

**Mont Vernon Heritage Commission
Public Meeting Minutes 7/8/21
Approved**

In Attendance: Charles Baker, Brian Billow, Rebecca Schwarz, Tim Berry, Sarah Beth Ross (left at 8:00pm)

Community Member: Eileen Nabor (via Zoom)

Absent: John Morrison, Randy Wilson, Zoe Fimbel

Called to Order: 7:08pm

Meeting was delayed shortly with the set up of Zoom for community participation - placement of computer to follow State laws (all members on screen, community members muted and commenting turned off etc)

Berry states that he had a review done of the existing Town website and stated ours was the only Board/Commission that passed with flying colors. Schwarz states the only thing missing is the last two months of minutes due to issues with the website. They are on file in the office at Town Hall.

Town Meeting Follow-up: Baker states we've essentially had our hands tied with the results of the voting. Asks if there is a way to get the structural assessment done without having to use a Warrant Article such as grants or other funding. Brings up the Community Development Finance Authority and that they are supporting Seven to Save listees, and wonders if that may be a resource. Berry states he believes that it is worth pursuing. Suggests we reach out to DEW which is the architect that was selected by the current Building Renovation Committee to get a written proposal in order to attempt a grant. Berry suggests it may be possible to also go under the Repair and Maintenance of Town Buildings Line Item. Schwarz states that the current CP Williams plan was funded in part by an LCHIP grant and Berry states that was only \$600 of \$50,000. Berry states if we had funding available, the Heritage Commission does not need a vote from the community to hire an architect to do the structural assessment we need to be able to apply for grants. Berry will call the Municipal Association and find out if the Town can use the funds from the Line Item for assessments, and he will call DEW to ask for a written proposal so we can use it for grant applications. Berry says it's worth mentioning that the taxpayers still don't seem to be aware that the Heritage Commission will not be able to apply for grants without a Design Build Plan that is less than 5 years old. Schwarz states that she did say that at the Town Meeting, but that we are really only becoming visible in the community this year and we just need to continue to work to educate the community as to what our needs, goals and purpose is. Berry states that it's unfortunate, but we have been successful with fundraising although it's in smaller increments, so we should continue to focus on that as well. He believes we have been successful in educating the community that we need more money to be able to apply for grants but we have not yet made it clear that the plan we currently have will be considered too old for

us to use in grant applications. Baker states that he is concerned because many of the historic homes within the Historic District are also not being preserved and he believes that adds to the idea that the Town Hall is not in major need of repair. Ross states that the Town Hall isn't personal property and Baker replies that there is a Historic District Commission in place that should be enforcing regulations on these properties with facades rotting away etc. He states this is something that makes the Certified Local Government designation critical; we need to get this application completed and in the queue for approval. Again, Certified Local Government programs do offer zero match grants, which we could use without having to ask the community for more funds..

Certified Local Government/Rules of Procedure: Baker would like to make this our main immediate focus and finalize the Rules of Procedure in the near future. Berry would like to have a work session to work on the Rules of Procedure uninterrupted. Baker asks if this would have to be done in person and Berry responds no, but that it is 10 pages and would go much faster in person. Baker states that he has already started making edits to the document that was sent out for this meeting. Schwarz asks if maybe we should do a subcommittee before we do a work session. States she went through the document and there are many points that don't follow our ordinance and with Baker already making edits she feels it's not ready for review. Believes at least two sets of eyes before putting it out for a work session and final review would make it faster in the end. However, Schwarz states she cannot take on any extras at the moment, but she would be happy to pass the ordinances and any other relevant information to that subcommittee, but she cannot participate in it at this time. Berry states he would rather try to do it all at once in a work session, but allow Baker to make his edits prior to that work session so we can make the final draft at that work session. Baker states that a lot of his document was based on the Amherst document, but there are several items that do not apply to Mont Vernon. Berry states we should be able to complete it in one work session then, once Baker pares down the document to what applies. Schwarz agrees, but states that as the document is already undergoing edits before it was able to be reviewed at the meeting she feels it's not a complete document that's ready for even a work session. She would prefer not to schedule a work session or meeting until Baker is done with edits and ready to present for review so we can review it as a team, make hopefully just a few minor edits and be done with it since the Rules of Procedure has now been underway since July/August of last year. States we need to get something nailed down now, so if Baker is not comfortable with it at this point and is already making edits before we review it then us reviewing it now doesn't make sense because we may be commenting on something that isn't even in the document anymore. She feels that it is summer and members are going away and have plans and families and it is unfair to ask the whole team to meet for a work session when things aren't ready because that means there will be more work sessions and more meetings taking up more personal time. Ross states her feeling is similar and that she likes Berry's idea of just one meeting to review the completed document, but that she would really like to work on this item. States we find one day that works for everyone, perhaps a three hour work session and that's our time limit. Then it can be presented at the next meeting and voted in since we've all already worked on it and reviewed it. Baker says he will go through and edit it completely one more time. Schwarz states that Amherst is a Certified Local Government so they've included a lot of items from that program in their Rules of Procedure and they have different powers granted by their Town that won't apply to us. She makes the ordinance available to every Commission member so each member can review it prior to the review session. Berry says let's take this opportunity to review the ordinance and schedule a meeting in a few weeks to wrap this up in one meeting. Work Session is tentatively planned for: July 21 at 3:30 via Zoom

Grant updates: No updates but Becci does have receipts she needs to submit for reimbursement for certified mail delivery. Berry asks who is the contact for grant applications and Schwarz states she is for LCHIP and Moose Plate and Baker is for Lowes. Baker states that Lowe's deadline for announcements to begin is July 20.

Berry asks when LCHIP is going to start scheduling site visits. Schwarz says it is not listed on their checklist but they have not reached out yet.

Berry motions to authorize reimbursement to Schwarz for the certified mail expenses. Second by Billow, no further discussion, all in favor. Motion passed.

Fundraising Subcommittee: Schwarz states the subcommittee has not yet met this month, but that she has an email out looking for dates the subcommittee can meet. States that she only emailed Billow and Wilson because she thought the group had decided that Baker was going to take over the Historic Resources Subcommittee. Baker says he's made no moves on that subcommittee because he hasn't spoken to Fimbel yet and Schwarz states she didn't think there was a chair for that group and states we never chose a chair for either group to her knowledge. Billow agrees that at least for the Fundraising Subcommittee there was no chair voted. Baker states he would like to still observe the Fundraising Subcommittee meetings just to see what's going on there. Schwarz states anyone is welcome to listen. Schwarz states again her only concern is that between herself, Billow and Wilson they planned and executed a successful raffle with the kayak and the Historic Resources Subcommittee is floundering without direction. Berry states his wife is interested in becoming an alternate on the Commission and also working on the Historic Resource Subcommittee. Baker asks what is the process for submitting her name and Berry states he will handle it at Monday's Selectmen's meeting.

Berry motions to appoint Anna Rorbacher-Szok to the Heritage Commission as an Alternate member, second by Schwarz. No further discussion, all in favor, motion passed.

Baker states that the monies (\$2015) from the kayak raffle have been deposited to the Heritage Fund and that Ms. Cleary stated that the credit card money has still not been deposited to our account. Schwarz states yes, she had emailed Baker and Belinda Yeaton on June 14 stating that after dropping off the cash from the raffle in conversation with Laurie Brown she was not able to confirm that the credit card transactions had been placed in the account. Brown stated that a check should be written and deposited but it was unclear whether she would be doing that or expected Yeaton to do so. Brown did state that she had never received communication from the Heritage Commission regarding the acceptance of credit cards. In the email Schwarz suggested that perhaps Baker could reach out to Brown to see what works best and we can develop a plan going forward as the Commission's acceptance of credit cards should not make extra work for Yeaton or her staff. Schwarz further suggested scheduling a quick meeting between Baker, Brown, Yeaton and Schwarz so there is no further confusion. Ross asks if the money has been absorbed into the Town and Schwarz states no, it is sitting in a bank account that is not ours waiting for disbursement. States it sounds like Yeaton will just have to write us a check to be deposited and we need to determine how to proceed going forward. Baker states he will call Yeaton to work it out asap. Billow states that he can also ask Yeaton or Billow (in Yeaton's office). Baker asks that he have Yeaton call him. States that the current Heritage Fund Total is \$37,845 with the cash deposits but minus the credit card monies. Schwarz logs into EB2Gov and states we have \$350 sitting in EB2Gov based on quick math in her head but that Yeaton will have access to the reports to find the exact dollar amount.

• **August 21st Town Event:** Baker asks if the Commission is still planning to have a table at this event. Schwarz states that she can say that the Fundraising Subcommittee has not met in order to discuss this but that also she has not put any work into any of the events we have discussed for the remainder of the year and she will not until the whole team is on board. She states that Baker sent out his Activity Planning document for review tonight discussing the issues with the Kayak Raffle and states that she did the majority of the planning for that event along with Billow and Wilson. She states that she took on the majority of the work until it came down to the wire, she had sent out numerous emails asking for help with very little or no response from other Commission members. She states that it is a lot of work to do alone and it's unfair if it is assumed that she will continue to do projects alone. She makes clear that she is not saying she won't do events at all, but that this is why she has not done anything at this point. She wanted to wait until there was a regular meeting with all members present to have this discussion. Berry states we don't have much going on elsewhere besides Certified Local Government, maybe we should just do the fundraising as a group instead of having a subcommittee to be sure the whole team is focused on that as well. Baker says he was going to suggest that we focus on Lamson Farm day as that is more historically based. Schwarz agrees. Billow states that is what had been discussed at the previous subcommittee meeting. He apologizes to Schwarz for not being more involved with the kayak raffle. Says as we discussed previously we need to plan way ahead for events such as this and states both raffles this year had been planned and came together very quickly. Berry states that they seemed spur of the moment and rushed but that they were a success and Billow replies that success was at the stake of some of the members and that's not fair. Suggests we look way ahead so we can plan appropriately. Schwarz states Lamson Farm Day is the end of September so this is the time to start planning it. Also states that if you look back at the meeting minutes we discussed the kayak raffle at several meetings including regular meetings and subcommittee meetings, but that yes, in any event you can plan and discuss for months but when you get down to the last week or so things ramp up and everything has to fall together and go smoothly as well as quickly. Billow agrees the Kayak raffle was handled well, but that the first raffle of the year was very quickly done. Schwarz agrees that one was last minute but states again that for any event you can plan for an extended period of time, but you're still going to have that last push at the end where there is a ton to do to execute the event properly and all the planning needs to come into place and everyone needs to pitch in and it will be a lot of hands on busy work. Berry states yes, Schwarz did all the work, but part of the exasperation was that she was doing all the work and he and Baker felt that it was hectic for Schwarz and that they felt the process was rushed and if we had had a longer lead time with input from the whole group for a longer period of time it wouldn't have been that way. Schwarz states if the Commission wants to do away with the Fundraising Subcommittee she is fine with that, but that her only point is that until there is full team buy in on an event she will not begin work on that project. Billow states that a lot of the items that were mentioned as complaints or criticisms over the plans of the event were actually discussed in meetings with the whole group. Schwarz states that everything for the whole event was discussed with and voted on by the whole group in regular meetings. States the Activity Planning document suggests no less than two months planning for each project and that if you look back in the minutes this event was planned for at least that long. States that she understands where Berry is coming from, but that after repeated emails to the group asking for assistance, she made a personal phone call to Baker at home and said "I need support from you as my Chairman." In a text Baker responded he would be available at 3:30, but no phone call ever came from Baker. Instead an email was sent to the group at 5pm that Baker had had a conversation with Berry in which the two of them had decided to change everything from the dates of the event to ticket prices, which to her was a slap in the face after having put in so many hours and so much effort. She states that perhaps Baker did not mean for the email to sound the way that it did, but that Baker further stated that the changes would make it possible for Schwarz to take the weekend away stress free and then handle the project when she returns when in fact it would have created much more work doing damage control

and changing documents and advertising both online and in Town. She states that she can see how Baker and Berry feel that a subcommittee of 3 is not conducive to a group environment, but makes the point that it just took 15 minutes of conversation to see when our whole group of 5 could meet to go over the Rules of Procedure. If we have to do that for additional meetings for event planning it will definitely take longer to plan our events and we will accomplish less events and therefore less fundraising and that still won't do away with the end of the planning rush. Baker states that manning of the tables was the biggest sticking point and that he wasn't available for the dates the tables were planned for and Schwarz says he had indicated that at the meeting so she wasn't expecting him to work the tables on those dates, but that other members had said to pencil them in for specific dates, but that when Schwarz emailed the group on multiple occasions for their firm dates no one responded. Berry states this is why he feels we should not have a subcommittee because he feels that will get more commitment. Schwarz says she agrees with that. Billow states he didn't think that there was anyone who didn't want to go forth with the raffle during planning and Berry states that that was not the sentiment but that it happened so fast and people were confused by it. Schwarz pulls up the Meeting Minutes and states discussions began in Regular Meetings in April. Berry states that also, the whole group wasn't in on the decision making and that he and Baker thought that the whole group should have been a part of the decision making and Schwarz states that everything was discussed and voted on at the Regular Meeting and that was the time for discussion. Berry said he doesn't know and that it was just a messy deal. Schwarz says she disagrees entirely. Schwarz refers to the Regular Meeting Minutes dated May 13 and reads from these minutes the lengthy update and discussion including all plans and purchases to date, advertising efforts, and asking for Commission members to work tables. Berry states he just doesn't recall that and Schwarz states she knows he doesn't but that then the Activity Planning document came out using the Kayak Raffle as an example of what not to do and it's frustrating. Berry suggests that we move on and plan the next project as a group so this doesn't happen again. He states that it was a great result in the end and it's unfortunate that it bred some animosity among the group. He thinks we can move on and do better next time to work together and support each other better and have better participation in the process.

Meeting Minutes: Berry motions to approve the minutes as written, second by Schwarz, no further discussion, all in favor. Motion passed.

Other Business: Berry states he will update the group when the new Town Website is up and ready for training. Schwarz asks who they went with and he states Civic Plus. She states she really liked their presentation so she's happy to hear that. She also believes that as a Town Commission we can get a page for ourselves on the Town website.

Schwarz motions to adjourn

Meeting Adjourned: 8:35pm

Next meeting: August 12, 2021

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Schwarz

Secretary