

AUBURN'S HISTORIC & CULTURAL SITES COMMISSION

Meeting minutes from October 11, 2023

Willard Memorial Chapel, 17 Nelson Street, Auburn, NY 13021

Present: Dr. R. Burgess, S. Fischer, J. Giannettino, D. Gottschalk-Fielding, C. Kasper, J. Kline, K. Kuhl, C. Mason, M. McEvers, Rev. P. Price, G. Sears, D. Stankus, A. Wilson, K. Wise Gosch,

Excused: Rev. P. Carter, B. Chabot, A. Daddabbo, D. Lamb, K. Walker, J. Wrench, R. Bradley, K. Hill

Guests: Kate Grindstaff, Seward House Museum

Call to Order October 11, 2023, at 9:03 a.m. by J. Giannettino. The mission statement was read by K. Wise Gosch.

Approval of Minutes

C. Kasper asked for a motion to accept the July 12, 2023 minutes as presented, and the motion was made by D. Stankus and seconded by K. Wise Gosch. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Finance Report

C. Kasper presented the Finance Report. Item lines were reviewed including the funds for Fort Hill Cemetery to print their map brochures; the increase in the FLTA membership expense going from \$350-400 per year; the Auburn Public Theater program ad for \$650; and the Dickens' Christmas guide ad. Also for Advertising, the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance (FLTA) half-page ad in their annual magazine guide with the 'Meet Me In Auburn' theme for \$2200. Each year, 100,000 of these guides are printed and distributed throughout the region and state, and from experience these get a lot of traffic in welcome centers. Visit Rochester requested more Auburn brochures to display in their area, which includes the airport, which impacted the Fulfillment expense line with shipping through UPS.

Committee Reports

Tourism Strategies

C. Kasper announced Tour Cayuga welcomed the media for a special promotional event on Saturday, September 23, 2023, held at the NYS Equal Rights Heritage Center with an Underground Railroad theme.

Site Director Reports:

C. Kasper announced ERHC will celebrate its 5-year anniversary with an open house in collaboration with the Cayuga County Chamber of Commerce's monthly 'Business After Five' series on Wednesday, November 15, 2023.

K. Wise Gosch announced updates at Cayuga Museum including an upcoming symposium, workshops, and programs. A new children's gallery has been established on the 2nd floor porch, which will be available year-round. Thanks to the Jim

and Juli Boeheim Foundation, families will be offered free admission on the last Saturday each month and can expect to enjoy fun activities and a scavenger hunt.

A. Wilson shared updates for the National Park Service expected to take effect in 2024. The Parker Street properties are undergoing their final remodeling touches including sidewalk and driveway enhancements, plus an accessible parking/loading/drop off zone. The lift will be installed later this year. The first offer has been extended to a full time park ranger, who will start in December if the contract is accepted. An educational position will be filled later and likely two seasonal employees. Wilson has been in contact with descendants for a sneak peak opportunity. An opening event is being planned for late spring/early summer 2024. Details surrounding participation in Harriet Tubman Week programming are to be determined. Event opportunities are being pursued such as collaborations with local groups, congregations, community venues, and possibly church services. Outside groups' use on Sundays is being considered with a special park use permit. The Harriet Tubman Home annual contract is being reviewed with the 2024 copy in its draft stage.

C. Kasper added information about the commemorative Harriet Tubman bicentennial coin fundraising sales match initiative, offering any support ERHC can provide.

S. Fischer announced upcoming events at Willard Chapel including a soprano singer performance and a talk with Ted Freeman. Event visitation has dropped this year however walk-in traffic has tripled in 2023. Upcoming capital improvements will include enhancing the driveway to wrap around the building and the existing blacktop to be repaved, as well as seeking a second accessible entrance. Next Sunday, the chapel will host a music school performance at 2PM.

K. Grindstaff enticed members with the annual Haunted History tours at Seward House museum coming up later this month. Upcoming projects will include DEI initiatives, the 5-year strategic plan for 2024-2028, and renovations to the barn and carriage house. On-site parking will be closed during property improvements.

D. Gottschalk-Fielding announced Seymour Library's budget vote will occur on October 25, 2023. Details are available on their website. The Friends of Seymour Library group will be hosting a Local Author Expo fundraising event.

J. Kline announced upcoming Business Improvement District projects and events. Gobble 'N Go is an annual Auburn Education fundraiser event featuring 12+ venues offering samples from 1-6PM on October 21, 2023. DRI art unveilings are coming up at Freedom Park and Auburn Public Theater plus two new sculptures are expected for Spring of 2024. The next big event will be the Holiday Parade on Saturday, November 25, 2023 now at a new start time of 5:00PM, still ending with the tree lighting at City Hall, now around 6:00PM.

K. Kuhl retold details about the Underground Railroad media event held on September 23, 2023 at ERHC. Planning is underway for other related events such as Juneteenth and Harriet Tubman Emancipation Weekend. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Park in Maryland, a part of the National Park Service, is planning future events for September, according to A. Wilson. C. Kasper added information about Statewide proclamations.

Rev. P. Price recalled the Healing and Reconciliation Weekend event back in September which featured special guests including the President of Onondaga Community College, who is the Diversity Chair for Micron, as well as Dr. Rhoda Overstreet-Wilson for the 3-day annual event.

Dr. R. Burgess shared upcoming Passport to History initiatives like the Pride of Place video featuring high school students who had participated in the program as fourth graders. Cayuga Museum collaborated with Genesee Elementary for a special educational STEAM program. A National Park Service Women Studies class visit is in the planning stages.

K. Grindstaff echoed plans to enhance the Passport to History program for 2024 with a timeline of action items and materials to prepare.

C. Kasper added that through funding from ARMA, K. Grindstaff and local videographer James Reichart will collaborate to develop a promotional video for the Passport to History program. The series of videos will be perennial in content and serve as a resource for families and will likely live on the Auburn History website. K. Grindstaff presented this and other related information to City Council back in August 2023.

Marketing

Market NY Campaign

C. Kasper shared the TGW summer report that was included in the meeting packet. The target audience remains women aged 55+. Details shared included the success of the Meet Me In Auburn campaign, with merchandise including blue or burgundy T-shirts and logo stickers for sale as well as free postcards, plus the billboards to return soon. Participation in Art in the Park in September saw impressive merchandise sales. The TGW contract wraps in December, impacting the lantern trail and digital ads. Over the course of five years, we've had three rounds of the Market NY grant. New sticker wraps for the lantern trail will be installed soon. The first location choice for placement of the stickers will be the historical markers though in cases where one is not present at a site, the building will be the next option. The experience should be made as easy as possible for patrons by sites letting them know where to find the spots, rather than operating the program like a scavenger hunt. Materials to help include a printed one-sheet and map as a directional for frontline staff to assist visitors.

The Break the Ice Media (BTI) contract with TGW led to a partnership with Hope Breen from Rochester, well known for ROC the City with Hope. She created an e-newsblast and itinerary for day trips to represent Auburn and is supported by a strong following on social media with engagement.

CNY The Good Life will cover Auburn as the featured Our Town in the Nov/Dec 2023 issue. Travel writer Theresa St. John from Saratoga, NY was covering a visit to Auburn story.

Auburn NY Visitor Guide 2024

J. Kline reviewed strategic planning to create the next edition of the visitor guide with Lee's departure from The Citizen. In-Design will be used in-house for content updates. Site directors and partners were asked to submit copy change notifications. Ads will be added or adjusted for relevance.

2023 Programming

Holiday Traditions (December 10)

Save the date for the second Sunday in December for the return of this community favorite event. C. Kasper requested copy from sites for the press release. With the growing number of sites participating it has been realized that patrons struggle to attend many or all locations' programs, leading to a drop in visitation, which has inspired consideration for including a trolley to escort patrons to multiple places.

2024 Programming

Brave Brews (March 8-10)

Save the date for the second weekend in March 2024 for the third annual Brave Brews Weekend event. C. Kasper said International Women's Day and Pink Boots Brew Day will occur on March 8.

K. Kuhl mentioned the Brave Women campaign will occur during this time and retreat operators are interested.

Rev. P. Price said the You Matter Women's Conference will be returning for March 8-10.

Harriet Tubman Week is scheduled for the second weekend in March 2024, 3/10-3/15.

A tie-in with the above stated events and campaigns may be favorable.

Solar Eclipse (April 8)

C. Kasper discussed the Path of Totality relating to next year's solar eclipse and related partner events. Rochester is expecting 500,000 visitors. Group discussion added more details to the conversation. Cayuga Museum is planning a STEM program. Erron Hill Winery is promoting its Eclipse wine. Sterling Nature Center is hosting a T-shirt design contest. A. Wilson said the National Park Service is teaming up with NASA for special programs at parks including the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls. Fair Haven will host a related photo workshop. The tourism office will receive 5,000 solar glasses through a grant and will have some to share with the most qualified participants.

Path Through History

I Love NY's Path Through History weekends will occur on June 14-16 and October 12-14.

M. McEvers, representing Fort Hill Cemetery, said tours with NPS are in conversation.

Auburn NY Pride (June)

Juneteenth (June)

Founder's Day (August 10)

Holiday Traditions 2024 (December 8)

Semiquincentennial/ Sestercentennial/ Quarter Millennial Anniversary of America (July 4, 2026) 250th

K. Grindstaff said Seward House Museum is planning related programming tied to this momentous occasion.

C. Kasper said funding may be possible, according to R. Bradley. The Museum Association of New York (MANY) has signed a petition for New York State to create a commission. The website is America250.org with the tagline 'One Nation, Many Stories'.

New Business

K. Kuhl discussed responsible tourism destinations focused on sustainability with grant funding available for the region in 2024. Owasco Flats has their Save the Salamander weekend coming up.

There was no new business.

Old Business

There was no old business.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Adjournment

C. Kasper adjourned the meeting at 10:12 a.m. A motion was made by J. Giannettino and seconded by J. Kline. All were in favor and the motion carried. The next Commission meeting will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, 1/10/2024 at Cayuga Museum in the Carriage House Theater.

Minutes by Gillian Sears