



Greensboro Historical Society

Meeting Minutes (January 14, 2025)

10:30 am @ the GHS Museum

Attending: BJ Gray, Erika Karp, Paula Harmon, Renée Circosta, Jane Johns, Amelia Circosta, Lise Armstrong, Jan Terwiesch, Nancy Hill, Willie Smith, Kyle Gray, and Nan Perron; Leslie Rowell and Janet Long via Zoom.

To-Do in the Coming Months/Assigned Tasks

- *Everyone/anyone:* Write a “GHS is thinking of you” note to Martha Niemi, c/o The Arbors at Shelburne; report HRD article ideas to Nancy; volunteer to write the Greensboro section of the Hill Exhibit timeline.
- *Lise:* Update 2025 budget to reflect discussed changes (increase donations, add Vanguard dividends to projected income, add “Tech Hardware” or similar line item, increase spending for 2025 exhibit); figure out how much one newsletter mailing costs and report to the group; continue work with the alarm system.
- *BJ:* Look into whether the GHS would need the Town’s permission to have the granite memorial bench on Town-owned land; possibly invite Becky Arnold to our next meeting to discuss the bench.
- *Leslie:* Order dehumidifier as soon as possible; deal with publicity related to UV shades as promised in the grant report.
- *Amelia:* Circulate question to core email group to get more opinions about whether the GHS should only send one newsletter in the fall.
- *Renée:* Continue digitizing the Hill Exhibit timeline; work on pamphlet for summer exhibit.
- *Jane Johns & Erika:* Continue moving forward with 2026 Winter Meeting.
- *Jan:* Continue work on garage renovation.
- *Skip:* Install newly-purchased bulletin boards.
- *Kyle:* Coordinate with Greensboro UCC regarding shared purchase of clip-on microphone; work on pamphlet for summer exhibit; fix incorrect links on GHS website; post last winter meeting video to GHS website; work on pamphlet for summer exhibit.

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

Changes to Agenda: John Stone had a proposal related to the Bayley Hazen Trail; we will bring it up later if he arrives. Renée will discuss the opportunities for participating in LLHMS judging in Other Business.

History Moment (Erika): Erika shared a part of the “Fire, Flood, and Other Misfortune” chapter from *The History of Greensboro: The First Two-Hundred Years* in connection with the recent Los Angeles wildfires. The group was fascinated to learn about how early fires in Greensboro could be particularly devastating: Houses, barns, and other outbuildings were often connected to one another for easy access

during the winter, which unfortunately facilitated fires spreading from building to building and taking down entire building complexes. We also learned about the early “bucket brigade” method of extinguishing fires. The group learned about several devastating natural disasters in Greensboro, including a fire in 1831 that completely burned the store where Willey’s is now, destroying all the public records stored there--an event which continues to hamper research into Greensboro’s early history. Erika encouraged everyone to explore more of this fascinating information in *The First Two-Hundred Years*.

President’s Report (BJ): BJ thanked Nancy and Clive for hosting the GHS holiday party this December. She provided an update on Martha Niemi, and reported that the Historical Society’s report for the Town Report was written by Renée and successfully submitted by BJ.

Secretary’s Report (Amelia): The minutes from the November meeting were approved as submitted. Volunteer hour estimates for November through January were collected.

Treasurer’s Report (Lise):

Items of note from Lise: The Profit and Loss statement from last year looks very good. There has been discussion about sending only one newsletter in the November/December season, because donations in the fall have consistently been much better than in the spring and the newsletter costs are climbing. Lise also noted that the budget for Janet Long’s book emporium has been lowered from \$500 to \$300 and that the GHS had to sign up with the Vermont Department of Labor for unemployment insurance for our employees. (Our contractors are technically employees, so the GHS would be responsible for paying unemployment in certain situations.)

Budget changes/suggestions (Renée): Renée suggested that we raise the budget for the 2025 Exhibit from \$10 to at least \$100, because we will certainly have some costs even if we aren’t making substantial changes to the exhibit. Renée also questioned the income side of the budget, pointing out that the \$8,000 overall loss projected for next year (as in most prior years) does not seem accurate. She requested again that the Vanguard dividends be reported on the income side of the budget and income statement; the dividends have amounted to a substantial \$3,000 - \$4,000 in income in previous years, and the quarterly dividends that the GHS receives from Vanguard are still income even though they are reinvested. She also suggested raising the budgeted donations from \$8,000 to \$10,000 or \$11,000 to more accurately project donations for 2025. (We have consistently received closer to \$12,000 in donations in recent years.) Renée agrees that a budget should be conservative but she does not think that it is right that the P&L and budget suggests that the GHS loses money every year, when in reality we have had a small financial gain for at least five years.

2025 budget approved: The 2025 budget was approved with the agreement that the changes noted above will be made.

Donation thank you notes (BJ): BJ has kept up with thank you notes from the President to donors who have donated \$100 or more.

Follow-Up From Previous Meetings: No follow-up discussion.

Committee Reports

Building and Maintenance:

Garage Renovation Project: Jan updated the group with a proposal for the restoration of the garage. He passed around a slide presentation outlining some of his ideas (which he will also circulate to the whole group via email), including pictures of the building's current status, planned uses, a rough floor plan, and interior design ideas. Jan pictures clapboarding on the inside walls made up of 1x6 boards coated with VT Natural Stain (or an alternative mineral oil of some sort; BJ expressed concerns about the longevity of the VT Natural Stain). There is a crack in the concrete floor that will need to be fixed. Jan and Emma Palumbo have also measured all of the large objects in the garage and are cataloging the smaller objects. There is definitely some junk in the garage, much of which Jan will take to All Metals. Jan says that the next steps are actually starting the clean-up process and incorporating the remaining items in the shed into an exhibit. He estimates that the project will cost about \$4,000 to \$5,000 (including most of the labor costs). The Town owns the building, so we can ask the Town to pay for structural repairs but not for renovations/additions that are specific to our own GHS programming. So, the GHS will have to foot the bill for a part of this \$4,000-\$5,000 estimate, but we will likely not need to cover it entirely. Jan would like to be able to use the lawn space in front of the building to support the related programming, but this would likely require an agreement with the owners of Lauredon Apartments, as they control this land. Renée requested to make sure that personal expenditures related to the garage renovation be tracked as in-kind donations.

Alarm System (Lise): Ongoing process. Kyle brought up fixing the continual buzzing from the alarms in the exhibit space.

Bulletin Board: Skip ordered the \$230 bulletin board to add to the exhibit space for next summer. Renée noted that this expenditure should be added to the 2025 exhibit line item in the budget. This cost already far exceeds the allocated \$10, so she suggests raising the 2025 exhibit budget line item to at least \$400.

Tom Hurst Memorial Bench: BJ reported that Becky Arnold would like the GHS to consider installing a memorial granite bench for Tom Hurst on the GHS property. The group was amenable to the idea, although Jan wondered whether the granite blocks at the beach overlooking the water might be a better location. Renée asked whether we would need the Town's permission to have a permanent installation like a granite bench on Town-owned land. BJ will look into that and possibly invite Becky Arnold to our next GHS meeting.

Archives

UV Shades Grant & Publicity: Renée said that when the GHS accepted the Vermont Arts Council grant to buy the UV-blocking shades, we promised to do some publicity related to the grant and the role of the Arts Council. This is primarily Leslie's responsibility, but Renée brought this up as a reminder.

Dehumidifier: Renée encouraged Leslie to buy another dehumidifier of the same type that we already have in the archives as soon as possible to have it available for the upstairs space, which smelled musty in the fall. Leslie confirmed that this is on her list.

Newsletter: Jenny was absent, but the group discussed the possibility of having only one annual newsletter instead of two. The group discussed how the spring newsletter is supposed to tell everyone of what's coming in the summer, so if we did not do the spring newsletter, the GHS would have to be active with other kinds of publicity leading up to our summer programming (e.g., on Front Porch Forum). Jan pointed out that the physical reminder of the GHS and our programming is very valuable, particularly for out-of-town people who may not be closely connected with the GHS. Renée said that we should figure out whether the spring newsletter covers its own costs, and that if we determine that it does not, we could substitute it with a smaller "green sheet" or other small pamphlet outlining the GHS events--this would not reduce mailing costs much, but it would substantially reduce printing costs. Lise is going to look into how much a single newsletter mailing typically costs. Lise suggested that we perhaps try one or two years of mailing a single newsletter annually and assess what happens to donations after that. The group decided that it would be valuable for Amelia to send an email to the core GHS email list to obtain more thoughts and opinions. It was also at this time that it was brought up that the broader GHS email list needs to be strengthened and broadened--more people have recently requested to receive newsletters and other publicity via email. Perhaps, for example, emails could also go out when website updates are posted.

Website and Tech (Kyle): The clip-on microphone will cost \$300. The Church would need to approve paying half of that. Renée pointed out that there is no line item for such costs in the 2025 budget and that surely there would be some other technology requirements in the coming year. Lise agreed to add a "Tech Hardware" or similar line item to include these types of expenditures.

Hazen Road Dispatch (Nancy):

Editor: Nancy brought us the good news that Dan Penrice, a professor with significant editing experience, is interested in possibly taking on the position as HRD editor. The HRD Advisory Group is going to meet with him next week. Dan has suggested that he is not looking for a stipend, although payment or lack thereof also needs to be finalized with him. This process will be handled by the HRD advisory board, but Nancy will also update the GHS group at the Board meetings.

Article Ideas: Several articles for the next edition are already in place (including the second half of Jasper Hill's article). Nancy encouraged everyone in the group to think of additional topics and writers for this year's HRD. GHS members should let Nancy know of any and all ideas.

Hardwick Gazette Collaboration: Paul Fixx and the Hardwick Gazette have expressed interest in helping the GHS with HRD publicity, for example by running parts of articles in the newspaper. More collaborative opportunities should be considered.

Other Business

2025 Summer Exhibit: BJ wants more labeling in general for this summer. She reported that Chris Arnold had the idea of incorporating a futuristic/railroad technology corner in the 2025 exhibit (for example, with information on new sensors to identify track problems). BJ also mentioned that a possibility for the bulletin board space could be to illustrate and explain the connection between Greensboro and Greensboro Bend, as many visitors asked about this. She has a large map in mind.

Timeline (Renée): Renée hopes that the Hill Exhibit timeline will be fully digitized by next month's meeting. There are 20 years to update, and she needs help specifically with the Greensboro section.

2026 Exhibit: The group discussed possible topics for the 2026 exhibit, including Wildlife in Greensboro and Greensboro Services. Amelia mentioned that it might be difficult to tie Wildlife in Greensboro back to historical content; however, this could be slightly altered to discuss the history of hunting or fishing in the area, for example. Jan proposed the idea of a "Lost Roads" exhibit, focusing on the lost and forgotten historical roads in the Greensboro area--many people have talked about wanting more information about the Bayley-Hazen Road, and our exhibit could include a lot of information relating to this, perhaps tying in well with the VT 250th Anniversary. Covering the Bayley-Hazen Road would also open up lots of collaborative opportunities with neighboring towns.

2026 Winter Meeting: As planned, the subject of this year's Winter Meeting will be Greensboro and Greensboro Bend graduates. Jane and Erika reported that they have been working on generating a list of all of the graduates from the Greensboro High School to possibly contact about participating in our Winter Meeting.

LLHSM Judging: Renée forwarded an email to the group from Eileen Cochran at the Vermont Historical Society regarding the opportunity to participate as judges to select the next LLHSM Achievement Award winners. Nancy added that she did this once, and that it took some time but was definitely worth it.

Family Trees: Willie passed around blank family trees for people at the meeting to fill out and return to her for the archives.

President BJ Gray adjourned the meeting at 12:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amelia Circosta (Secretary)

NEXT OFFICIAL MEETING: February 11th, 2025 @ 10:30am at the GHS Museum and on Zoom