

North Brunswick Historical Society

Minutes of the Public Meeting Tuesday, September 22, 2015

Present: Michael Hritz, President; Connie Adamo, Vice President; Richard Liguori, Treasurer; Nansi Krauss, Secretary, Janice Larkin, Trustee, Lisa Russo, member.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:08 pm by President Michael Hritz.

Mr. Hritz welcomed Lisa Russo to the meeting. The Society's new general members are Lisa Russo, Marissa Tacinelli, Joanne Von Bischoffhausen, Kathleen Pelly, Yvonne Mikalopas, The Hirschhoff family, Fran Cipot, The Amodio family, and Cathy Nicola.

Treasurer's Report:

Mr. Liguori presented a summary financial statement which shows an ending balance in all accounts of \$15,022.72. Debits included \$25.00 for the NJ State Corporation Filing Fee, and \$200.00 to Always Video for completion of the "Happy" video. Credits included \$125.00 for Trustee memberships collected, \$250.00 for general memberships and \$280.00 in sales of the North Brunswick picture book. \$740.18 was transferred to the checking account from our savings account, and \$500.00 transferred back to the saving account.

The two accounts save the Society almost \$18.00 per month in fees. The Society will keep \$500.00 in the savings account moving forward to ensure that this remains the case.

Old Business

- The "Happy" video was completed and is available to view on the Township website. It was in heavy rotation on the Township's cable access channel 15 for quite some time.
- Mr. Hritz filed the annual income taxes online using a 990-N e-file form so the Society is all up to date on all these matters.

Project Updates:

- **The Pulda Farm**

Mr. Hritz distributed binders to the Board which illustrates the assessment from HMR Professional Assessment on the condition of the farm house. The assessment lists any number of items that need attention, but urgent items are few. HMR's overall assessment is the farm house is in reasonably good shape. The Society wishes that the first project on the farm house will be to repaint the exterior front and side, remove the non-conforming shutters, and return the front of the presumably original one and half story section of the farm house to a more historically accurate entrance. This would mean the porch and steps would be removed and stone steps to the door be installed. A similar porch in the back of the house may come down as well.

The NJ Barn Company was allotted \$5,000 from the Township of North Brunswick to do an assessment on the various outbuildings. They only charged \$3,500 making \$1,500 available for project work. Their assessment assigns a condition to each structure and recommendations for their disposition. The report suggested that the first projects on the outbuildings should be gutters and rotted wood repairs on one of the privies and vegetation removed from around the corn crib. Mr. Hritz is confident he can ask the Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services to have staff assist on at least these aspects.

A "barn cleaning" is scheduled as noted under "new business".

Mr. Hritz is hosting a "contractors summit" in October to see who may be able to assist us with many of these projects on a voluntary basis, or in a reduced cost fashion. He will share the presentation he put together for the Mayor and Council in an effort to gain their support.

- **Grants**

Mr. Hritz was pleased to announce that we have been awarded the New Jersey Historic Trust's 1772 Foundation Grant. This is a matching funds grant in the amount of \$7500. The primary purpose of this grant is for painting the farm house and the porch renovations. Stripping and painting the three most visible sides of the house will be the first steps.

A motion was made by Mr. Liguori and seconded by Ms. Larkin to accept the grant and authorize Mr. Hritz to execute the grant paperwork. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Hritz was also very pleased to announce that the Society was awarded the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission grant in the amount of \$2,205. This is also a matching funds grant which will be used to employ Margaret Newman, of Historical Preservation Consulting from Carversville, PA. She will research the "story" of the Pulda Farm property so the Society has a complete history of the ownership, the parcel, and hopefully some more information to help date the original part of the farm house. Ms. Newman's fee schedule is \$1,500 at four weeks, \$1,500 at ten weeks, and \$1,410 at the end of the project.

A motion was made by Mr. Liguori and seconded by Mrs. Adamo to accept the grant and for Mr. Hritz to execute the agreement with Ms. Newman.

The Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission requires a grantee to attend an ADA workshop. Ms. Krauss attended that workshop on behalf of the Society. The workshop outlined the some ways that sites can be considered "accessible". They shared their website which has an assessment tool, and it was suggested that more than

one member review this assessment as it is quite extensive. This assessment tool will help guide the Society as it move towards opening the Pulda Farm house to the public.

Mr. Hritz indicated that there is water on site from Old Georges Road for the benefit of the Community Garden. Green Acres money was used for this project, and they required any onsite wells be capped, hence the water from Old Georges Road. Mr. Hritz plans to ask the Parks department to assist in determining whether there is an old septic system or a leach field on site. The area will need restroom facilities when the public will have access to the site.

Mr. Hritz discussed how the farm house and property might be used in the future. The house may have one floor of exhibits and one floor for meetings or events. The barns can be used for flea markets or fundraisers, and the property rented out for various events. The Historical Society can use the property for fundraisers as well.

Future grant opportunities will include the Whole Foods Grant. In addition, the Society would like to have the Pulda property, among other possible locations, included in the National Register of Historical Places. This process requires very detailed information and will be pursued after the historian does her work.

- **Archives**

After a tremendous effort by Mr. Hritz, Mrs. Adamo and to a lesser extent, Ms. Krauss, the Pinkham files have been sorted into categories. Next steps will include further sorting and formal recording of the items on an Excel sheet or perhaps an Access database.

- **Historical Markers**

Ms. Larkin reports that she got the vendor information from the Board of Chosen Freeholders, Southwell Company, in San Antonio, TX. These signs are for the heavy duty plastic historical signs. Ms. Larkin will continue to pursue information in this regard.

- **Social Media**

Ms. Krauss set up the Historical Society Facebook page, which has 388 total "likes". She posted the membership information, and from that, we generated several paid members. One picture of the Korvette's in the Brunswick Shopping Center from the 1970's generated an incredible amount of interest: That picture had a reach of 26,900, it was clicked on 5,300 times, "direct" clicks from the page of over 4,000 and 10,226 "impressions", meaning it was commented on directly or indirectly, it was shared, etc. The demographics of the page are 58% women, 42% men, the largest age group is 45-54, and the vast majority are from North Brunswick, among those that identify a town in their individual profiles. Interestingly, there are two likes from Italy and one from Canada. Milltown, East Brunswick, New Brunswick and Edison are the other top cities in which the fan base resides. Clearly, more pics from the '70's will be key to keeping the fan base engaged. Ms. Krauss will continue to monitor and update the page moving forward.

It was suggested that Ms. Krauss pursue finding a web designer to make our website rather than relying on a "build your own" free site. She will investigate the cost of such an endeavor.

New Business:

- All members will receive meeting minutes moving forward.
- A Barn Cleaning is scheduled for Saturday, October 17th from 10am – Noon. Bring a friend!

- Pete Clark, Principal at NBTHS, had asked a member of the Society to speak at the July 4th Celebration at the Municipal Building. Ms. Krauss gave a brief talk and Mr. Clark sent a lovely thank you note.
- Mr. Clark wrote a letter to the Society about documenting the big warehouse fire from July for posterity. Mr. Hritz suggested that the NBTHS students produce a video about the fire which could include interviews with elected officials as well as staff and volunteers.
- Mr. Hritz suggested that the Society host an outdoor event at the Pulda farm with a small band, wine, beer and snacks. The cost could be mitigated by donations and we could charge \$20 per person. This could be done after some further work is done at the house to "show off" the progress. Target month is May, 2016.
- Mr. Hritz talked about how other communities do various walking tours, especially in cemeteries of note. He suggested a walking tour of the Van Liew Cemetery as an example.
- Mr. Hritz suggested a Super 50/50 raffle as a fund raiser. Prior to that, the Society must get a license from the State. Mr. Hritz will pursue that license.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 pm with a motion by Mr. Liguori and a second by Ms. Adamo.