

Westport Island History Committee

April 16, 2019

Present: Jeff Tarbox, George Richardson, Mary Coventry, Mary Ellen Barnes, Judy Hughes, Sandy Besecker, Dedee Greenleaf-Hodgdon and Gaye Wagner

At 5 p.m., preceding the regular meeting, George provided a tour of the Wright Landing House to help members evaluate its potential for providing History Committee display/storage space on the upper floor of the house.

Present: Jeff Tarbox, Dedee Greenleaf-Hodgdon, Mary Coventry, Mary Ellen Barnes, Dennis Dunbar, Amy Mussman and Gaye Wagner

The meeting convened at 6:35 p.m. at the Town Office. Gaye motioned to approve the March 19 minutes; Jeff, 2nd; unanimously approved. Dedee made a motion to approve the February 19 minutes; Jeff, 2nd; unanimously approved.

Discussion opened on the Wright Landing House. It was noted that the house could potentially provide:

- a community space,
- display space to showcase history and island preserves,
- storage space,
- work space, and
- an opportunity to sell items to generate revenue.

It was also noted that considerable information is still needed:

- An evaluation of structural strength – e.g. is it adequate to hold fire proof storage containers? Is the attic space designed for weight bearing or just crawl space?
- Ability to provide temperature, humidity and light control;
- Evaluation of costs to make the space serviceable and secure;
- Is it possible to share responsibility/use/ownership with another town group(s); and
- An in-depth assessment of pros and cons – with some kind of “decision-making triage” to establish thresholds for what would make it a “go” or “no go.” A “go” would require fundraising and considerable work on the house.

Given that the Wright property is in a flood zone, it was suggested to view this as an interim location -- perhaps with a timeline of 10-20 years. All committee members need to be involved in making the final “go” or “no go” decision because work on the house and on fundraising will be an all-involving commitment. Members agreed to proceed with gathering more information given the potential opportunity.

Discussion opened on suggestions for a summer event. Suggestions focused on how to use the visuals and information created for last year’s Historic House Tour within a new context such as early settlement on the island. It was agreed to create a display using Dennis’s work to place on the stage for Town Meeting on June 22; migrate the display, or part of it, to the Town Office for the summer; and build on the display to develop a narrative and panel discussion for a program in July at the Town Hall.

Amy advised that work is underway on the Friends of Westport Island History (FOWIH) website. She suggested a contest to help develop a logo for FOWIH. Mary Ellen concurred as long as we retain the right to tweak the logo. Dennis suggested looking at logos used by other historical organizations. Amy will do this. Others logos could help provide structure for a contest.

Dennis reported on some items regarding the research and relocation of the Segerstrom House:

- In the process of tearing down the Segerstrom house, a scrawled date of 1892 was found in the framework. This is significant, because it was believed to be the Stephen Dunton house, but he died in 1889. It went to his daughter Eliza Jane. In 1892, she married Charles Ruckley. So the old house apparently went down and the “Rialto Hotel” – a rooming house – was built.

- Re the 1815 parcel map – 111 acres at the north end was owned by Wiscasset – parcel 63. Lucas, one of the original proprietors, claimed the rights to parcel 63. Although he didn't want to settle here, he was philanthropic and donated the land to the Wiscasset School Department to sell for school funding. It bounced around and finally got sold – it is likely the land that Fort McDonough was on.
- On the north end of the island, back in the 1600's, Westport had a fur trading post (on the opposite side from Doggett's Castle). This is referenced in the Fannie Chase book.

Gaye made a motion to adjourn at 7:40 pm; Amy, 2nd; unanimously approved. **The next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 21, at 6:30 pm at the Town Office.**