

Mather Homestead Foundation  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
October 26, 2022

Meeting called to order at 5:19pm

Attendees: H. Raker, L. Kennedy, J. Sini, M. McGovern, T. Sload, T. Van Elslander, L. Swenson, G. Morgan, C. Glassmeyer, P. Rashin, A. Janis, J. Foster (zoom), D. Boston (zoom),

Absent: R. Chilton, S. Berger, M. Edwards, R. LaMorte

September meeting minutes were approved with two amendment. Ginger asked them to be edited to say there is no \$6K limit on grants. Penny was not listed and was not in attendance.

Heather began with highlights from the ED Update. Financially, we are coming in ahead of projections. Oil and gas expenses were above budget which is to be expected given inflation and oil prices. Membership has grown significantly over the last year. Lisa and Heather are tracking memberships via Greenlight with Lisa reminding expiring members of renewals monthly. The board discussed how to make sure members are aware of the value of membership, including more prominently featuring member ticket prices and making sure those who obtain a membership passively through an annual fund donation know that they are members.

In the financial discussion, Heather raised the need for an audit. Maria, our bookkeeper, recommended we complete one soon. Lauren conferred she had received feedback from the foundation's accountant that an internal audit every 3 years is an industry best practice. Jennifer suggested that the foundation budget for an audit in 2023.

Tammy has been looking into size of the board. We are currently at 15 and would like to consider adding a few key members, including Sarah Nickerson. This would require increasing the board size were we to vote new members in immediately. A question was raised about whether neighbors should be added as board members. Penny Rashin shared best practices on board members as neighbors based on her experience. Penny felt they can be added but should excuse themselves from votes with conflict of interest. John Sini had a similar experience on P&Z and felt including supportive neighbors would be encouraged and they would not need to be excused from votes. The board felt Sarah would be a great addition but did not see the need to increase the board size since several members may roll off this summer. The board voted to add Sarah as a board member when a spot is open and could attend board meetings as a guest until then. Heather agreed to determine the best timing for introducing new classes of board members.

Lauren provided an update on the Jr. board. They have entered their second year and have a better idea of their scope and direction. Meetings will be held bimonthly. The focus will be on the fundraising via the Après Ski party as well as encouraging attendance at other events. Heather felt there was a need to get the Jr. Board more involved with the annual fund and will attend the Jr. Board's meeting 11/8 to discuss further.

Heather shared progress on the essay contest. It will include 6,7 and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Carol, Tammy, Maeve, Ginger, Penny volunteered to be on the essay review committee. Prizes will include a book. The question will be "Why are National Parks important for kids?" Ginger suggested securing the right to publish the essay. The contest will take place Nov/Dec.

Next, Heather asked how we should be working with the advisory board. Currently, we reach out to them for their areas of expertise. Carol suggested we have an event that includes all boards. Heather will look into June timing for an event.

Heather shared an update on grants. She and Lisa are working on a \$16,000 grant for the CT Humanities Operating Grant. They are also exploring additional grants that can be used for the continued refurbishment of the property.

The board asked for an update on the neighborhood concerns. Heather reported that neighbor M. Reilly kindly helped us understand how neighbors are watching the homestead. Some are counting cars and mid-size events and there are still concerns about usage. J. Sini shared that the P&Z discussions about the Harvest Festival were very supportive of the homestead. P&Z had approved for 300 people per hour for the 3 hour event and Heather and Lisa felt we came in right on target. Parking was all on site, fit into the field with excess space still available and did not impact neighborhood traffic or noise. John suggested inviting neighbors to view Stephen Mather exhibit in a private viewing.

On the buildings and grounds report, tree clean-up has been the major project for October. Davis Tree has volunteered approx. 40 more hours of volunteer work. Heather and Ginger have identified trees to remove.

The master planning project for the landscape design continues.

Diane is leading the effort and shared updates on vendor interviews. Rose & Carl has been helpful and is the most knowledgeable about the process. 50% funding could come from the state. They would help create a proposal of how to use fields, improve parking, create safe traffic flow, etc. His other projects include work on the Merritt, Choate/Rosemary Hall. They also recommended Tulip Tree Site Designs. Diane suggested we hold the vote on their involvement until both groups could meet.

Other vendors considered include Keith Simpson, cultural landscaper. Ania felt he was a good choice based on client roster and traffic experience. Ginger recommended we tighten the scope of his work and better define his end product. Penny also recommended we tighten up the deliverables to confirm what is in scope and what would be considered additional charges. He

also offers a talk on how local history has influenced the shape of our area today which would be a good addition to programming. Carol Glassmeyer suggested adding the language “to not exceed \$5K” to prevent excess cost.

Additional vendors included Jessica Mathison who had a more pragmatic approach on garden design and was more expensive.

For work on the house itself, Heather shared that she met with Dan Montague. He is willing to donate his time and work with subs on cost as well as have Ring’s End donate some materials. She also mentioned Carl Goodnow.

Ginger looked back into the latest report on the home’s repair needs and felt the scope needs to be refined based on the budget. Key repairs and additions that aid the long-term support of the home (i.e. rot repair, dehumidification, possibly AC, siding repairs and window repair) should be done first before more aesthetic repairs like painting or “nice to have” repairs like stairs and the elevator.

Heather also raised the question of the Playhouse and shared a sample playhouse that could be purchased online. Total cost would be approx. \$35K. The board felt this was low priority and should be further discussed along with landscape design. Carol asked if we could just remove the current one which needs some repair. Lauren questioned whether it is considered a 4<sup>th</sup> structure under P&Z guidelines. More information is needed before we remove it.

Diane closed out the grounds discussion, identifying Immediate next steps to be 1) identifying grants and 2) selecting the right contractor.

Heather provided brief highlights on recent events, including the opening of the Stephen Mather exhibit:

- Kids Corner – big hit, 5 senses of the national parks
- Open hours – by appt and invite groups, encouraged to bring people in
- Exhibit – lots of ideas for groups, scouts, enrichment at elementary schools, 6-12 social studies
- Encouraged to come to other upcoming events, including Cheese education & tasting

Lisa shared an update on the Annual Appeal. Letters are dated Nov 1 and will be available to us Monday 10/31. Please return by the following Monday 11/7. Board members are asked to add their name to envelope and a note on letter. The goal is \$140K.

Heather wrapped up the meeting by sharing the event calendar for 2023. Our strategy is to focus on our best events, sticking to what worked for 2022 and ensuring events match the

mission. There may be a need to refresh the Barnraiser theme but we will discuss further in a future meeting.

The meeting adjourned was adjourned at 6:46pm.