

Bradford M. Field Memorial Library Ad Hoc Committee Meeting Minutes
March 2, 2023

Present: Richard Nathhorst, Ann Ferguson, Maureen Ippolito, Silas Ball, Kari Ridge, Anne Schuyler, Donald and Sara Robinson, Judy Todd, Kathy and Van Stoddard

Absent:

Visiting: Pat Duffy, Tanya Cushman, Carol Heim, Macaylla Silver

Richard called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm.

Motion to accept and approve the minutes from the February 2 and 16th meeting was seconded and approved.

Richard started the recording of the meeting.

Visitors will be asked for their comments at the end of the meeting.

Richard: The next item on the agenda is the planning for the public meetings. Do we have any progress on that from the subcommittee?

Ann F: I would just like to say that Kari mentioned to me and I saw what was on the agenda. I figured that was a general agenda item that we really have no further reason to discuss right now because we are still gathering the information. We do have the information to discuss from Anne Schyler's various documents so maybe we could move to that.

Richard: We have a Field Committee webpage on the town website. I haven't started populating it yet. We have a whole bunch of stuff that Anne has sent us and I have a whole bunch of stuff that I've collected over the period of the meetings and I am going to try to put all that stuff up in the next couple of days. We can put minutes up there and we can do all sorts of good stuff. Anne Schuyler will send her information to Richard. Richard is the only one who can post to the site.

Sara: How do you get to it?

Richard: You get to it on the town web page. Look for Boards and Committees and it will be there.

Richard: I would like to swap one thing here on the agenda and tell you that we have the consultant for the wetlands delineation and the endangered species search and also the title 5 study. Tighe and Bond have been selected. They have done other work for the town and are well established.

Donald: So what are the costs associated with that?

Richard: The proposal is coming right now. They say it's half a day's work so it will be even less than the cost of the survey which was \$3,000 but they gave us a not-to-exceed figure of \$4,000, so we are covered. That is competitive with the other people and I figured that they were the least controversial firm we could hire because they are well established and have a long track record with the town of good work. The only thing they won't do, if we get to the point of doing a perc test they will recommend somebody to do the perc test.

Ann F.: I have a question about that. If you are doing a Title 5 search, don't you need to do a perc test before you can do that?

Richard: The Title 5 stuff is doing all the setbacks and other work and also determining whether there is enough area to meet the code. So all of that comes after the wetlands delineation but before the perc test.

Donald: I would point out, as I've mentioned previously, that Larry LaClaire had recommended two septic designers that he works with and he was also willing to do the perc test. I think this cost is rather high. As I understand it, the Select Board had only authorized up to \$3,000.

Richard: \$30,000.

Donald: I don't think it was the entire amount because the entire amount (Richard interrupted)

Richard: We checked that and that is what I was told. We are good to go and we are working with Margie on this and it's going forward.

Donald: Can Patty comment on that?

Pat: I generally go with working on Margie with things like this.

Sara: I remember being at that Select Board meeting where you were there Richard and I don't think they gave us the whole \$30,000 and Tom confirms that he did not. You might want to check that.

Richard: I think Pat may want to comment on that. I think you know they told us we could use what we needed to use out of the \$30,000.

Pat: They didn't say you couldn't do it, it was like, yes, you can use it for the plan that was in front of us.

Richard: Alright, so the next thing that I need to get in place that I haven't quite finished yet is the architect who will do the historic valuation and the structural valuation on the building.

A discussion took place about using Tighe and Bond being the right company and how much money the town is giving us to get the required work done.

Richard: Do we want to move on to a discussion of the proposed uses of the building?

Ann F: I would like to make a comment from having read the material that Anne Schuyler sent to us and particularly the article or summary of what Graham Black wrote that she recorded in the document historical questions and references about the value of museums. So obviously, one of the uses we are talking about the building is it being a museum. He is talking in this article about the general value of museums. That is relevant to us because all three of the options that we are considering for this building, whether it gets moved and the town continues to own it, whether it stays in place and is still owned by the town, or whether it gets sold and stays in place. They all consider the likelihood that it will be used as a museum. So the question is, what is the value of the Field Museum as a museum and what are the general value of museums? What I got out of the Graham Black article was that there are three main uses for values of museums for towns. One is learning resources, historical resources for present generations to know about the lives and history of past generations. Secondly, as a kind of representative of specific historical cultures of the past generations, and thirdly as a tourist attraction that may be a possible source of income for the town. I did also get that Graham Black anyway felt that museums were especially valuable if they considered that they had a duty to remain relevant to society. One of the questions that I want to raise for us to think about is what is the particular collection that the Field Museum now has, considering that we will be using it as a museum, is it representative of the past history of the town? Clearly it is representative of the Field Family and some of their connections in that period. Is it going to be a static museum? Is it just going to stay the same collection that it is, or is it going to try to become more representative of the history of populations that are not likely to be in the archives or in the collection which would be the indigenous populations, Native Americans, Leverett workers, is there anything about Box Shop workers who were women workers and if not what ownership would be likely to make that museum become relevant to society by curating it, that is to Leverett residents, by curating so as to bring it up to date to be more representative. Those are some of my questions cause otherwise another possibility is that it just stays an archive or some part of it stays an archive because that is always valuable, and the rest of it gets used for something else. It does seem to me that the town is going to have to pay for it, on all three of the options that town will have to pay money to preserve this building because even if it sells it to a non-profit there will be requests for CPC money to preserve it and so forth that the non-profit will be making in connection with them making requests for other buildings in town including the school house and including possibly the Leverett Sawmill so we really need to be thinking about who is the best owner of the building. What are those owners going to be doing as opposed to thinking about the kind of history that will be preserved there and how is it going to be curated if indeed it is going to remain relevant and representative of the total history that the town people want to include in it. So that is a long statement but that is something that I'm hoping people would like to address.

Richard: I think that is entirely appropriate. I think that one of the issues that we need to look at is diversity in the history of Leverett. It's not just the white European well-to-do farm families that made Leverett. Leverett also has a first nations component. There are lots of minorities

that have lived in Leverett or do live in Leverett. There have been a number of ethnic groups in town. A town museum needs to reflect the diversity of all those people and not just a small subset.

Ann F: Anne, I wondered if you would like to comment on that because you are the one who put this document in and talked about the question of it remaining a static museum or not?

Anne S: The purpose of me sending out all this stuff, and now that we have a page on the website I can send some of these other documents, one is to give everybody sort of a broad overview of current literature and get second opinions about museums. The Black one was very well done because it was sort of to the point. There is no reason in my mind that just because we want to say that if the Field family archives stay there that doesn't mean that it's restricted to only that, of course not. For a museum to be effective in a town it has to not be static and it has to be able to answer and fulfill educational needs and things like that. I don't think there is anything that we need to restrict ourselves to. But you bring up a really good point which I had thought about as well, which I'm not even sure is, it might even be beyond us at this point, but what is the next step for this building? What is going to happen to it? Who is going to run it? Who is going to, if it stays with the town or doesn't stay with the town, and I don't know if that is something we can sort of chew off at this point. Everything you brought up is to that point. If we go to the town and say these are your three options, you know people are going to say, well then what? I don't know how we answer the 'then what'. One of the other things that I sent out which people can look at, and some of you are already familiar with I'm sure, is the Secretary of the Interior's standards of historic preservation and the whole issue of what makes up the historic integrity. Why that becomes important is that whoever runs it, owns it, whatever is going to have to ask for grants in order to keep it, maintain it, run it, or whatever. That is why it is important to sort of remember those categories and those standards of what the Secretary of the Interior's standards are. For this building it's the category of rehabilitation that I believe is the one that most likely suits us, meaning that it's open to the most changes internally, but it still has strict standards of the seven elements of historical integrity, which is in the documents and you can look at it yourself. Its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling or association which is a little touchy feely. So that's kind of a next-step question as well. It's a good one.

Maureen: How do you make a museum more inclusive if there are no artifacts for native americans or for early minority people??

Richard: Well, I think you tell the story. There are some artifacts there, I saw some arrowheads and projectile points and other stuff there.

Ann F: Eva Gibavic, one of our historians on the Historical Commission, has done a lot of work around mapping Native American remains of artifacts in the woods. There would be exhibits of those and so for. There are possibilities of gathering that stuff. There has to be the will to do it. There has to be democratic input, somehow, to be able to make sure that those populations and the workers in different ethnic groups get represented. Part of the question about what the Bradford M. Field Memorial Library Ad Hoc Committee Meeting Minutes

March 2, 2023

Page 5 of 12

next step is, would that be better done by the town or by a non-profit? Who is likely to be concerned with these diversity issues and is that something that the town is really concerned about to have a diverse history? We can find it if there is the will. The question is, is there the will?

Richard: I think that is true and I think it's a lot easier to enforce that kind of thing if it's a public building. If it's a private building that is privately funded and doing things like asking for CPA money, it becomes more problematic in enforcing that diversity is respected.

Kari: Richard, I had a question. This might be more a question for Sara and Ann. I'm wondering, do we know if some of these artifacts exist but just not at the Field Museum? Maybe the Historical Commission and what is the other body? The Historical Society. I'm just wondering if those groups, or other groups in town. I know Eva has a lot of knowledge and a lot of maps and things like that that could go on display at the museum but I'm just wondering if there are other places that these things are being stored, the Native American history, that we could just as easily move it over to the Field Museum for displays and things. Maybe these collections already exist is what I guess I'm trying to say.

Sara: There are some things at the schoolhouse and of course we have some things at the Field Family Museum. It was in my proposal that these things be rotated, that we don't need to hold them in one secret place or in one corner. They should be brought out on a rotating basis and have programs around them so that people do get familiarized with it and it becomes a town educational, social, and all the other encounters that can happen from it.

Kathy: I think that this is a really great topic to bring up and we are not going to be able to solve it tonight. We are talking about some kind of a hand-out or something that we can present at town meeting and maybe we just want to include this diversity and holistic historical scope as a principle that we endorse as a committee. There would be work to be done later in terms of what we have, what is available that we don't have and other things, but just to have that be a statement of our principles.

Anne S: I would just like to reiterate that none of this is static. The thing that is still exciting about museums is that there are things that Eva can still find or someone else can find and even if it is not an actual tangible artifact you can still tell that story by the shape of the land, all those things. This is what I do and that is why I get excited about it. It does take people and it takes resources to do this, so that is a question that is going to be asked.

Sara: I guess we can be concerned about CPC, but it is town money and the town can decide on it. There are a lot of other grants available for such a thing and I think once we get established and something saying exactly what we've got and what we are doing with it we can get those grants. There are a lot available in the Mass Cultural and national. I think those things are readily available to such things as museums and programs around are heritage.

Richard: So one of the questions that I have is how do we deal with the current collection that is there? There is an awful lot of stuff there and not all of it is of particular historic value and of high quality. One of the things we need to establish is that we need to have some professional curation and some talent to be able to put together shows and do all this stuff. We need to talk about how that is going to happen.

Silas: I feel like this has gotten a little off track. I don't think our charge is to decide who is organizing the papers on the shelves and who is sweeping the floor and who is putting out the displays. I could be wrong, but I don't think that was our charge. I think it was the preservation and saving of the structure itself. With that said, I think that the historical society, as small as it has been for my whole lifetime, has done a pretty good job. It's pretty much been Edie on her own down there. Could it be more organized, sure. Could there be more variety of displays, sure. I think the Historical Society has been in that particular location a one-woman show for 30 years. I'm not sure that is what we're supposed to be deciding on anyways. Ann, I just wanted to say to you that the collection represents donations. (The committee members were having a hard time hearing Silas so there was a pause while he figured out the issue.) So, again, the collection is based on donations. There could be more there from the Field family, but that's just because Edie is the Field family. She sees them every Sunday, but other than that it's based on donations. Sadly, the native population of this area was run out of town long before they could get comfortable and feel like donating their ancestral "fill in the blank" so you are not going to see a lot of things from the natives that were here before us. Not because they weren't welcome, not because some of us wouldn't enjoy seeing that, but because it doesn't exist.

Richard: That's really not true.

Kathryn: I agree with Silas in that this might be a bit out of our scope and our scope was to give recommendations and determine the option for the building and the uses as well, but I think this is a little bit too detailed in terms of the uses and again, if we wanted to make a statement that as a committee we support a diverse history of Leverett and all of that. The collections can be added to, curated, and all that stuff but that's beyond the scope of the committee.

Richard: I think that it's relevant in that if one of the things we are deciding is who is going to own the building and who will be able to control that effort at diversity.

Ann F: Let me speak to Silas. Silas, I'm not denying the value of the collection that exists there nor the work of Edie Field and yes, it was donations. I'm thinking about what happens to it going forward and who controls what happens to it? Not just that the building is saved and restored, which I am in favor of, but would it be more likely to be expanded in ways that would keep it relevant to the present and try to find other artifacts that were more representative if it were owned by the town as opposed to the existing non-profit which, in fact, also has the Moore's Corner Schoolhouse, and has connections to the Leverett Sawmill so it basically has a rotating sort of officers that are involved in two of those nonprofits. So the question is will they represent the interest of the town that would want to keep the Field collection and want to keep it restored, but in a way that would in the future. Number 1, Anne Schuylers point that in fact we

Bradford M. Field Memorial Library Ad Hoc Committee Meeting Minutes
March 2, 2023

Page 7 of 12

can get grants that we need so that this is not going to be an endless cost to the town that we can not really afford for all of three these buildings and Number 2 that would reflect this principle of diversity to include more in the future as a museum if that is one of its uses and that is one of the things that we are supposed to be thinking which is the cost of the town and the uses to which it will be put so that is why it's relevant. It's not what is in the collection and how it was handled in the past, but what is going to be done in the future and who should own it and have to be responsible for the cost and having to expand it.

Anne S: One thing I would just say to that also is there are ways that you could force through charter or something that if you sell it to the Historical Society that you put conditions about inclusivity and diversity and all that.

Richard: I don't know how you would force that though.

Anne S. If you were selling it, then the donation of the sale wouldn't go through unless you agree to it. Could you make them do it if they didn't do it? I don't know, maybe some enforcement mechanism could be built in there. But, there is also the situation that it is right now which is that the town owns it but the LHS runs it. If you keep that as the situation, then in that case you can also make it a mutual agreement that the LHS, which I'm sure they would because that's their value system also, but make it sort of the bylaw that they have to increase diversity, etc. I agree that sometimes it gets a little out of scope, but on the other hand I think that this is a question that is going to be asked by the general public so it behooves us to have a good answer or a choice of answers.

Donald: I was going to say, Anne, in response to the discussion, Article 16, which we've talked about before, which was passed unanimously at town meeting back in 2016 did have an amendment to it which said "any such sale shall provide that if the building is no longer used for such purposes, the Select Board shall have the option to purchase the building for the sale price". They specified what the purposes are within the article itself. It says in here "that the property for educational historical organization for the purpose of operating a facility for collecting, storing, maintaining and making available for display to the public historical articles and archives and in that case they authorized the selectman to sell it within two years or take any action relative there to."

Richard: 2016, so it's no longer in effect.

Sara: Right

Donald: I realize that, but I'm saying that this was an article that was put before the town and passed unanimously.

Ann F: So it could be done again with additional language with diversity and so forth.

Donald: Exactly, and restricting it as it did in this amendment to the article.

Kathryn: Often we hear about things that were considered or passed by the town meeting in 2008, 2009, 2016? Pat, maybe you can weigh in, how should we consider that. I mean it's so long ago, relatively.

Pat: I don't know the legality. But if you look at the one, it said within two years and then two years passed and nothing happened. So I think it expires. If nothing happens, it's no longer

Richard: It's moot.

Pat: Yeah

Donald: I don't think anyone is arguing that. I just bring it up as a historical record of what has transpired in the past and that they did consider trying to restrict it in terms of its uses and if it is no longer used for that purpose it would revert back to the town.

Pat: Right, it can happen again. You can construct an article in any way that you want and then it usually goes to the town council, meaning the lawyer, and she'll say if it needs to be tweaked or whatever. That's been my experience with the articles on the warrant.

Donald: Exactly.

Richard: Alright, does anyone else have anything. Then I guess we can move on to the last item on the agenda which is the article that appeared in The Greenfield Recorder. Don, you brought this up.

Donald: We're obviously not in Greenfield. It was 80 degrees here today. The article was brought to my attention by someone else. My concern with regards to the article is the fact that the article has a lot of opinion related information in it. Richard, hopefully you agree, that the chair of the committee should not be rendering a personal opinion but sharing the works of the committee itself.

Richard: I do agree with that and I want to make a statement about this interview. I didn't seek this interview out, nor did I particularly want to do it. It was brought to my attention that Scott wanted to interview me by Ann Ferguson and I couldn't really get out of it. When I started the interview with Scott I made it very clear that I wanted to give him the information on the three options and I wanted to do that fairly and without any bias or personal opinion in it. And I did that, and I think he quoted that in the article pretty well. But he was rather insistent that I give my personal opinion of the issue and when I stated my personal opinion I absolutely spelled out that this is my personal opinion and he did quote that in the article that I had stopped being the chair and expressed my personal opinion. I didn't seek this interview out. I did the very best I could with it. It is what it is and basically that's it as far as I'm concerned. I can't refuse these interviews. I did, by the way, suggest that he interview you Don and Sara and I suggested that he talk to Anne Schuyler and I suggested that he talk to Maureen. I did all of that and I can't control him once I've given him the information, so it is what it is.

Ann F: And I should say that he contacted me asking if I would give him a report on the committee and I didn't think that was appropriate since I'm not the chair. That is why I suggested that Richard be the person that he discussed it with because I was concerned that the same kind of thing would happen, that I would be stating my own personal opinion and that would not necessarily represent all opinions on the committee.

Richard: I did my very best to represent all of the opinions on the committee, but I didn't write the article.

Pat: I just want to say that my experience with reporters and such is that they often go for a hook or a story and don't exactly relate what you said to them or what you said in public. That's happened to me plenty of times and including when I was campaigning to get the water line done that a whole story was written that didn't represent what I had said to the reporter. You can't really control it. I think that is a well known trope about reporters.

Anne S: We can't really control it, but could we sort of have a bylaw that says 'don't talk to the press'?

Richard: I can't do that. I talked to Margie and talked to other people about whether I could just refuse an interview and they basically discouraged me from doing that.

Ann F: I just like to suggest that people, Don and Sara, you could write a letter to The Greenfield Recorder saying that this article didn't represent everybody's views on the committee and state your views.

Donald: My point is going back to process wise, the chair has to be impartial. Whenever talking to the press or anything of that nature it's not appropriate to give a personal opinion but rather to be impartial. It's fine to outline what the options are and so forth and so on. When it gets into statements supposedly attributed to Richard and anyone that doesn't go along with what my opinion is is a purist. So, I'm a purist, whatever that means. I don't want to belabor the point. I know Scott well. I can reach out to him and make sure that from my perspective that any further reporting from him for the chair of the committee should be restricted to facts and not the opinions of the person being interviewed.

Richard: I encouraged him to interview you. He was pretty insistent that I give him a personal opinion and I said you need to say it's my personal opinion which he did do in the article.

Kathy: Just a comment to Don, please contact your friends or relatives. I think Richard did very clearly state which were the facts of the committee and his own opinion. The statement that a committee chair can not voice an opinion, I don't know if that is true or not, I don't think it is.

Ann F: No one would want to be a chair if that were the case because then you could never state your own opinion.

Sara: That's the way chairs are.

Kathy: Your opinion and the progress and charge and work of the committee. I don't know what the policy of Leverett is but I think that what Richard stated is entirely appropriate.

Sara: What's unfortunate is that we've working so hard to present to the town and the community what we've been working on and what the options are and they get something to read in the newspaper and they get swayed one way or another. We're trying to do this forum to present an equal basis. So that is what was unfortunate.

Richard: That is why I didn't particularly want to do the interview. If you don't do the interview, then that sways the opinion also. "There was no comment from the chair of the committee." That can be spun too. Basically, you mess with the press and they can spin it any way they want to spin it and I did what I did, and it's done, and I'm done talking about it.

Richard: Is there any more business or can I open this to the guests?

Maureen: So, we talked at the last meeting about the facilities budget. I'm going to be going to that meeting so I don't know if you want me to raise my hand at an appropriate time.

Richard: I encourage you to. I'm going to that meeting. We can do it together. Pat, has there been any change in the budget that you are aware of?

Pat shook her head no.

Maureen: I've never been to a budget meeting so will they just announce when they are going over

Richard: They go through every bloody item.

Maureen: Okay, so it will be clear when I have to raise my hand or something.

Richard: Yes.

Richard: Can I open the floor to the guests? Carol, you look like you've been eager to talk.

Carol Heim: I just wanted to say that I really welcome the discussion that you were having early about the uses of the museum and the kind of collection that it will include. I do think that it's a really important discussion and I really want to see both the existing collection preserved, protected, and more people knowing about it. I think that is really important and I also think it's really important to expand beyond that collection and I think that is going to be important for people in town. I've heard from other people in addition to this being my feeling that in deciding anything about whether or how much money to spend on preserving that building it's going to matter a lot what commitments are made to the collections going forward in the future and well

as preserving the existing one. I think that is really important and I'm really glad that you are having that discussion.

Rhcard: Thank you, we really appreciate that. We are trying really hard. Anybody else? We are coming right up on 8:30 and I'd entertain a motion to adjourn.

Ann F: So moved.

Richard: All in favor? Passed unanimously. All right. Thank you all very much.