



Greensboro Historical Society
Meeting Minutes (October 8, 2024)
10:30 am @ the GHS Museum

Attending: BJ Gray, Erika Karp, Lise Armstrong, Amelia Circosta, Renée Circosta, Paula Harmon, Skip Hoblin, Jane Johns, Clive Gray, Nancy Hill, Jane Mercaldi, Nan Perron, and Jenny Stoner.

To-Do in the Coming Months/Assigned Tasks

- ❖ *Everyone/anyone:* Volunteer to do the History Moment in November. Submit requested newsletter articles to Jenny by November 11. Help with open house and book sale on 10/12.
- ❖ *BJ:* Submit appropriation request to Brett Stanciu. Check with Polly Allen about the historic status of the town hall.
- ❖ *Lise:* Start budget process for next year. Check back with possible *HRD* editors.
- ❖ *Nancy and Clive:* Hand out candy from GHS doorway to trick-or-treaters on Halloween.
- ❖ *Renée:* Revise and possibly submit letter to selectboard about town hall history; wash the big window before 10/23/24; put GHS up Halloween decorations; work with Kyle on exhibit summary pamphlet for next year; continue work on Hill Exhibit timeline; gather and summarize visitor data in docent records; update volunteer hours tracking file for recent submissions.
- ❖ *Debbie:* Write any required thank you notes.
- ❖ *Leslie:* Research and buy a dehumidifier for upstairs in the museum.
- ❖ *Kyle:* Think about potential content for pamphlet with a brief overview of the content of our summer exhibit for next year; incorporate slides into video of Annual Meeting; research/buy clip-on microphone.

President BJ Gray called the meeting to order at 10:30am.

Changes to Agenda: No changes.

History Moment (Jenny): Jenny and Nancy shared a newspaper article and anecdotes about Fred Sharpless, a Philadelphia physician who practiced in Greensboro in the 1950s.

President's Report (BJ):

BJ noted that the GHS is not a political group and we are here for history only.

Martha Niemi is out of the hospital and we all wish her well.

There are no GHS materials in the vault at the town hall.

Willie Smith does not believe the town hall is registered with the town or state as a historic building. BJ will check with Polly Allen on the historic status of the property.

Leo Circosta is at Norwich University and we look forward to hearing about his activities there.

The mural in The Bend is complete and at Nancy's request Renée put up a sign near the mural with some Bend and railroad history and information about the mural. Nancy and Jane were at the dedication of the mural and have some photos to share. We will continue to think about a pamphlet with additional information on the mural that we could have ready in the spring.

Secretary's Report (Amelia)

Approve October Meeting Minutes: The minutes from the October meeting were approved as submitted.

Collect Volunteer Hours: Volunteer hour estimates for the past month were collected.

Thank you notes: Amelia sent thank you notes to Steve Leach and Stefani Cravedi. Nancy sent Bob Merrill a thank you note and a \$100 stipend for speaking at the Annual Meeting; Bob returned the \$100. Debbie is going to take over writing thank you notes.

Treasurer's Report (Lise)

We have a new CD at 4.1% interest.

Vanguard is up about \$5,000 over last year.

Lise will get started on the process for next year's budget.

Nancy noted that we seem to be projecting a loss of about \$3,700 this year, but Renée noted that this is probably just a timing issue. Lise explained that, for example, we have not received all of our donations or book sale proceeds yet.

Approve financial report: The financial report was approved as submitted.

Follow-Up From Previous Meetings

Open House and Book Sale: We are almost ready for the open house and book sale on October 12. Nancy will order donuts and BJ will get cider. BJ will run the book sale and welcomes others to join her.

Town Appropriation Request: Renée had circulated a draft letter to the town outlining our contributions to the community over the past year and requesting an appropriation of \$6,000. Renée noted that we asked for \$7,000 last year and were granted \$6,000. She also reported that the selectboard minutes from a recent budget meeting state that the selectboard discussed possibly doing away with appropriations altogether or requiring that entities requesting appropriations petition to get on the warning for Town Meeting with their requests. She said that we should keep an eye on this and that it seems unlikely that appropriations would be eliminated, but we should be prepared to gather signatures for a petition if that is the route the town decides to go. Some people expressed surprise at this, and Renée explained that requesting petitions was

not a bad idea because the set of entities requesting appropriations can age over time and that the current list may not be accurate. It is not likely that we would have to petition every year. For example, the petition could be valid for three years. Nancy noted that Hardwick does something like this for its appropriations.

Town Hall History Letter to Selectboard: [Note: The voice votes were not recorded clearly, but the results of the motions are accurately reflected. The best available information is included below.] Renée circulated a draft letter addressed to the selectboard and the Greensboro community outlining the history of the town hall/Greensboro High School and highlighting some of the materials in our archives related to the building.

BJ did not think it was necessary to make any statement related to the history of the building and said that the topic was too political.

Renée noted that she was asked by some townspeople why the GHS has not yet said anything about the town hall given the current proposal to turn it into apartments. She also explained that the statement in the letter that part of the GHS mission is to “assist state and local officials to assist in the preservation of historic buildings, monuments, and markers” is from the GHS bylaws and as such it seems reasonable for the GHS to at least provide some information on the history of the building. The letter primarily contains direct quotes or paraphrasing from our *200 Years* publication, a direct quote about the town hall from a Vermont state history survey, a description of town hall or Greensboro High School items in the archives, and some photos of items from the archives.

BJ questioned whether the building was historic because it had no plaque stating as such and because Willie told her it was not on the list of state historical sites. She also noted that the issue of the town hall is related to affordable housing and felt that if the GHS said anything about the history of the building it could mean that we object to having affordable housing in the building.

Renée disagreed. She noted that RuralEdge indicated that the town hall is on the Vermont List of Historic sites and that RuralEdge seems to be proceeding as if the building were a historic building and that RuralEdge would not go through that (e.g., saving the tin ceilings) if they did not have to because historic preservation take a lot of extra money. Renée said she has not been able to independently confirm the historical status of the building but that it is clearly listed in some state databases with historical information and it is in Greensboro’s historic district. In any case, the letter does not make any claims as to the status. Renée also noted that if the GHS cannot make a statement about the historical significance of a town building consistent with the purpose stated in its bylaws then perhaps we should consider changing the bylaws.

Erika felt that the letter (circulated last night) was rushed and that there was no need to hand it in now. Renée explained that the selectboard has indicated that it wants to have a purchase and sales agreement this fall, and that given that the selectboard is now meeting only once a month, if we don’t hand in anything at the meeting tomorrow, we might end up being too late.

Jenny and Jane M. indicated that some of the proposed language seemed too political and/or “inflammatory” (e.g., noting that it is in the GHS bylaws to assist in the preservation of historical buildings).

Jenny made a motion not to submit the letter as currently written. Erika seconded the motion, which carried with Jane and BJ abstaining and zero “no” votes.

Renée noted that if the historical society did not want to submit a letter, Renée could submit a letter on her own with a statement that the letter does not reflect the opinion of the GHS.

Skip made a motion to table this topic for now and deal with it next month. The motion was seconded. The motion did not carry with at least Renée, Amelia, and Jane voting “no” and at least three abstentions.

Further discussion on changes proposed by Leslie to make the letter a plain statement about the history of the building little or no opening commentary or closing statement. Everyone agreed that the changes would make the letter a neutral statement about the history of the building.

A motion was made for Renée to edit the letter as discussed and recirculate a draft with the expectation that if the draft read as expected and people had a chance to check via email, Renée could submit the letter tomorrow with a neutral statement that it was from the GHS to describe the history of the building and the related contents of the GHS archives. The motion carried with at least two abstentions and zero “no” votes.

Committee Reports

Building and Maintenance (Lise): Skip reported that he would be able to install a cork board over the “Willey’s case” on the far wall of the exhibit. A motion was made to install a cork board over the Willey’s case. The motion carried with only Renée voting “no.” She explained that, among other things, we have enough display space, it is nice to have some place to rest the eyes, and cork boards are more appropriate for displays in schools.

Newsletter: Jenny would like to have the March meeting topic decided in time to include it in the newsletter. Erika suggested we could talk about Greensboro schoolhouses. Renée thought this might not be the best time for that topic with the town hall issue and Lakeview possibly closing. No other ideas were presented. Jenny requested the following articles for the fall newsletter, with submissions due to her by November 11:

- President’s Corner - BJ
- Annual meeting - Renée
- Summer exhibit - Kyle
- Mural in The Bend - Jane and Nancy
- Research notes - Leslie
- March meeting - Erika and Jane (topic likely related to Greensboro schoolhouses)
- Methodist Church redevelopment and grant - Jane (if possible)

Website and Tech: --

Hazen Road Dispatch (Nancy): We still do not have an editor lined up for next year's *HRD*. Lise will ask some possible prospects again. Everyone please keep your ears open for other prospects.

Other Business:

Fall Museum Clean-Up and Shut Down: We will deal with this after the open house on the 12th. Renée will change the window decorations to a Halloween theme after the open house. Nancy and Clive will plan to sit at the GHS doorway for Halloween night trick-or-treaters.

Storykeepers: Renée relayed that the Greensboro Free Library had contacted the GHS about working together on the StoryKeepers project this year. This is a family history writing project led by Natalie Kinsey-Warnock with elementary school-aged children. It was agreed that the GHS could make the archives available if the children were interested in researching something for their stories.

Mary White sent a letter to BJ suggesting that the GHS work with the Hardwick Historical Society on joint programming. Nancy noted that we did this for the Civil War exhibit [at the Highland Center]. BJ says we can do this more on an ongoing basis.

BJ thought that wildlife in Greensboro might be a good topic as part of the 2026 exhibit.

President BJ Gray adjourned the meeting at 12:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Renée Circosta on behalf of Amelia Circosta (Secretary)

NEXT MEETING: November 12th, 10:30am @ the GHS Museum