



ED Update December 2, 2022

Little Free Library!

- We have installed a “little free library” between the barn and the main house. Includes kids books focused on our central themes of American History and National Parks/Conservation

Essay Contest

- 11 submissions expected from students in 6, 7 and 8 grades from Stamford, Darien and Corinth, New York! No New Canaan. Will have to work harder to reach those kids next year.

Annual Fund going well

- \$55K to date with 93 gifts
 - o Last year same time period also 93 gifts totaling \$46.8K. up 17.5%
 - o We are on our way to reaching our \$25K goal in new or increased gifts (We are around \$17K now)
 - New gifts include \$3,000 from new neighbor, \$5,000 from a donor who loves our literary evenings, \$2,500 from the generous Pelleys who came to hear Acabella.
 - o Pledges still to be collected \$62.5K
 - o Thank you for getting letters signed! You will hear from us when your contacts make gifts so you can thank them.

Financials

- We are in good shape -\$16K operating income as of December 1
 - o If we just collect \$62.5K in pledges we'll have a profit of \$46.5 – conservative estimate.
 - Also can take \$8K from endowment
 - o Variances
 - Revenues: Events have brought in \$57K in profit vs. \$36.5 budgeted – ahead by \$20K. Additional CT Summer at the museum grant ~\$3K, venue rental ahead by \$1K, \$1.5K from credit card points to cash, membership ahead by \$3K, tours ahead by \$1K.
 - Expenses: STM exhibit will be \$5K higher than expenses, general maintenance and landscaping/lawn we are ahead thanks to \$10K of work done pro bono by Davis Tree.

Buildings & Grounds/Master Planning

- Master Planning group recommends the following ... will be discussed at our board meeting:
 - o Hire Dan, sub of Fox Hill Builders, right now to do the highest priority repair work to address rotting wood and damaged shingles, trim, windows, gutters, etc. - pay for entirely ourselves with donated materials and time, ~\$20k

- Hire Heritage to do a Cultural Landscape Report and master plan without using grant money, they can start in the spring when they are available, we can set a budget for the work - \$20k-\$30k?
- Hire Dan to renovate the playhouse with funds raised by the Junior Board, ~\$25k, and do the work in the spring
- Apply for a Survey and Planning grant to hire APS to write specs and create drawings for most of the remaining work recommended in the CAR - ~\$200k of work. This grant does not require a match.
- With the specs/drawings, apply for a Historic Restoration Fund to pay for the repairs
- Clean Up
 - Davis Tree has completed clean up of area behind barn and tree removal – very generous!!
- Garbage
 - Working on moving garbage out of the little room off kitchen as it is an eyesore to those who enter and also smelly! Will also allow us to use this room as a “welcome center” once we clean it up
 - New garbage container down by barn

Grants

- Operating support grant from CT Cultural Humanities submitted (received \$16,100 this year) – waiting to hear
- Plan to submit grant for APS to do follow up work with board approval

Archiving

- Hal Miller continues to work on archiving our materials.

P&Z

- Heather met with Fred Doneit (Darien P&Z) on 11/15 regarding neighbor issues. He continues to hear from a few vocal neighbors, in particular Tyler Blackwell (see email below sent by Tyler to P&Z with his specific concerns). Fred believes that Tyler is speaking for a group of about 10 to 12 neighbors. You'll see that he has many accusations that I simply think are unfounded.
- Fred emphasized that the commission recognizes our contributions to the community at large and the support of the town. But he clearly needs to be responsive to our neighbors. He asked that we provide quarterly updates on our events which of course we will do. While I do believe that P&Z is very supportive of us, I do not think that we should submit an application any time in the near future, e.g., 2023. Neighbors are still too sensitive. I think we can continue to provide great mission based programming within our limits over the next year.
- ***** I would like to offer rentals for 30 people and under. Will then notify neighbors – to be discussed at meeting**

STM Exhibit

- Our exhibit has been well received!

- We have welcomed Fall Harvest families (~600 people), Darien Garden Club (30 people), 69 people before Jonathan Waterman lecture, small group of neighbors, Darien Men's Club (30 people), New Canaan Charity League Sustainers (~10 people)
- Upcoming groups – second Darien Men's group coming next week. Will continue to reach out to groups in new year.
- Working on a kids exhibit that we could take to schools.

Events/Programs

- Current/recent
 - o 10/28 Night at the Museum – for kids – really fun! ~25 kids had a blast. Truly bringing history to life!!
 - o 11/9 American Farmstead Cheese & Wine Education and Tasting with Plum Plums Cheese
 - o 11/30 Homesteading 101 Workshop: Holiday Greenery – 26 people per session = 52 people. LOTS OF FUN! Raised over \$2K.
- Upcoming 2H22 events – Please support these events!
 - o 12/2 Con Fuoco Holiday Concert
 - o 12/10 A Visit from St. Nick
 - o 12/22 K-2 Cocoa & Cookies – make cookies for Santa
 - o Yoga ongoing
- 2023
 - o 1/18 Art at Mather: American Vistas – from the Hudson River to National Park Lands – presented by Artscapes
 - o 2/8 Keith Simpson will discuss the history of our area from a landscape perspective
 - o 2/16 An Evening at the Mather Tavern

Communications

- email list subscribers 1,667 ... up from 1,568 last ED report, up from 1,119 last year.
- Instagram 1,199 followers ... up from 1,153 last ED report, up from 1,038 last year this time.

Mark calendars

- 2022-23 board schedule
 - o December 7 – 4:15 pm, place MH barn, zoom link available
 - o January 18 – 4:15 pm, place TBD
 - o March 8 – 4:15 pm, place TBD
 - o April 26– 4:15 pm, place TBD
 - o June 14– 4:15 pm, place TBD
 - o July 26– 4:15 pm, place TBD

From: Tyler Blackwell <tyblackwell@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 7, 2022 11:23 AM
To: Doneit, Fred <fdoneit@darienct.gov>
Subject: RE: Mather Homestead

Fred,

In my opinion, the greatest concerns and issues are as follows:

- 1) **Safety** - The biggest issue for my family is safety. They have numerous events throughout the year with unlimited alcohol served. Some of these events have >150 people. They are sending all of these people out onto the very dark, narrow roads of our neighborhood after hours of drinking. They never have a police officer or any other type of official monitor at the events. This is very dangerous. I have personally seen people leaving the Homestead party barn and weaving down the center of Brookside Road in front of my house. I would at the very least like to know when they are having these drinking parties so I can keep my family off of the roads.
- 2) **Traffic** - The streets around the Mather Homestead are not equipped to handle up to 150 cars at the same time. The roads are narrow and there are no stoplights. These large events cause meaningful congestion at the four way stop at the corner of Brookside and Stephen Mather roads. They also cause abnormal wear and tear on the roads. Furthermore, Brookside road is a popular place to run or ride a bike and the significant increase in traffic related to the Homestead events creates an additional safety issue.
- 3) **Noise** - Many of their events are held outside because the party barn is relatively small. The sound from their outdoor parties and concerts reverberates throughout the neighborhood. Some of their parties go until late at night and have kept my children up way past their bedtime. Last fall they had a very loud outdoor concert and the guest musician addressed the crowd using profanities.
- 4) **Cars on the Lawn** - As you may know, they only have actual parking spots for possibly 10 cars. Therefore, they haphazardly park cars all over the property when they have events. Having a large number of cars parked all over the Homestead's lawn 30 or more times a year greatly diminishes the character of the neighborhood. There seems to be no actual parking plan. The plan is to just park on the grass wherever you can fit your car.
- 5) **Temporary Tents** - In the spring, they had two events with large temporary outdoor tents. The tents were unsightly and were left up for many days both before and after the events. One of the tents wasn't secured and was blowing around the property for a few days.
- 6) **Deceptive Behavior** - The Homestead has a history of acting in a deceptive and disingenuous manner. It began back in 2019 when they secured the amendment to the special permit without notifying any neighbors. They introduced the amendment in the P&Z meeting as part of the barn reconstruction approval and made false representations about consulting with neighbors. The notice that went out in 2019 to property owners within 100 feet only described the barn reconstruction and said nothing about the proposed amendment. In the 2021 calendar year, they had more than 20 scheduled mid size events presumably exceeding the max of 10. In early 2022, they tried to again sneak through an amendment to the special permit without speaking to any neighbors. Fortunately, this time the proposed amendment was described in the notice that went to adjacent property owners and neighbors were able to organize to rally against it. Over the summer, they sent out a letter to neighbors saying that they were no longer going to rent the party barn out to 3rd parties. Then they proceeded to have at least three third party rentals this fall including the Fall Y'all cocktail party and a rehearsal dinner.

