

ELIOT HISTORICAL SOCIETY – Minutes of the Meeting – September 9, 2019

Paul Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:05pm. A reminder that on the first Monday of the month the Eliot Historical Society holds their meetings, the exception this month is due to the Labor Day Holiday. Paul confirmed the schedule for the evening, with the Program will be followed by refreshments and then the Business Meeting. Paul thanked Doris Grover who made the fudge for the evening raffle and confirmed that at the end of the meeting two names will be drawn and winners announced.

Officers Report

Secretary Report: Tracey Graffam read the minutes of the June meeting which were accepted and approved with one correction.

Treasurer's Report: Pam Ashley presented the treasurer's report which was accepted with no corrections.

Committee Updates

Correspondence: Jan requested a Thank You note be sent to Mr. K for providing music at the School House.

Membership: A discussion around ideas to increase the EHS membership took place. Recommendations included adding & paying for good advertisement for programs and EHS sponsored events. Keith also recommended bringing in programs that will draw people from around the area— an example of the program held at the New Castle Historical Society on the archeology efforts on Shapleigh Island.

Programs: Nothing to report

Collections: Nothing to report

Building: Nothing to report

PR/Publicity: Nothing to report

Fund Raising: The committee is planning to meet to discuss Election Day fund raising. If anyone is interested to assist, please contact Margie. It was also noted that we have two flags available to be raffled / sold. They are currently at the town hall.

Education: Jan shared that the School House has completed their summer events. Although proceeds are less than last year, she believes there is value for the school which in addition to providing education opportunities also provides the organization visibility. In particular, the story book time went over well. Jan met a new family who recently moved to Eliot and bought the Goodwin house. The family is interested in our efforts and would be willing to speak about the history of the house – which was built in the early 1800s. Jan will add the house to the history display for the students. Jan believes with improved marketing and added visibility from the Bicentennial events things will improve.

Grants: Application is in process with Fabulous Finds. We have let them know that we are still interested with the 2 year wait period that is coming to an end.

2019 Nomination Committee: No updates.

Old Business

Jan provided an update on the events for the Maine Bicentennial. The calendar is finalized with a variety of events scheduled and will start with the kick off with the Eliot Festival days. Interesting events are scheduled throughout the year which blend state-wide with local events and will culminate with the Eliot Festival in 2020. There will be a time capsule planned for opening in 25, 50, 75 and 100 years out. They are working with community to determine what artifacts should go into the time capsules. Roseanne has recommended that Historical Society look for ways to blend our programs with the events planned. Rather than add new events, they are encouraging organizations to build upon what they are already doing. It was also recommended that we look to participate in the Maine Bicentennial Parade which will take place in Lewiston. Eliot would participate with Kittery as one of the earliest settled communities in Maine. It was also noted that Eliot received the gift of the Maine Bicentennial flag which is unique. Not all cities or towns were selected to be gifted the flag. We were fortunate to be one of the few recipients.

Paul provided an update on the newly commissioned shed. The costs turned out to be less than expected and with better quality with the purchase of the rubber-made style shed. The budget was approved at \$800 and costs were at about \$650. Paul, Denny, Skip and Jack all worked together to assemble it – which was a bit of challenge but got it done. All are invited to see their good work – the shed is located behind the Grange Hall.

A recap of the Annual Cookout was provided. There were approx.. 50 people in attendance with about ½ being members and the other half visitors. The kids sang songs. The evening was perfect, no bugs and good weather.

New Business

In discussing future program ideas, it was recommend we have a sing-along or music program. Donations could be collected. It was also recommended that we have a booth at the Eliot Festival Days to promote the school and the organization. Another idea was that we reach out to the Navy Yard and see if we can get the Navy Band. People really enjoy the music.

The Chairperson of the Eliot Festival Parade is looking for small businesses or organizations in the community who would like to be on the panel for judging the parade floats. Those who participate will have their business or organization mentioned. It will be a good way to get visibility. EHS could use this opportunity to share what they do and also highlight School House. Categories can be determined by the judges. They are working on getting a flatbed trailer. Participants would need to be able to climb a few steps. Paul has volunteered to be a judge. So looking for 2 other people. Would take at most about 30 minutes.

Earle asked if the Shriners are participating. It was not known if they are.

In looking at fundraising ideas, Roseanne recommended to the Fundraising Committee consider selling raffle tickets. A recommendation also to offer the post cards with pictures and local homes of Eliot. Jan also confirmed that we still have the Post Cards in stock. Perhaps in addition to the events, we could have these offered at the Library - as a potential sale point. Jan will look into the idea. Also put forward was the idea of EHS selling the “Maine Established 1820” decorative wooden signs as a fundraising idea. Tracey will follow up with Paul on this.

Big thank you for Margie and Skip Brown for bring refreshments for tonight’s meeting.

Next month’s refreshments will be provided by Roseanne and Bob Fisher.

Next month's program will be the presentation of Russ Staples and his brother Jim. Together they will share the story of their father, Walter Staple and the writing of his book "Mostly My Maine". The business portion of the meeting was brought to a close at 9pm.

Program

Carolyn Bogh kicked off the program by thanking Keith for the suggestion for the evening's program and introduced Jennifer Hunter who presented on behalf of the York River Study Committee. As the York River Study Coordinator, Jennifer provided an update on the status of the Committee's work over the past year. Jennifer was accompanied by both Chuck Ott who is the Committee Chair and Jack Murphy who is one of Eliot's representatives on the committee. Both of whom assisted in answering questions at the end of the presentation. Jennifer shared that this would be the 4th visit made to the Eliot Historical Society over the past 4 years and thanked the organization for their support and having her back to provide the latest updates and information.

The York River Study Committee which was established in 2015 and is made up with volunteers from the towns of Eliot, Kittery, South Berwick and York. Jennifer provided an overview of the presentation and confirmed that in 2017, the York River Study Committee unanimously endorsed pursuing a Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation for the York River and its major tributaries. She provided an overview of the support received from each of the communities and their majority support. Jennifer started her presentation by explaining what a Watershed is and the communities that make up the York River watershed. She also shared information on the Partnership designation which identifies lands that are "outstandingly remarkable value" – meaning rare, unique or significant. Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers do not fall under federal land ownership or mgmt. Jennifer provided an overview of the study that was conducted over two years which culminated into the York River Watershed Stewardship Plan.

The study was authorized 2014 and was supported by all the appointees from each of the communities. There were many meetings with communities, engaging in projects and surveying land throughout the watershed area including the land in Eliot.

Within the York River Watershed there are 9 National Register Sites and over 100+ archeological sites, bridges, cultural landscapes. The ecological diversity of the area includes many threatened & rare species. The high water quality which serves as a drinking supply source for many. The area is known for its coastal resilience – which is protected with sea level rise, in many areas the salt marshes are often under threat due to over development. However, the YRW has a lot of undeveloped marsh areas which protect it.

During the archeology survey of the watershed, 6 out of 9 sites identified many artifacts. EHS is the keeper of more than 100+ artifacts found.

When reviewed for the suitability for the designation, the communities need to show there is the ability to support and provide adequate stewardship at the community level. The survey was conducted across the communities which included reviews of Town plans and policies and recognizing resources & threats, the stewardship plan provides a guide offering a range of actions for the community to consider. The recommendations and guidance offer ways to proactively protect while enabling coordination across the neighboring communities. The designation will also allow for Federal funding for communities to help with the work required to implement the recommendations called out in the Stewardship plan.

During elections in the Fall of 2018, the community voted to approve the plan with 73% approval rate.

In February, Congresswoman Pingree introduced a bill to designate the York River into the National Wild and Scenic River System. The bill was co-sponsored by Rep. Jared Golden. The House Natural Resources Committee held a

subcommittee hearing in May. Congresswomen Pingree, National Park Service Deputy Director Dan Smith and the York River Study Committee Chair Chuck Ott all provided testimony in support of the bill.

The study will be posted online with a 90 waiting period. The organization is then hoping for a Senate companion bill which will then require additional hearings. When awarded, federal funds would be awarded annually and could amount to \$150k. For more information, you can check out the committee's website: YorkRiverMaine.org

At the end of the presentation, Chuck shared his experience on the committee over the past 10 year's efforts to today. He was very honored to represent the committee in Washington.

Question was asked what can we do now to help? Jennifer recommended that those we could help by providing supportive comments to the National Park Service once the Study Report is posted. Those looking to support can also contact Sen King's office to encourage his efforts in getting the bill through the Senate.

The program ended at 7:45pm and was followed by refreshments until 8:05pm.

-Respectfully Submitted,

Tracey Graffam-Dickson

9/9/19