

G.A.R. Memorial Hall Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes October 10,2017

National Guard Armory Room A, 50 Skyline Drive, Worcester, Massachusetts

Meeting Began at 5:30 p.m.

Present: Daniel McAuliffe, Michael Baker, Linda Hixon, Reynaldo Rodriguez, Tim Boucher,

Guests: Janice Thompson, Robin Conroy and Stephen Rolle

Minutes from the September 19, 2017 meeting was approved pending areas:

- 1) Conway to "Conroy". 2) Treasurer Hixon requested that the Board give her to at least until Veteran's Day to continue the project. The word "after" was placed between until and Veteran's Day.

Chairman Daniel McAuliffe opened the meeting making a brief comment about an article written by Nick Kotsopoulos. The article was written in Worcester Telegram & Gazette "Confederate Flag Captured by Worcester Infantry to be to be on display at NC Museum". Chairman McAuliffe relayed how the article was very positive about the Board and getting the word out about the things that the Board is involved with doing.

Old Business:

1. Chairman McAuliffe gave a report on the books located in the Worcester Auditorium. Chairman McAuliffe met with Wendy Essery the Archive Manager for the Worcester Historical Society. The purpose of their meeting was to discuss the removing the GAR books from the Auditorium and transporting them to the Historical Museum. According to Chairman McAuliffe the following would be needed:
 - a. Access to the Auditorium on Saturday November 4th
 - b. Boxes- Good ones that come from places like Staples and WB Mason.
 - c. Large clear plastic bags to cover the boxes
 - d. Small paper bags for the smaller books to protect from mites.
 - e. Truck (If the city cannot provide one, Chairman McAuliffe has offered to rent one

Chairman McAuliffe added that if there were duplicate books such as the GAR Encampments books if the Board would agree to having them sold. The money would come back to the Board's control. Everyone present by a show of hands was in agreement with the decision to sell any duplicates.

2. Chairman McAuliffe then talked about extending the loan agreements on the flags located in New Bern and at the Museum of the Albemarle. The process to extend is already in the works. Chairman McAuliffe shared an email that he sent to the Museum in New Bern. Chairman McAuliffe handed the email to Secretary Reynaldo Rodriguez to file with the GAR Board files located at the Armory on Skyline Drive.

Assistant City Solicitor Janice Thompson addressed the Board regarding the loan agreement process. Ms. Thompson relayed that there can be a single agreement for all three flags with the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources in North Carolina . Chairman McAuliffe added that during the 2 years of the loan extension the flags can be swapped between Museums.

3. Chairman McAuliffe opened up discussion on the June 13th vote that the Board had regarding artifacts under the control of the GAR Board going to the Historical Commission. Chairman McAuliffe read a statement which highlighted the importance of such a move. Chairman McAuliffe mentioned that items such as the flags and the bell and the bronze plaques need to remain the property of the City of Worcester. Chairman McAuliffe added that the Board which is not attracting new members and have no new projects. By not having projects to do and minimal membership then the artifacts are being put at risk.

Assistant City Solicitor Thompson handed out a letter written by her from the City's Law Department addressing the "G.A.R Hall Board of Trustees and Historical Commission". The letter outlined four possible scenarios. Ms. Thompson then went over each with the Board. A summary along with Ms. Thompson's input is as follows:

Option 1: The duties of the GAR Hall Trust would be assigned to the Historical Commission. This would mean a modification of the trust. According to Ms. Thompson that is going to require taking it to Probate Court and possibly special legislation. Then the city would have to do a reorganization plan. Ms. Thompson said that other factors have to be taken into account such as lineage. The GAR Trust requires a lineal descendant of a civil war soldier. Ms. Thompson also pointed out that the Historical Commission has its requirements also such as residential and professional. All of which might not be practical.

Option 2: Terminate the Trust. Then move the property to the care, custody and control of the Historical Commission. Ms. Thompson pointed out that that option will also require a reorganization plan to assign the additional duties. A problem to note is that once the records and relics are out of the Trust some protections may no longer be there.

Option 3: Assign the additional duties to the GAR Hall Board. The city has other historical items that could come into the care of the GAR Hall Board. A possibility is a different Board altogether with the GAR Hall Board's Trust staying intact as it becomes part of a different Board. This would require a reorganization plan. Ms. Thompson pointed out that this plan would not require court action or the attorney general.

Option 4: No action. Ms. Thompson said that an option would be to take no action at this time. It can tabled for a future decision.

Ms. Thompson did tell the Board that one thing that will need to be done is to get a real value of all the property. This is important as only some of the items have assessed and even that assessment could be at least 10 years old.

Chairman McAuliffe opened up with a question regarding option 1, confirming that the artifacts would remain in a trust. Ms. Thompson answered that they would remain in a trust with the Historical Commission being the Board of Trustees. Chairman McAuliffe followed to confirm that all property and money would be protected with option 1. Ms. Thompson said "Yes" in the Trust.

Chairman McAuliffe confirmed that option 2 would mean no trust and option 3 meant more duties for the Board. Chairman McAuliffe wanted to know what would those other items be. At this time Assistant Chief Development Officer Stephen Rolle addressed the Board. Mr. Rolle answered along with Ms. Thompson that there are no details yet. No one is sure what they are yet.

Trustee Michael Baker asked about a timeline on any options that had to go through the courts. Ms. Thompson answered that it was hard to tell. Basically it could go months or years and that she could check with the Attorney General's office. Ms. Thompson confirmed what the Board understood is that it is not a quick process. Even with the court there would still need to be a city reorganization plan.

Chairman McAuliffe addressed the Board and the guest as to his motivation for moving the Board in the direction of dissolving. According to Chairman McAuliffe it will be hard to tell what the Board would be like 20 years from now. He explained that we would all be gone but the flags and the bell and other stuff will still be there.

Guest Robin Conroy addressed the Board. Ms. Conroy is an archivist and through her profession she has seen many collections of records be dismantled because there was no Trust. Ms. Conroy said she has seen items torn apart or sold when a Trust gets dissolved. Her opinion is that it is best to keep the Trust.

Treasurer Linda Hixon added that she was not present for the June meeting. Ms. Hixon said that she disagrees with getting rid of the Trust or the Board. Ms. Hixon said that the Board is a viable Board. According to Ms. Hixon she doesn't think change is necessarily the right thing to do.

Trustee Baker added to look at the options. There is a legal side being court. And looking at it as a historian there are a lot of things in the city that have been abandoned. Trustee Baker used the General Deven's monument as an example. Trustee Baker said that options 3 and 4 might be better.

Chairman McAuliffe added that people need things to do. He relayed to the Board that members need to be participating members. If a person doesn't have the time to commit or the desire then the Board is just dormant Board.

Secretary Rodriguez said that he has been on the Board for 14 years and doesn't have the energy for the Board as he once had. He added that over the years the Board has had as little as 2 or 3 and even had one member go and come back. He also said that perhaps the Board is just in a 'rebuilding phase'. He said the next meeting will officially be his last and he will go where the majority wants to go.

Ms. Thompson addressed the Board and said that there was no obligation to vote on any options at this time. She pointed out that the Board's vote is not binding but advisement to the city manager. She said that the Board can table the item and revisit in the future.

Chairman McAuliffe asked that the city manager weigh in on it. Mr. Rolle added that it makes sense to see from 'city eyes' which would be the city managers point of view. The city manager has to consider all the various departments and boards/commissions.

Treasurer Hixon informed the Board that there needs to be a meeting with full membership so that Trustee George Maple would be present.

Chairman McAuliffe agreed that Trustee Maple should have a say in the matter. Chairman McAuliffe suggested that everyone write down their reasons and that he would take all of them, including Trustee Maple's reasons along with the minutes to the city manager.

New Business:

1. No new business.

Being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6:10 p.m.

The next meeting will be November 21, 2017, to be held at the National Guard Armory on Skyline Drive at 6:30 p.m. instead of the normal 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Reynaldo Rodriguez

Secretary, G.A.R. Board of Trustees