

Historical Commission Meeting

Minutes for August 20, 2018, 6:30 PM

Approved at the 2/7/19 meeting

Shutesbury Town Hall – Community Lounge downstairs

Members Present: Karen Czerwonka, Christopher Donta, Miriam DeFant, Henry Geddes, Janice Stone, Kristin Van Patten. Mary Lou Conca (Associate) also present.

Members Absent: Miriam DeFant.

Visitors: Susan Millinger, Craig Pepin.

Janice Stone was the Acting Chair of this meeting (and Secretary).

1. Discussion of CPC digitization proposal with Kristin Van Patten, archivist. Kristin handed out a sheet with information about digitization projects, which she referred to from time to time as she spoke. First question is why are we interested in digitizing materials? Will it be for in-house, town or general public use? What are the short- and long-term goals and objectives? What is the scope of the project, and how will digital images be used? Commission would like to preserve important historical materials and make them more available (digitally) to the public. Preservation is first step, then where to put them, and what form to make them available to the public? Once material is digitized, we need to create the metadata, and create key words and ways to find it. All this will take a long time. Longer term concerns for digital images include what kind of hardware, resolution and output you want, finding digital storage space, and on-line management.

Before digitizing, we need to evaluate the archive and understand the whole collection. We need to create a collection location index, Finding Aids for collections, deal with any immediate preservation concerns, and restrictions. The archive needs to be usable, identifying what we have and where it is. Kristin will send the Commission some examples of main indexes. What is in most need of preservation? Are items original or copies? Kristin could do the "Finding Aids" for all new archives. Do we want Finding Aids for each collection, or a simple index for all?

The Boston Public Library (BPL) has a big push on for digitizing historical documents and storage space, especially for "hidden gems" (hidden stories). Check with Library Director to find out if we are a member (to take advantage of this effort). Who could work on making these indices (for each document, or just for each collection)? Perhaps interns, but they would need supervision from a paid archivist on staff (or maybe Kristin can supervise?).

Example of how to approach a large project like ours. Start smaller, evaluate what is in house, by groups, create index and Finding Aids. Preserving first, and make accessible later. We will need a scanner and software, and some kind of drive (Google, hard drive?). Then create metadata. We could start with a WordPress type website (easy to set up). Do we have any special collections? New Salem (Swift River) Historical did a huge restructuring and archive. Commissioners asked Kristin to send us some links showing what was done. She suggested that old tax records could be a good candidate for the BPL digitizing project. They are fragile and bound volumes (take up room). When do town records become historical records? Town Clerk

is holder of many town records. Kristin suggested we start indexing and organizing the materials to make it more research friendly (and to know what we have). Indexing could be by subject matter or format. Kristin will check with Simmons College about getting an intern to get us started. Simmons has a satellite archive program at Mount Holyoke College (library sciences & archives). Susan Millinger told the Commission the Records Storage Advisory Committee is researching how to store records short and long term. The two MA roving archivists have done some assessments. There are two data loggers, Old Town Hall and Town Hall. Commissioners should check the UMass digital repository (how?)

2. Discussion about Shutesbury Historical Commission vacancy. Craig Pepin present, but discussion will be deferred to the next meeting when Miriam is also present.

3. Unanticipated business at time of posting. Mary Lou mentioned that the next issue of Uniquely Quabbin will include some of her photographs of doors of Shutesbury. Henry handed out copies of the draft letter to send to the five Federal and State recognized tribes, explaining what we would like to do, and if they are interested in participating with us. Commissioners should review it before the next meeting. We will need names and addresses to send it to. Henry said he would send it by email to the Commission members for their comments. Next meeting date to be determined by email.

4. Adjournment. Karen made the motion, seconded by Henry, to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by

Janice Stone, Secretary
Shutesbury Historical Commission

List of Documents used at Meeting:

1. Agenda for this meeting.
2. Handout on Digitization Projects
3. Draft letter for Tribal Groups.