

Provincetown Historical Commission
May 11, 2007
Minutes

Meeting called to order 9:00 AM

Members Present: Polly Burnell, Stephen Desroches, Eric Dray, Taylor Polites

Members Absent: Steven Milkewicz (excused), Char Priolo (unexcused)

Also Present: Doug Johnstone and Joyce Johnson

1. Approval of Agenda

Polly Burnell moved to approve the agenda. Polites seconded.

Vote: 4-0-0

2. Approval of Minutes

Burnell moved to approve the minutes from the May 4, 2007 meeting of the Commission. Polites seconded.

Vote: 3-0-0

3. Oral History Project

Doug Johnstone and Joyce Johnson were present to provide the Commission with guidance regarding next steps for developing an Oral History Project.

Johnson has been conducting oral histories/interviews on her half-hour radio program with WOMR for 30 years. She believes she has at least 300 oral histories. Her interviews cover the Provincetown/Truro area and she began with Raye Wells, Josephine and Sal Del Deo, Ciro and Patty, some coastguardsmen, etc. She also recalls more recently Carol Whorf Westcott managing a videotaped oral history project with the participation of Town Hall and the Cape End Manor/Council on Aging. Johnson's interviews are maintained in some cases at WOMR and also at her home. Burnell asked if the Commission could acquire copies of the recordings and what were the best ways to structure interviews.

Desroches suggested interviewees be provided with topics in advance so they could be prepared to talk about their memories. Burnell added that using pictures or individual's photo albums could help the interview process. Burnell also added that video is much more awkward than audio recording, which provides an intimacy that is missing when videotaping. Johnson concurred.

Dray related that the ultimate goal was to create a searchable website with recordings and text searchable transcripts of all existing oral histories and to continue the oral history project by targeting specific individuals in the community. Johnson commented that the Library has many oral histories as well and there may be text transcripts of them.

Doug Johnstone described his vision for managing an oral history project, which included continuing with recordings, although this would not be until 2008. He stated that he would gladly cooperate or work under the guidance of the Historical Commission if it developed an oral history project. He also said he may be able to contribute to transcribing audio recordings if there was a need. His long term goal would be to integrate images and recordings on the Historic Preservation Project website. He referenced how oral histories are presented on Nantucket's website. Dray and Johnstone discussed potential financing options if they agreed to explore hiring staff to work on the oral history project.

The following next steps were agreed upon.

- Polites will check with Laurel Guadagno at the Monument for their oral histories.
- Burnell will check with the Library to get a list of their oral histories.
- Desroches will check with the Martha's Vineyard Oral History Project to see what guidance they can provide for the Commission.
- Johnson stated she would make an effort to inventory her oral histories.
- Dray will redraft consent forms for oral history project. Johnstone suggested including approval for use of photos as well.

Desroches also suggested the Commission organize a History Summit between the various constituencies in Provincetown to provide direction for efforts for historic preservation and access. Institutions could include PAAM, PMPM, HC, WOMR, Doug Johnstone and the Historic Preservation Project, as well as individuals like George Bryant and Josephine Del Deo.

Given that there was no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: Friday, May 25, 2007 9:00 AM

Action Items

- Polites and Burnell will inventory surveys currently on file at Library to isolate those that are held at the MHC and not at the Public Library.
- Priolo will begin collecting detailed information on the existing oral histories to create an inventory of them.
- Dray will draft the HC goals for 2008 detailing the current priorities of the Commission to better bring awareness of preservation issues before the town administration.

- Dray will discuss status of Town Hall with David Guertin and what level of rehabilitation is needed to correct current issues so the Commission has a better understanding of the situation.
- Desroches will check with the Martha's Vineyard Oral History Project for additional information on managing an oral history project.
- Johnson stated she would make an effort to inventory her oral histories. Burnell offered to assist her in this inventory.
- Dray will redraft consent forms for oral history project. Johnstone suggested including approval for use of photos as well.