

**CITY OF NORWALK
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MAY 23, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: Peter Bondi, Chair; Suzanne Betts; Eric Chandler;
Thom Dunlap; Kathryn Martino; David Westmoreland;
John Kurtzman (7:05 p.m.)

GUESTS: Fred Bondi and Bruce Kimmel, Common Councilmembers;
Pat Rubino, D.A.R

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Bondi called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- April 25, 2012

The minutes were not available at the meeting.

**** MR. WESTMORELAND MOVED TO TABLE THE ACCEPTANCE OF
THE MINUTES TO THE NEXT MEETING
** MR. CHANDLER SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - Peter Bondi

Mr. Bondi reported that Ms. Gunn received notice this morning that she was being let go from her position as Curator a month and a half before the original notice. He said that the Commission is now without a staff person. The locks on the building will be changed shortly. He said that as the Commission Chair, he hopes to get the key so that he will be able to oversee the collection.

Mr. Bondi said that Mr. Hamilton had IT come in and take the computers from the Museum this morning. Mr. Bondi said that they have 17,000 entries and feels this information should remain at the Museum. He said that he believes they were looking for the data base. He said that when asked by Mr. Hamilton, Ms. Gunn sent him the disc.

Mr. Bondi said that Ms. Gunn asked if she could act as the staff person for the Commission, but was told that there was no funding for staff. Mr. Bondi said that **he does not know who is going to take on Ms. Gunn's responsibilities. He said that now that the Museum is closed, there is no Curator. In reference to the sign posted on the door, he said that he does not know what "closed until further notice" means.**

Mr. Bondi said that he has had no communication from the Mayor in three months. He has not returned any e-mails or telephone calls. Mr. Bondi said that the Commission needs to stick together; they are the governing body of this collection. Mr. Chandler added that this is a charge.

Mr. Kurtzman joined the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

1. Review and Approve Norwalk Historical Commission Norwalk Museum Resolution

**** MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION**

**** MR. DUNLAP SECONDED**

Mr. Bondi read the following resolution into the record:

WHEREFORE, the Norwalk Historical Commission is responsible to “safeguard the heritage of the City of Norwalk by preserving the elements of its historic, cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history, and to promote the use of historic sites for the education, welfare and pleasure of the citizens of Norwalk and of the general public as provided by Section 57A-2 of the Code of Ordinances”, and

WHEREFORE, THE City of Norwalk having contracted with Manice deForest Lockwood to operate and staff a historical museum for the benefit of the people of Norwalk.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration thereof, the Norwalk Historical Commission hereby:

RESOLVED, that no decision should be made by the City regarding the Museum without the Norwalk Historical Commission.

RESOLVED, that the Commission believes that until an appropriate discussion of the Museum’s future can take place the current arrangements for operating the Museum should remain in effect, including maintaining sufficient hours for the public to access the Museum and staff to assist the public for that purpose. The City should continue to provide necessary funds until the provisions of these Resolutions are implemented.

RESOLVES, that the current City administration is not committed to the future of the Museum the Commission recommends a non-profit income tax exempt organization (sometimes known as a 501 (c) (3), not under

control by the City administration be created with the sole mission of managing the Museum in the interests of the people of Norwalk; such management would include, but not be limited to all aspects of the **Museum's operations including fundraising, personnel, education programs, collections' care and service to the public.**

The Commissioners held a lengthy discussion and made various changes to the resolution:

WHEREFORE, the Norwalk Historical Commission is responsible to "safeguard the heritage of the City of Norwalk by preserving the elements of its historic, cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history, and to promote the use of historic sites for the education, welfare and pleasure of the citizens of Norwalk and of the general public as provided by Section 57A-2 of the Code of Ordinances", and

WHEREFORE, THE City of Norwalk having contracted with Manice deForest Lockwood to operate and staff a historical museum for the benefit of the people of Norwalk.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration thereof, the Norwalk Historical Commission hereby:

RESOLVED, that no decision shall be made by the City regarding the Museum without the inclusion of the Norwalk Historical Commission.

RESOLVES, that the Commission recommends that the City of Norwalk continue to provide significant financial support in perpetuity for the care of the Collection and they further recommend the creation of a non-profit income tax exempt organization (sometimes known as a 501 (c) (3), which will include Norwalk Historical Commission appointees, with the sole mission of managing the Museum in the interests of the people of Norwalk. Such management would include, but not be limited to all aspects of the **Museum's operations including fundraising, personnel, education programs, collections' care and service to the public.**

Mr. Bondi suggested that the Commissioners think about the resolution and think about which direction they should go. He said that there is frustration because there has not been any communication from the City. He said that he was open to suggestions and is open to sitting with City administrators to discuss options.

Mr. Chandler said that it was expected that the Curator would continue in that capacity until the end of her contract so that she could finalize the transition. Mr. Bondi said that they were going to finalize the transition next month. He

suggested tabling the resolution and re-thinking it and continuing to move forward.

**** MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO TABLE THE RESOLUTION
** MR. DUNLAP SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Kimmel said that it was assumed that the City could not get a good deal on this location, because it is a prime real estate location. Mr. Bondi said that the landlord was willing to work to keep the Museum here. Mr. Westmoreland said that Mr. Hamilton said that they could get one of the empty spaces in South Norwalk for less money.

Ms. Martino said that it will be interesting to see what is going to be done to protect the collection.

Mr. Fred Bondi said that he was here this evening as the Chairman of the Land Use and Building Management Committee. He said that they were not aware of what took place today. He said that when he and other Council people had a tour of the Museum they were surprised to see the magnitude of what is in the building. Mr. Fred Bondi said that he thinks this is the best location for the collection in the City because it is in an area close to other museums.

Mr. Fred Bondi said that the Lockwoods donated the property on East Avenue to be used for a museum. When it moved to this building, they were under the assumption that when Keystone House moved in there, the rent from Keystone House would pay the rent on this building. He said that currently there is no rent coming in because the Fire Department is using the Lockwood house and that could be why the Museum is in the predicament it is in now. He said that he hopes they can come up with a solution to keep the Museum here. He suggested not going back to when the Friends were in place. Mr. Westmoreland noted that the Friends raised hundreds of thousands of dollars and this collection would not be here if not for the Friends and Mr. Bloom.

REPORTS - BOARDS

A. Norwalk Historical Society - David Westmoreland, President

Mr. Westmorland reported that the Historical Society was bringing back the Little Red Schoolhouse program. They are working on the Civil War exhibit that was enhanced by items loaned to them by Mr. Chandler. The Historical Society is

working on fundraising to restore "Chester" the Civil War statue at Riverside Cemetery.

B. Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum - Patsy Brescia, Chairman

There was no report presented this evening.

REPORTS

A. Buildings - Peter Bondi

Mr. Bondi reported that Mr. Mauro has been working on the Little Red Schoolhouse and getting it ready for painting.

Mr. Westmoreland said that Mr. Mauro is excellent and they could never maintain anything without him. Mr. Bondi added that Mr. Mauro is restoring the Barn.

B. Cemetery - Kathryn Martino

1. Presentation By Ms. Pat Rubino From The D.A.R. To Discuss A Plaque For Pine Island Cemetery

Mr. Westmoreland introduced Ms. Rubino. She invited the Commission to attend the ceremony at Pine Island Cemetery on Sunday, June 3, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. to dedicate a marker to honor Walter Hoyt, a Revolutionary War soldier.

C. Finance - David Westmoreland

Mr. Westmoreland said that he did not receive any reports. He will make arrangements with the Finance Department to get the reports. He said that in **looking at last month's report, the Commission is on track.**

D. Norwalk Museum - Peter Bondi

1. Update And Report On The Mayor's Museum Restructuring Committee

Mr. Westmoreland reported that the Restructuring Committee is trying to go through the physical location. Ms. Bacal developed a matrix so that they can list pros and cons of each structure. He said that this building is included in the matrix.

Mr. Bondi said that he is not in favor of splitting the collection. Mr. Dunlap agreed

that he did not want to see anything separated. Mr. Bondi said that he knows that 17,000 items in the data base is small; however, there were no records from 1991 -2000. The only record keeping that was done was by one or two people at a time. He described how each item has to be documented and said that it can take a half hour to an hour for each item. Mr. Bondi said that when Ms. Gunn took over as Curator, everything was recorded on cards, and no one could find anything.

Mr. Westmoreland said that there has been no discussion about breaking up the collection. They are only talking about separated archives. The only compelling thing about moving the collection to the Library is that they are open to the public a lot more than the Museum.

Mr. Chandler said that Mr. Park was quoted in the newspaper saying that the Norwalk Museum let down the City. He said that the opposite is true; the City let down the Norwalk Museum because it was hampered by the hours it was allowed to be open. He said that the Norwalk Board of Education underutilized this facility. He said that even if it was not open to the public, those hours could be used for school trips. Mr. Chandler said that they need to let people know that there is a rich history in Norwalk.

Mr. Kimmel asked Mr. Westmoreland if there were discussions about having separate staff and a special location in the Library. Mr. Westmoreland said that the Committee was shown a large room and that they would provide separate staff. Mr. Bondi noted that they would have to hire special staff. Mr. Kimmel said that it would be a library within a library. He said that very rarely will someone doing research find themselves in a museum like this. He said that typically they do research in libraries and courthouses.

Mr. Bondi asked where the money was coming from if the Library has to hire additional staff. He said that the Museum has the only copies of The Gazette and they just acquired The Hour archives. He said that the CEO of Nash Engineering had wanted to donate their collection to the Museum, but will not do that now. They were a big employer in Norwalk.

Mr. Bondi explained that Ms. Gunn was under Union restrictions and could only work certain hours. She was not able to get everything done; archiving was not the only task that needed to be done. He said that she also spent a lot of time working with the Commission on building repairs.

MUSEUM CURATOR'S AND ASSISTANT TO THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION REPORT

There was no report this evening.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed this evening.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business discussed this evening.

**** MR. DUNLAP MOVED TO ADJOURN
** MR. WESTMORELAND SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services