

Watchung Historical Committee
Minutes of the December 13th, 2023 Meeting

Attendance: Don Monetti, Stephen Pote, Bob Mayers, Maureen Greenbaum, John Guzman, and Chris Vander Fliet, and Tim Logan.

Absent: Fred Hayeck, Terri Pavlak, Keli Leunes, Michael DeParto, and Paul Fischer (Council Liaison)

The meeting was called to order at 6:57PM. 7 members of the committee were present for a quorum.

Motion to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2023, meeting was made by Bob Mayers and seconded by Tim Logan and approved.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – C. Vander Fliet

Vander Fliet thanked everyone who continued to Operate/Open our Museum to the Public/Open House and update the Open House schedule document.

Vander Fliet thanked all members for their commitment this year and all the accomplishments completed including, but not limited to getting outside volunteers engaged, helping to build the website, school display with Helena Ruta (display, preserved interviews with teachers, and a scavenger hunt), video interviews, and keeping the doors open on a bi-weekly basis.

Vander Fliet reported again that Wilson Memorial Church was looking to showcase some of their history in the next year or so as they celebrate their 115th year. It will be likely that Wilson Memeorial and the Texier House will need to collaborate as part of this milestone in Wilson's History.

2 more years before Watchung's 100th – there will be a lot that will be expected of the Watchung Historical Committee over the next couple of years and we need to be ready for this special anniversary. The committee needs to establish a prioritized list of things that need to be done.

Vander Fliet thanked Mike Departo again who helped to spearhead volunteers from Mt. Saint Mary's this year to archive photos at the Museum. Mike will continue to try to schedule the Mt. Saint Mary's volunteers.

VICE CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Tim Logan reported on preliminary planning for a future Ness Property display in the Family Life room with different tools and artifacts found and collected by him over the

years. Tim is meeting with a colleague to consolidate pictures, possibly create a diorama, and provide a written background summary.

LIAISON REPORT – P. Fischer

Paul Fischer was not present and there was no status update for the following as it relates to security at Texier Building:

- Key Fobs/Door Lock
- Alarms at Texier House
- Working cameras, connection with Police Department

In regards to Bylaws, the committee would like to see their passage in order complete committee membership (including auxiliary members) and expanded terms.

Cleaning of Texier House: Paul said he would follow up on contracted cleaning status at Texier Building. There is still no consistent cleaning service being provided to the Texier Building. Vander Fliet reported that we need a more regular cleaning of the Texier House Museum going forward.

Gods Acre Sign: Vander Fliet did report that that Borough plans to install a new sign at Gods Acre site. This sign would include all the inhabitants at the cemetery and the correct spellings of all buried there. The sign is currently missing some of the names of those buried there. The back of the sign would have QR codes that Maureen Greenbaum is willing to work on.

PROJECTS/NEW BUSINESS

Legend of Watchung Mural

Vander Fliet reported that Jason Crafts, art conservator of the Legend of Watchung Mural visited Borough Hall on Friday November 17th to investigate the two potential locations within Borough Hall to hang the mural. The location on the southern wall of Borough Hall seemed to be most fitting and reasonable after being reviewed by Jason. The Borough would be responsible for creating a window seal for the middle window. Jason will provide the Borough an estimate for the remaining work to be completed, what has been paid for already, and what will be done before the mural is delivered. This will include safe transportation and installation preparations (working with the Borough) and installation of mural.

School Display Completion

Vander Fliet will set up a date with the committee in January or February to finish the School Display. Vander Fliet requested member participation to help see this to completion. It was suggested that more pictures of the school and possibly students be displayed.

Digital Picture Frames

Discussion was deferred to January after more measurements can be made with the school display's layout. The idea for a digital screen in the library to showcase

Whispering Leaves articles (scanned by Don Monetti) is still in the works if we can get approval from the Baumgartner family for use of the papers for historical purposes.

Historic Website/New Additions

Maureen Greenbaum is willing to bring anyone interested up to speed in the website's development process. Maureen continues to make good progress on developing a structure for the website. Interested parties will be able to access segmented videos, and then “tag” them so that in the future they can be requested by name, subject, etc. Maureen said that a lot can be learned in 20 minutes. Vander Fliet reminded everyone on the committee to begin writing about a subject on Watchung history that interests one so it can be added to the website, e.g., O’Connors. There was a lot of expressed interest in collecting photographs of specific items and events.

Watchung’s Names and America 250th Anniversary Timeline

The committee is considering various displays of several items, possibly including the various names given to Watchung Borough over the years. Another idea is to align a timeline of world events with a timeline of Watchung events, to give a perspective of what was happening in Watchung during the passage of time and world events.

100th T-Shirts

No update at this time.

Borough History Videos

Vander Fliet continues to upload to YouTube, edit, and provide timings in YouTube video descriptions that are part of the historical video collections. There are 25-26 videos which have been uploaded on the web for viewing.

Remaining segments that need to be completed are the four teacher interviews (part of Helena Ruta Gold Award Project), Interview with Tim Jones, the segment on the flood (with updated rainfall), interview with Al Ellis (some remaining edits), and tour of the Texier House Museum with Diddy Addario which was completed by Johnny George.

Texier House Project List/Release Projects to Schools

The committee needs to organize its needs and continue to update the summary descriptions of projects which would require student volunteer assistance.

Watchung 100th/Coloring T-Shirt

To be investigated further by Maureen Greenbaum and her contact in 2024.

Ornament Program

Vander Fliet reported that resident Laurie Wood who makes ornaments yearly that are Borough themed decided to make a simpler ornament this year that showcased the zip code 07069. There was not enough time to make the more complex ornament that included the two-room schoolhouse/Art Center, but that would be the idea and goal for next year. The Historical Committee is usually the beneficiary of a donation from Laurie for some of the money made in the selling of these ornaments.

Whispering Leaves/Contacting Family Updates

Don Monetti sent a letter via mail to the relatives of the Baumgartner Family (original authors of the Whisper Leaves articles). He will report back to the committee if he hears back from them and possible next steps.

Jimmy Roselli House Display/Information

No update at this time.

Museum Filming Tour

The committee felt that filming the Texier House and supplementing the filming with tours from the members might help us to be able to have more information that we can provide as it relates to inventory. It will also help us to better prepare for what might be required for Emergency Preparedness. This video would be professionally filmed (financial cost to this) and could be used to help categorize what is in the Texier House. It would also help support our digital video archives and bring the tour to more people who may not be able to visit the Texier House Museum.

The Committee additionally needs to continue to organize taking digital photographs of individual items in the cases and throughout the building.

Interview with Bruce Ryno

Vander Fliet asked Bob Mayers and Don Monetti if they could start to list questions they would like to ask Bruce Ryno in a future filmed interview. Sue Tucker would also be heavily involved in this interview, and a majority of the interview would revolve around the historic homes in Watchung from the 1700's, 1800's, and 1900's. This could couple with the overall filmed tour of the Texier House Museum.

Goals for Next Year

Roundtable discussion by all members for topics/ideas they want to be involved in for 2024. The committee needs to both develop a list, prioritize and price them.

Workroom Cleanup

Workshop and Date for January or February?

Discussion on 2024 Budget

Breakdown of anticipated budgetary costs for 2024:

1. \$4,000-5,000 for video tour of the Texier House Museum
2. \$1,000 for additional film and editing services
3. \$1,500 for additional display buildout at the Texier House
4. \$500-\$750 for digital picture frames for the Texier House Museum
5. \$500 for misc. expenditures to support events at the Texier House.

Meeting with Volunteers from Mt. Saint Mary's

Volunteers from Mt. Saint Mary's have started to create and use a process for sorting, classifying pictures, and then tagging them for future use/access. A separate notebook exists which creates a line item/record of every picture.

Mt. Saint Mary's Involvement

Departo reported that students from Mt. Saint Mary's met with members of the historical committee and began to categorize/inventory and scan photos in the Historical Committees achieves. While we are still working out the details on how to most effectively and efficiently do this, it is a great start.

PUBLIC PORTION

(No comments)

Announcements

Vander Fliet thanked Keli L for sending out a Thank You card from Andy Stout for the Fluting Iron she donated to the Museum. Texier House Museum.

Pote/Vander Fliet will meet in late December or early January to discuss the Emergency Preparedness seminar Pote attended.

SCHEDULE FOR TEXIER HOUSE OPENINGS (through April is as follows)

January 7, 21 (NOW JANUARY 24)

February 4,18

March 3, 17 (closed)

April 7, 21

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56PM.

Submitted by: Steve Pote (Secretary)

NEXT MEETING: January 24, 2024.

Attachments:

1. No attachments.