

Westport Island History Committee

April 1, 2021 via Zoom

Present: Jeff Tarbox, Mary Ellen Barnes, Dennis Dunbar, Paul Bonyun, Dedee Greenleaf-Hodgdon, Joan Mason-Bradford, Jean Wilhelmsen-Exter, Anne Cole-Fairfield, and Gaye Wagner (absent for the first part of the meeting)

Guests: Bob Mooney

The meeting convened at 4:04 p.m. via Zoom. Paul moved to approve the minutes; Dennis, 2nd; unanimously approved.

Annual Report: Jeff moved to approve the History Committee Report for the annual Town Report with suggested changes from Gaye and Callie; Dennis, 2nd; unanimously accepted.

History Center Capacity: Former WVFD Chief Bob Mooney explained how he has determined the occupancy of the History Center based on National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines. His sketches with measurements were shared. Without allowance for Covid 6-foot distancing requirements, he estimated the following capacities: living room area -- 14 persons; and kitchen and dining areas -- 16 persons. The occupancies of the back rooms would be determined by the use of the rooms. After discussion, members agreed that Jeff's proposal of 10 people plus a docent would be reasonable.

History Center Sunday Coverage: April 3 – Dennis; April 11 – Jean; and April 18 – Mary Ellen.

History Center Security: Jeff suggested research on a more robust security system. The current system is intrusion and fire sensing only and does not include water intrusion, temperature or humidity monitoring. Internet service allows more options. Jean noted that SimpliSafe is an internet-based security system that offers heat and moisture monitoring, as well as fire and motion sensing. Jeff will investigate. We will need to work with the Selectmen, the Wright Landing Committee and Helping Hands.

History Center Lighting: Paul reported that the electrician he contacted did not follow through. Anne suggested Paul DiMauro of Damariscotta, 207-563-1156.

History Center Work Projects: It was suggested that fire safety equipment be evaluated: doors that open out; crash bars & exit signs. Other suggestions: chairs/benches for the deck; a sandwich board for the corner of Main and Ferry Roads to flag open hours – perhaps similar to Lulu's Barn; installing the grip bar for the bathroom and fixing the toilet to flush properly. A Wright Landing House Steering Committee meeting needs to be scheduled.

History Trail: Dennis ordered another 150 copies of History Trail flyers and will leave them at the History Center.

House and Cellar Hole Mapping Project: Dennis reported that adding the old map layers to the tax maps cannot be done until the Selectmen are ready to submit other tax map changes for the past year. This will delay overlay of GIS information on existing parcels. He has learned of new cellar hole "possibles": at Knubble Bay and at the North End on the old Decker road – one could have been the Decker/Clough/Marie Antoinette House. He attempted to measure what is visible as the possible cellar hole – stone line depressions in the ground – but it will take more work. Dennis asked the Town of Edgecomb for the Marie Antoinette House tax card (where the house is now located) to view the footprint – but it was illegible. He did measurements using the aerial view on Google Maps and estimated a 34' x 27' footprint similar to other Island houses.

Interpretive Signs at Segerstrom Preserve: Jean has emailed members drafts of the pending signs for the three cellar hole sites at Squam Creek. Dennis reported that it looks like there will be a fourth. On a recent visit to the Segerstrom House grounds, there was indication of an ell on the original Steven Dunton house. It appears that the original Dunton house sat on this site; and materials from the original house may have gone into what later

became the Hotel Rialto/Seegerstrom House. Jean shared views of the interpretive signs for the James Franklin Dunton, John Dunton, and Joseph Dunton/John Hodgdon homesites. The signs will help visitors visualize the houses that once sat at the sites and provide a thumbnail history of residents.

Friends Event: Joan reported on the planned family event at the Seegerstrom Preserve with guided tours and a self-guided scavenger hunt which will take about 1 – 1 ½ hours to complete. There will be a map with photos of treasures to find, prizes, and refreshments. Dennis will conduct tours. Volunteers to be stationed at each cellar hole are needed. Families will likely be more interested in the Scavenger Hunt; adults without children may be more interested in the guided tours. Jean asked if there would be a way to guesstimate attendance, e.g., sign up, or expression of interest on Facebook. This will be looked at for promotional efforts. Jeff will talk to Community Association Co-Chairs Rose and Deb to see if the Association would like to be involved.

Catalogit: Jean is planning a preliminary Catalogit training session with two volunteers, Ann Springhorn and Sandy Besecker. A draft “cheat sheet” has been developed. The initial focus will be on uploading digital collections with existing scanned images and basic information documented. Gaye will upload all Deeds of Gift to Catalogit to have accession and contextual information available for the items to be catalogued.

Friends: Mary Ellen asked if the History Committee would be willing to merge the History Committee Facebook page with the Friends Facebook page. She also reported that Debbie Williams has agreed to be the manager of the Facebook page. One issue to consider: the email address to use. Dennis suggested, to agreement, that because the Friends is the outreach-charged group, the Friends email should be used. Gaye motioned to merge the History Committee Facebook page with the Friends of Westport Island History page; Jean 2nd; unanimously approved.

Mary Ellen also reported that Deb Williams made a quilt to be used for a Friends raffle. She and Louana are planning to speak next week about a fundraiser of some sort.

Exhibits: Nothing new to report, but Joan has a copy of the book Diseases in the District of Maine 1772-1820: The Unpublished Work of Jeremiah Barker, a Rural Physician in New England by Dr. Richard Kahn. She is willing to make it available for the Pandemic’s exhibit.

New Acquisitions: Gaye reported that Town Valuation Books from 1848 to 1868 are now preserved and available digitally. Digital valuation information is now available from 1828-1868.

Jeff made a motion to adjourn at 5:40 pm; Paul, 2nd; unanimously approved. The next meeting will be Thursday, May 6, at 4 pm at the History Center, weather permitting; or via Zoom absent weather cooperation.