

NEXT MEETING: February 12, 2013

Board Meeting – Alexandria Historical Society

November 13, 2012

President Bill Dickinson called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. at the Black History Museum. Other members present were Peggy Gross, Lisa Adamo, Ted Pulliam, Debbie Ackerman, Dave Cavanaugh, Jackie Cohan, Audrey Davis, Tal Day, Linda Greenberg, and Adrienne Washington.

Dickinson introduced a visitor, Paul Friedman, a new Historical Society member.

Minutes: The minutes of the October meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report and Membership Report: Adamo circulated a Treasurer's Report for 1 October through 31 October 2012, a Treasurer's Membership Report for the same period, and a Treasurer's 2012-2013 Budget (attached). She pointed out that the donations to the Endowment Fund to date for the current fiscal year were considerably less than donations to the Endowment Fund for the last fiscal year. It was suggested that more information should be provided to members about how these funds have been used .

She reported that with additional new members who joined in November, but who are not reflected in the latest report, membership is at roughly the same level as last year. In response to a question from Dickinson, she said there were about 170 memberships that translate into about 240 individual members. She mentioned that the membership categories should be labeled the same in all items of Society literature. Now sometimes, for example, the same category is labeled "Family" in one item and "Couples" in another. The categories should be as those in the Constitution.

Dickinson reported he had attended the Del Ray Historic Preservation Conference where he passed out copies of membership brochures and the *Chronicle* to a number of people who expressed interest in joining the Society. He also reported that we now have more email addresses of Society members.

Old History Award: Greenberg mentioned that she had received an email from Rod McGee, the award winner from Episcopal High School in 1985, who had been unable to attend and receive his award at the award ceremony that year. He now was interested in making a financial contribution to the Society and was inquiring whether it would be possible at this late date to receive his award. The matter was left open.

Website Statistics: Adamo had circulated the statistics earlier today (attached). Greenberg reported that from the communications she receives regarding the Society, it appears that many people are interested in doing genealogical research, particularly concerning Civil War soldiers. Paul Friedman pointed out that the introductory page on the website has only a brief summary of the history of Alexandria, about half a page. Pulliam volunteered to draft an introduction about Alexandria's history that was more comprehensive and interesting and to take a new look at improving the historical aspect of the website.

Dickinson noted that Adamo was doing a considerable amount of work handling the duties of website manager, membership chairman, and treasurer. He asked for volunteers to take over the membership and website duties. No one volunteered immediately.

OLD BUSINESS

Rosenwald School Special Lecture: A discussion was held concerning when an event should be held to commemorate the Rosenwald School and what type of event it should be. Among other comments, Paul Friedman, who is part of a group considering options for the event, suggested it be connected to the anniversary of some event important to the Rosenwald movement or the Alexandria Rosenwald school in particular. Davis reported that the man who was to build a model of the school could not complete it in time for Black History Month in February.

Cavanaugh was unsure that there was sufficient time to organize a large event. It was generally agreed that it would be best to ask author Stephanie Deutsch to speak in February and maybe announce plans for the future. Dickinson agreed to talk with Stephanie Deuthsch and with T.C. Williams officials about holding a lecture at T. C. Williams in February.

War of 1812 Commemoration – Boat Tour: Pulliam reported that he had talked with Helen Wirka, a Carlyle House staff member and the convener of a city committee that had been doing some planning on the War of 1812 commemoration, about the idea of organizing a tour down the Potomac in August 2014 to commemorate American and British actions in Alexandria and on the Potomac during the War. Although she was interested in the idea, the next meeting of the committee has not yet been scheduled. Greenberg volunteered to talk with her further about the tour idea. Pulliam and Dickinson mentioned that they had talked with Lance Mallamo, Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria, and that he seemed interested in the tour idea. Dickinson suggested that re-enactors and National Park Service personnel might be interested in participating in the tour.

Presidents' Plaque: Dickinson thanked Ackerman for organizing the presentation of the past presidents' plaque at the October lecture and particularly for locating past presidents and helping them to attend the presentation.

Website Maintenance: Adamo reported that she had investigated using a different company to manage the Society's website. The new company offers membership and other services that the Society is not now receiving from the current service provider. She was unclear whether the new company would supplant or supplement the current service provider, whether the current service provider also could provide the same services, and what were the comparative costs of the two companies. She agreed to investigate the matter further and report back at the next meeting.

Strategic Objectives for 2012-2013: Dickinson circulated a list of strategic objectives for the coming year.(attached). A subcommittee was formed to examine the list and report back at the next meeting. Cavanaugh was appointed the subcommittee chair. The other members were Gross, Ackerman, Dickinson, Greenberg, and possibly Friedman.

Investment of AHS Assets: Day indicated that he and Greenberg had not yet done enough analysis to suggest a policy on investment of just under \$40,000 of the Society's assets. They are to report at the next meeting.

Carver School: A discussion was held about whether the Society should take some action in support of preserving the Carver School. Davis reported that Boyd Walker, president of the Greater Alexandria Preservation Alliance, had not yet released a study of the history and architectural needs of the Carver School building. The deadline for purchasing the building before the owner would demolish it is February. Friedman reported that he talked with Walker recently and that no progress had been made on finding a buyer. Cavanaugh asked about community support for preserving the building. Davis reported that the community around the building was interested but that the cost was too high. The cost of purchasing the building is \$600,000. In addition, it is estimated to cost \$300-400,000 to renovate it, depending on its future use, and an indefinite amount to maintain it. Pulliam reported that the Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission provided money to pay for the study. Davis reported that the city had a steering committee that was trying to help find a purchaser by contacting real estate agents and by other means, but had not been successful. Friedman said that there was an American Express program that might provide funds for the purchase. There was general concern that the Board could not take a position without reading the study. Davis said she would email Walker asking when the study would be released. Washington volunteered to draft a letter from the Society saying that it generally values preservation of historic buildings like the Carver School building but that it needs to evaluate the study before taking a definite position.

War of 1812 Pension and Bounty Land Records: Adamo reported that the National Archives and Fold3.com (the latter owned by Ancestry.com) want to digitize and place online with free access the War of 1812 pension and bounty land records now at the National Archives and are seeking donations from historic organizations across the country like the Society to help with that effort. For example, a donation of \$25 would digitize 50 images. Dickinson suggested that because in 1812 Alexandria was part of the District of Columbia, we should find out what percentage the population of Alexandria was then of the population of the whole District of Columbia and consider paying to digitize that percentage of the District's War of 1812 records. Adamo said she would investigate the matter further.

New Board Member: Ackerman mentioned that a new member of the Board needed to be selected to fill a vacancy. The nominating committee would meet before the next meeting to select someone to nominate to fill the vacancy.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Chronicle: Greenberg reported that the next issue of the *Chronicle* would be published in February or March and it would contain an article by Jack Sullivan. She is working with people on articles for future issues.

Future Speakers: Gross circulated a list denoting speakers for March and May 2013 and suggesting possible speakers for later with a couple of target dates (attached). Based on Board discussion, she will contact the potential speakers for availability. She also thought it might be good to have a speaker on some aspect of more recent Alexandria history. Davis and Washington suggested seeking a speaker on civil rights, such as a professor or graduate student Davis knew now researching Samuel Tucker, who organized the Alexandria library sit-in demonstration in 1939. Washington also mentioned Carroll Gibbs, co-author of *Black Georgetown*, who had interviewed Tucker. Dickinson suggested the author of *Freedom's Cap*, a book about the

expansion of the Capitol in the 1860s and the politics surrounding it. Ackerman suggested inviting former high school award winners to speak for a few minutes at the awards ceremony.

A short discussion was held about the honorarium for a speaker employed by the federal government who is not able to accept an honorarium. It was generally agreed that the speaker would be asked to name a charity or historical organization to receive the honorarium.

Newsletters: Cohan thanked Greenberg for mailing the last newsletter. She also indicated that she needs speaker information and other input for the newsletter about 4-5 weeks before the lecture in order to circulate the newsletter in time to allow people to plan to attend. She suggested that the newsletter contain a president's forum for remarks by the Society's president. She also indicated that she could issue the newsletter more than the five times a year needed to announce the speaker at upcoming lectures. It was suggested that the newsletter and the *Chronicle* occasionally could be mailed at the same time to save postage.

Archaeology: Pulliam reported that Pam Cressey, Director of Alexandria Archaeology, is retiring December 31. Davis reported that Fran Bromberg will be Acting Director and that after retirement, Cressey will continue to work at Alexandria Archaeology about 20 hours a week.

HARC: Day reported that HARC is helping to revise the Office of Historic Alexandria's Strategic Plan and the guidelines for the Parker-Gray Historic District. It also is reviewing the city's budget for Fort Ward and Freedmen's Cemetery. Washington mentioned that there still was a dispute about how much money the city would spend on investigating the African American community that was present at Fort Ward.

NEW BUSINESS

Mailing List Availability for the Lee-Fendall House: Dickinson reported that the Lee-Fendall House was in severe financial situation and wanted to use our mailing list to seek funds for the House's preservation. After some discussion, Pulliam moved and Greenberg seconded a motion for the Board to send a letter to the Society's members pointing out Lee-Fendall's need for funds and asking for the members to help Lee-Fendall with donations. The motion passed with Day, who is on the Lee Fendall House Board, abstaining. Day agreed to provide Dickinson with a letter Lee-Fendall had sent to its members describing its situation and seeking funds. Dickinson then would draft a letter from the Board with Friedman's help

2013 History Awards: Ackerman volunteered to head the students' awards committee, and Davis volunteered to head the Michael T. Miller award committee.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Pulliam, Secretary