

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
FRIENDS OF POPLAR HILL MANSION

August 18, 2021

Open Board Meeting Minutes

Present: Board Chair, David Scheid, Vice Chair, Jeanne Mears, Treasurer, Sharon Murphy; Board Members: Ginny Hussey, and Betsy Wolfe; Curator & Recording Secretary, Sarah Meyers; Guest: Julia Glanz

I. Call to Order:

The August Open Board Meeting of the Friends of Poplar Hill Mansion was called to order on Wednesday, August 18, 2021 at 12:00 p.m. by Board Chair David Scheid.

II. Approval of Minutes:

The Board Chair asked if there were any corrections or additions to the May 19, 2021 Open Board Meeting Minutes. Hearing no corrections to the minutes, the April Open Board Meeting Minutes were approved.

III. Reports:

A.) Chair: David Scheid

- 1.) David welcomed City Administrator, Julia Glanz to the meeting.
- 2.) David announced that the Mansion had a chimney inspection done and the results came back that all well with the chimneys. There was a concern with the plaster in the Parlor, but that is due to the normal settling of the house.
- 3.) David reported that the Friends have a current balance available for the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore for \$78,000. The total in the endowment is \$287,206.
- 4.) David also mentioned the need to repair the main dining room table. Sarah said it needs to be fixed asap. The decision was made to call multiple people and see who could get it done the soonest. Jeanne made a motion to have the table repaired and Ginny seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.
- 5.) David announced that the September meeting will be a meet and greet for potential new members of the Board, so that the Board has the opportunity to meet everyone at once. Several names were mentioned as potential new members. All are invited to attend and everyone is encouraged to invite people who might be interested.
- 6.) David mentioned the need to update the brochure for the museum. Julia Glanz asked who would be designing it and offered the City's assistance. Julia also asked about the front sign and Sarah explained that she was told the Mansion could not have a sign the same size as the other City signs because of the Historic District. Julia mentioned that the new Newton St. Community Center just installed a sign and similar could be installed at the Mansion. Sarah asked about the base and said ideally, the sign at the Mansion should have a brick base to coordinate with the foundation of the Mansion.

B.) Treasurer Report: Chair Sharon Murphy

- 1.) There is \$9,821.83 in the operating budget.
- 2.) Sharon purchased more stamps in anticipation of the rate increase.

- 3.) Sharon has paid the annual \$900 Board Liability insurance.
- 4.) Comcast is over \$900 because the Friends had not received a bill and it was for three months.
- 5.) Sharon paid the web hosting to Go Daddy for \$21.17.

IV. Curator Report: Sarah Meyers

- 1.) See written report on file at Mansion.
- 2.) Discussion Curator Report: None

V. Committee Reports:

A.) Membership:

- 1.) No Report.

B.) Hospitality: Jeanne Mears

- 1.) The Committee had a meeting to discuss upcoming events. The board is adding a Halloween event for children. The Yuletide Open House will not have vendors. Instead of a Sweetheart Tea, the committee is suggesting doing a catered dinner. It was also suggested moving the Festival to May 1, since Juneteenth was made an official holiday. Jeanne will look into getting a list of food trucks for the Festival. (All events are tentative based on Covid)
- 2.) Jeanne also suggested doing a yard sale next spring. Betsy suggested using the Milford Twilley lot because of better location and visibility on Rt. 13. Jeanne mentioned Loudell's idea of selling furniture (not antiques) as well as other donated items. Betsy also suggested including a bake sale and plant sale and getting the garden clubs involved.

C.) Publicity:

- 1.) David reported that a travel writer will be visiting the Mansion on September 1.

D.) Acquisitions: Carol Smith

- 1.) No report.

E.) Mansion Improvements: Betsy Wolfe

- 1.) No Report.

F.) Review Committee: Carol Smith

- 1.) No report.

G.) Garden: David Scheid

- 1.) David reported that the tree in the back of the house was removed.
- 2.) David showed a draft of the sign for the pollinator garden. Sarah reported that she is waiting on information from the City on where to order the signs so it matches the rest of the City signs. The sign will also be the template for the other signs that will eventually be installed outside.
- 3.) Garden Clubs are getting more interested in the Mansion. The Wicomico Garden Club has scheduled a meeting and it will be discussed about them getting back involved.

- 4.) David wants to develop a 5 year garden plan.

H.) Grant: Ginny Hussey

- 1.) No report.

VI. Old Business

- A. Julia announced that a budget amendment will go through Council to get approval for the ADA lift on the back of the house.

VII. New Business

- A.) Special Guest Julia Glanz to discuss the role of the Board in cooperation with the Curator
 - a. From the City's perspective the role of The Friends is fundraising to help maintain the interior and property, help manage the interior, and advise the City on matters pertaining to the property.
 - b. The Curator is an employee of the City and takes her direction from the City.
 - c. Betsy talked about need to review the Bylaws. Betsy is upset that people need to be voted into the Board and said she has talked to people who do not want to join this Board because they refuse to be voted on. As David explained it, it important to meet people interested and have them meet the Board to make sure it will be a good fit and also see what they can contribute to the Board.
 - d. Jeanne mentioned that at times she thinks there is some confusion about the roles of the Board and the role of Sarah as the Curator. She said that ultimately she believes there is a lack of communication between the Board and the Curator. The Board will make decisions and not involve Sarah in those decision making discussions, almost as if, if she gets involved, then she is out of line and if she does not get involved then she is not doing her job. The Board puts Sarah in a lose/lose situation at times.
 - e. David explained that the Curator's job is to be the authority at the Mansion. She is charged with taking care of problems at the Mansion, developing public programs, and presenting the Mansion as a Federal Period house museum based upon the best information available, which is the 1828 inventory and other research of the period. The Board, on the other hand, exists to support the activities of the Mansion and offer suggestions to the Curator. The Curator has the professional expertise and sets the parameters.
 - f. David also reminded everyone that the Board not only has to adhere to City guidelines, but also the guidelines of MHT. Sarah's role is to have working knowledge of the rules and regulations of MHT and when the Board wants to do something that be out of line with those guidelines, it is the job of the Curator, as the professional, to explain why or why not they may or may not be able to do the thing they want.
 - g. It was also pointed out that the house needs to be interpreted as a Federal Period house, as is the mission of the museum, and not mistakenly as a Colonial or Victorian, as some people have wanted to do.
 - h. Julia mentioned Sarah's contract and along with it, the job description of the Curator. She thought it might be good to share the job description with the Board. Betsy asked

if it was a yearly contract and if anyone else competes for the contract. Julia explained that usually unless there are any issues, as long as both parties are happy, the City just renews the contract. Technically, however, anyone can apply for the position.

- i. Betsy mentioned that one thing she does not agree with is the Curator being a voting member of the Board. Ginny clarified that when she was an employee of the City and served as the Recording Secretary, she had voting right as those are in the Bylaws. Betsy reiterated the need for Bylaw revision. Jeanne took the opposite view and said that because the Curator is considered the expert and because of her knowledge of the property, the Curator should have voting rights. David agreed. Ultimately the decision lies with the Board and would take a Bylaw amendment.
- j. It was also pointed out that the Curator is the City liaison to the Board and as such, also represents the City to the Board. The Curator meets with City officials regularly to discuss issues at the Mansion.
- k. Julia asked Sarah if she had any specific issues. She said her big one is being left out of discussions from Board members or committees that pertain to the museum. As the Curator, she is supposed to be a member of every committee (along with the Chair) and oftentimes she gets left out committee meetings. She also said that she still feels there is confusion about the Board responsibilities and the Curator's responsibilities. She pointed out that the Board is mainly responsible for the income coming into the Mansion such as membership and events, while the Curator handles the exhibits, educational programs, and day-to-day operations. Sarah felt this needs to be better clarified, perhaps in the bylaws and also agreed to share her job description with the Board.

VIII. Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 1:08 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sarah Meyers
Curator, Recording Secretary