

Absent: Maureen Greenbaum, Michael DeParto, Fred Hayeck, Paul Fischer (Council Liaison)

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

Motion to approve the minutes from the April 26th, 2023 meeting was made by Chris Vander Fliet, seconded by Don Monetti and approved.

After some discussion, Tim Logan volunteered to take on the Vice Chairman position of the Historical Committee. Don Monetti motioned; Bob Mayer seconded. All voted in support.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – C. Vander Fliet

Vander Fliet reminded everyone that there was an Open House Learning Tour w/ Sue Tucker scheduled for 6/3, and during the 5/21 Open House Chris VF could also provide a learning tour. The group as a whole said this was a good date.

There was a reminder that Weekend Journey through the past would occur on October 7th 10am-5pm & October 8th Noon to 4 pm; all Committee members needed. Don Monetti will get certification of liability insurance for this project.

Memorial Day Opening – 2-Hour Open House immediately following the ceremony. Mr. John William Blackadar, as well his children, are being honored for their military service. Photos from Family will be on display at the Texier House that day and Chrissy Blackadar and other family members will be available after the Memorial Day service when Chrissy will speak on behalf of her father-in-law. Chris, Steve, Tim, Betse will be available on Memorial Day at the open House for tours immediately following the ceremony.

Senise Soppas (Watchung resident) reached out to the Historical Committee asking if they would accept a donation of 1970's Watchung Tax Maps. The primary communication was through the Chris Vander Fliet and she mentioned that she would drop the maps off as a donation to the Committee in the near future.

The Legend of Watchung – Presentation @ VV - BOE Meeting (scheduled for Tuesday June 6th @ 7 pm). Thank you to all of those who supported us, both from the Committee and outside of the Committee at the May 9th BOE meeting. Vander Fliet asked for support from all members at this June meeting (NOTE: June 6th mural discussion would

later be cancelled by BOE for reasons of insufficient time available to discuss. Mural hopefully will be discussed during July BOE meeting). During previous efforts, there was an excess of 200 individual donations made in support of the mural.

Local School History Project – Helena Ruta, Girl Scout Gold Award Candidate

There was an update on the School Display. Resident Helena Ruta is working to obtain approvals for her Girl Scout Gold Award project. Helena provided an outline of the work to be done; she also provided a copy of the application. The project would create a timeline, and other deliverables to be identified and completed. She will work with Sue Tucker to identify pictures of all schools (including construction/reconstruction projects, openings, school expansions, relocation, etc.) in Watchung, as well class photos.

Member Keli Leunes reported that she would be interested in assisting with the Helena Ruta's Girl Scout project. The goal is to work on this during the summer, and open it up to the public in early fall. Select members will make themselves present when the project is being worked on at the Texier House.

VICE CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

No Report

LIAISON REPORT – P. Fischer (by Chris Vander Fliet on behalf of P. Fischer)

Paul Fischer was not present, but status of several items were sent on his behalf, including:

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.
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 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:

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

Interview with Bruce Ryno:

Need someone to assist with a pre-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 website up and running, and to pull together various museum items. Committee agreed.

Videos on Tiby Wotherspoon:

Steve reviewed the three VHS tapes that were given to him, relating to Tiby Wotherspoon and the Slocum Disaster. Only one of the videos is of value; it is a complete History Channel recording that does an excellent job of describing the Slocum Disaster. Among the interviewees was Tiby Wotherspoon, who was only a baby at the time of the disaster. This History Channel program will be copied to video for use by the Committee and public. Video was sent to Walmart for processing.

Emergency Preparedness Seminar: Pote attended state-sponsored disaster planning and response seminar that discussed the availability of knowledgeable resources to enable the Watchung Historical Committee to take initial steps towards implementing an “Artifact Assessment Program”, a first step in becoming better prepared to prioritize, prevent and/or minimize damage to priceless artifacts at the Texier House. Steve will meet with representatives from the New Jersey Association of Museums who sponsored this course taken by Pote.

Loose Ends/Other

Publicity for Open Houses – Ideas for members of the community to supplement Open Houses (with Rescue Squad, Fire Department, Boy Scouts, professional athletes, e.g., Anthony Volpe, Laura Prepon, Authors) in order to increase resident presence at the Texier House.

School Relationships / Student Volunteerism – Terri Pawlak reported on the efforts that high schools make to encourage community service among their students. Terri was aware, for instance, of the work that Pingry does (ISP Mentor Interest Program). She checked with the Pingry School regarding student volunteer efforts there under the “ISP” project banner. It is too late for this school year, but now is the time to identify what projects might exist at the Texier House over the next 6 months. Value to students lies in ability to report volunteerism on college applications in the fall. Multiple students might be available during the summer and early fall who have various talents (photography,

film editing, write-ups, materials organization, etc.). It was suggested again that a project lists be identified, which is updated periodically for students to volunteer for. This project list would be made available to possibly guidance counselors, who can mediate between students and the Historical Committee. Terri identified what she believed were three projects that could be proposed to the school in solicitation of student volunteerism.

Potential projects:

- Terri's identified projects
- Project on interview and editing skills
- Project on website development and enhancement
- Project on risk management of Texier Building and artifacts (Steve can explain)

Following the last meeting, Chris provided a quick "Open House Protocol" tour to introduce what occurs when Historical Committee members are giving tours.

Open House Schedule:

Vander Fliet provided the following open house dates through October:

May 21st

May 29th

June 4th

July 16th

August 20th

September 17th

October 1st & 15th (it was decided that the Texier House will be closed on the 15th , following the Weekend Journey.

October 7th and 8th - Weekend Journey

PUBLIC PORTION

(None)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Submitted by: Stephen Pote (Secretary)

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday June 21st @ 7 pm.

Attachments:

1. No attachments.