

BROOKLINE MEETINGHOUSE COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: Monday, March 25, 2024, 5:00 PM, Brookline Town Office

Members present: Lee Anne Parker, Dan Towler, Kerry Bourne, Julia Duke, Stuart Duke, Jon Ballou

Lee Anne called the meeting to order at 5:10 PM. Minutes of our last meeting on Feb. 26 were reviewed. SD moved to accept, JD seconded, all were in favor.

The Events & Activities Committee – consisting of 5 community members and 2 BMH Committee members – met prior to the regular meeting to discuss various possibilities and plans for events this spring & summer. The group will continue to meet regularly in hopes of adding several new things to the calendar at the BMH this year, in addition to events already on the calendar, such as the spring plant sale on May 25 and the Town Picnic on August 4.

BMH Restoration Fund currently has approx. \$25K with \$15K expected from the State for the Historic Preservation grant. The Select Board at their last meeting voted to designate the remaining ARPA funds to the BMH fund, which will add another \$33K for a total of \$73K. The Committee appreciates this vote of support for our ongoing efforts. These funds will be used for matching grants, or for projects that are ineligible for grant funding.

Since the Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV) paid for half the cost of a conditions assessment for the BMH, which was done by Brattleboro architect Jon Saccoccio, the Committee has been relying on that assessment, and continuing support and input from Mr. Saccoccio, in addition to support and guidance from the PTV, to plan for the ongoing restoration of the BMH and the upgrades necessary to make the building more of a vital part of community life in Brookline. In addition, we participated in the Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP) administered by the Windham Regional Commission, to identify some of the challenges facing Brookline and devise solutions. The facilitator of that program has expressed interest in helping the BMH Committee obtain funding to complete a comprehensive plan for restoring the BMH. We have spoken to Mr. Saccoccio – and met with him on March 14 – about engaging his services to prepare such a “feasibility study” for us. We hope to have a proposal from him soon, which will be reviewed with the SB at their next meeting on April 3. At that meeting, Maggie Foley, the MTAP facilitator, will be present to explain whatever funding help is available to us and what we have to do to apply for it.

We hope also by the time of the April 3 meeting to be able to hire a building scientist to assist Mr. Saccoccio in investigating mold issues at the BMH, which he has asked for.

At the SB's last meeting on March 20, the Board agreed to post an RFP advertising for this position, since the cost of the job requires it to be put out to bid.

BMH Committee minutes 3/25/24 (continued)

It's worth noting that the Town of Athens, our neighbors to the north, with whom we have collaborated on the restoration of our respective 19th-century Meetinghouses, has engaged Mr. Saccoccio to prepare a feasibility study to help them restore and repurpose their old elementary school into town offices and a community center.

The Committee also hosted a visit from Jackson Evans, the PTV rep who has offered to assist the BMH with our strategizing and fund-raising. He toured the BMH and was duly impressed with the preservation work that has been done and the possibilities the building offers for Brookline. He has already been a great source of helpful ideas and resources, and he and the PTV promise to be vital partners going forward. He has a second visit scheduled at the BMH, this time with Caitlin Corkins of the VT Division for Historic Preservation, on April 4. We will be working closely with these people to secure the funding we will need to restore the BMH to its full potential.

SB member Bruce Mello will be attending a workshop in Rutland on March 28 offered by the Vermont Arts Council to learn about their grant programs, which we are hoping will be of help to us as well.

DT and LAP have signed up for a 2-day "retreat" offered by the PTV on "Fund-Raising and Project Management", which will be July 9-10 in Grand Isle. Presenters will include Jackson Evans of PTV and Caitlin Corkins of the VDHP, along with Christine Graham of CPG Fund-Raising.

We are still hoping to be able to engage the services of 802 Painting to paint the steeple of the BMH this summer. Shawn Gilbeau of 802 has given us an estimate to paint the siding on the wood addition, but this project has not yet been formally advertised or put out to bid. Members would love to see this done, but there is some controversy over how much to invest in this, given that a significant amount of clapboard repair or replacement would have to be done, and renovations necessary to comply with ADA may entail building an entirely new entrance, changing or eliminating some existing doors and windows, etc. Nevertheless, this building fairly screams for a paint job, and it has been identified as highest priority by Mr. Saccoccio and others. The timing of it in relation to the ADA work and other work, and whether to do a partial or incomplete paint job in the short term, while waiting for other work to be done, has yet to be determined.

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, April 11 at 5:00 PM at the BMH.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM by unanimous consent.

Respectfully submitted,
Daniel Towler

