

## **Oakland County Historical Commission Meeting Minutes**

7:00 pm, November 13, 2023

BOC Conference Room

I. Roll call: Dave Decker, Dave Walls, Rosie Richardson, Stephanie Arwady, Kathy Mutch, Jerry Murphy, Carol Egbo; absent: George Milne. Guest presenter: Leslie Pielack, Birmingham Museum.

II. Additions/changes to this agenda: NONE

III. Approve Minutes from October 9, 2023: motion by Mutch; second by Richardson - approved

IV. OCHC Commissioners up for reappointment: Egbo, Mutch – use this link to reapply:

<https://forms.oakgov.com/79>

### **V. New Business**

1. Underground Railroad Project: Leslie Pielack presenting.
  - a. Five communities (Pontiac, Farmington, Royal Oak, Southfield, and Birmingham) participated in this research project to identify freedom seekers and abolitionists. Volunteer researchers, including several OCHC members, have used these findings to create a database. A 5-panel traveling exhibit featuring 9 abolitionists and 11 freedom seekers has been created and an interactive website is forthcoming. The Underground Railroad Project is funded by Michigan Humanities and volunteer contributions.
2. Discussion on proclamations from commissioners, recognition of local historical groups, having OCHC work with BOC communications team to make this A Thing:
  - a. Thanks to BOC Communications Director Sarah Moreau, we have the names of commissioners whose districts these freedom seekers and abolitionists were from. Regarding a proclamation, perhaps OCHC can request that the Board of Commissioners make a joint proclamation in February in time for Black History Month. Leslie has reached out to historical societies to receive the proclamation and they are on board. OCPHS is scheduled to host the Underground Railroad Project exhibit in January and February. This exhibit launch at OCPHS could be a good event for the BOC proclamation.
3. Funding request to BOC for additional UGRR exhibit posters:
  - a. To fund a second set of traveling exhibit banners (\$1700), donations are needed. OCHC could request the full amount from BOC or we can pull from our own budget, since we're not printing posters. We could work with Sarah Moreau to figure out how best to approach BOC, and what the proper procedure would be to request both the proclamation and exhibit funding.
  - b. Leslie applied for a second year of funding to continue the project, exploring other parts of Oakland – she was awarded some money but not the full amount requested; the awarded funds will cover the development of lesson plans for Oakland County schools and a student research/study-guide book, to be available

printed and digitally, but not the second set of exhibit banners. Carol will develop the lesson plan and Leslie will develop the book.

- c. Motion made by Egbo to **request \$1700 for a second set of banners**; seconded by Walls. **Motion approved; Dave Decker will reach out to Joanne Stringfellow.**
  - d. Murphy and Richardson discussed ways to incorporate the OCHC poster project, which could be a way to let host organizations have something related to the UGRR exhibit to keep, after the exhibit has moved on from their sites. Decker noted that the interactive UGRR website will be available, too.
- 4. Discussion on annual report to BOC – what topics? Our approach? Still waiting on a meeting date. **We are tabled for now.** But Egbo and Decker will create a timeline presentation that touches as many commissioners' districts as possible. Milne and Decker: make sure to emphasize that we're here to help BOC with this presentation, and show that OCHC can be of assistance as the America 250 anniversary approaches.
  - 5. OCPHS 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary – wants to meet in the BOC auditorium in May for annual members meeting, possibly get a proclamation from the BOC/County Executive.

## VI. Old Business

### a. Action Items

- i. Time Capsule Pricing/Update (Rosie) – Richardson has catalog resources and will find some durable options. Tabled until next meeting.
- ii. Certificate of thanks to Jim Craft – Certificate template received; Decker will send to Stringfellow for signature from County Executive.

## VII. Committee Reports

a. Website – nothing new to report; some updates are needed: posters' content, UGRR project, etc.

### b. At-Risk Properties

- i. Rochester High School– Murphy says there is nothing new to report; the building is still standing and the property looks like it's being well-maintained. Decker re: Roosevelt High School site (West Bloomfield) – think of it now as at-risk *contents*, rather than at-risk *property* (as the building reuse seems to a done-deal), school records, trophies, bell, awards, other things hanging on the walls that need to be rescued. Can OCHC work with Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society on this to come up with a plan to save and store the “stuff” and engage with the school board? Murphy re: admin building in Grosse Pointe, purchased by developer and will be repurposed as residences; put on the national register so that developer gets the tax credit – Rochester had tried to do this with the high school building, but there was some issue with the Register application / application process, maybe? (unclear) – can OCHC work with Rochester Avon Historical Society to help? **Murphy will see if he can figure out where they are/were in the application process.**
- ii. Payne-Waugh/Bloomfield Cemetery – C. Egbo contacted Bloomfield Township Clerk to see if he wanted help, but hasn't heard back.

- c. 1857 Map digitization – scanned, available digitally but needs post-processing, photographing Clarkston map (the Daves will talk to Library Director about taking the map out of the frame).
- d. Local history as a subset of American History
  - i. Poster Project Discussion: Involving cultural resources, current library list. Great Migration poster and future topic and locations discussion.
    - 1. **Decker will notify Pam Tremble that we're not reprinting the first two posters; our next printing will be the Great Migration poster that Milne and Richardson are working on.** We need to develop a list of topics. We should do Underground Railroad but wait until the traveling exhibit is up so our poster complements it. Other topic suggestions: mills, railroads, taverns (and put mills and taverns together); Civil War and Indigenous digital maps.
    - 2. African American History – See New Business for UGRR Update – Richardson: how do we incorporate Juneteenth? Egbo: Oakland County has a big Juneteenth event; how can OCHC support that?
    - 3. Essay Contest – Rosie to evaluate options for awards/trophies.
    - 4. Time Capsule – Eight communities engaged, capacity questions for capsule contents (Rosie) – see above action item)
- e. Historic House Preservation Guide – **Tabled; revisit after the first of the year**
- f. History Coalition
  - i. History Coalition Meeting Oct. 26, 2023, Rochester Hills Museum – Pat McKay host, well attended, new chairs: Maura Jung/Carol Egbo. **January will be a virtual meeting; Egbo, Jung, and Decker will meet to schedule quarterly meetings for 2024.** Will ask organizations to host and attend meetings. Meetings can take place in libraries, government buildings, etc. if small organizations don't have their own large meeting space. Anyone can host! Mutch: Could Pat McKay give a workshop for coalition members on how to share their township's history? Learning opportunities like this will be part of future meetings--Topics for future meetings, based on what members have said they'd like help with, include: funding, getting younger members, working with volunteers. Round-robins will change to a small group format for better time-management at these meetings.
- g. Preservation – **Tabled for next meeting**

## VIII. Revisiting Old Topics

- a. Archives – **Decker to set appointment with Lisa Brown/archivist to assess finding aids** –Walls and Egbo to assist. Goal is to learn what finding aids are already available and how we can get access to collections; we can help them choose priorities when it comes to digitization, like probate records and deeds.
- b. 1820 Proclamation – develop this plan, contact Bruce Hawkins, and assess options for framing/presentation.
- c. Finding Guide – Decker: it will involve county records and reaching out to history coalition members to ask what they have in collections that other people might not know about. Egbo: **For January Coalition meeting, ask members to identify 2 things**

- in their collections that are cool and might have interest beyond their location (like a Civil War letter, etc.)
- d. Tax millage – no news yet; still in committee as of one week ago
- IX. Upcoming Events:
- a. **December Commission Meeting – set for December 11, 2023 at 6:00pm** at the Oakland History Center in the Schoolhouse (Potluck) – spouses are welcome; **no shrimp or fresh peaches due to allergies, please!** Rosie is Potluck Chairperson. Plan for 10-20 people. Who's bringing what:
    - i. Jerry to bring dessert
    - ii. Dave Decker: Paper plates and bowls, cups, napkins, and plastic cutlery, coffee.
    - iii. George: (shrimpless?) Jambalaya.
    - iv. Dave Walls: beverages (soft drinks and water).
    - v. ??: Sandwich tray? Meats?
    - vi. Carol: Entrée (meat/casserole/pizza).
    - vii. Steph: veggie chili, veggie tray and bread/rolls.
    - viii. Rosie: Chicken.
  - b. Oakland County Cemetery Coalition Meeting November 28, 2023 at Waterford Oaks Activity Center. Milne working on an interactive cemetery map.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:55pm following a motion by Murphy and a second by Richardson.