

Somersworth Cultural Commission

Meeting held at City Hall on Wednesday, 19 February 2020: First Draft

In attendance:

Councilor Matt Gerdiung	Chair
Councilor Rick Michaud	City Councilor
Celeste Feren	Commissioner
Jenne Holmes	Commissioner
Maureen Jackman	Commissioner
Pius Charles Murray	Secretary

I. Call to Order: At 5:00pm by the Chair

II. Meeting Minutes: The Chair asked for a volunteer to take the meeting's minutes. Mr. Murray volunteered.

III. Discussion of Past Commission Projects:

The Chair asked for a brief discussion of some of the Commission's past projects to get him up to speed so that the Commission could plan what to undertake next.

The unused Fisher Cats tickets surfaced as the only incomplete project from 2019. There was considerable general discussion of how to proceed with using them. The general consensus was that the planned bus trip added too much cost. The Chair stated that they are still usable for the 2020 season. The consensus was to determine how many tickets there are, for how long during the 2020 season the tickets would be good for, and if the Fisher Cats had any special events planned

RoadChair volunteered to find out this information for the next Commission meeting. Ms. Jackman suggested, based on what the Chair found out, that the Cultural Commission develop a marketing plan for the use of the tickets. Recommendations besides offering the tickets to the general public included a raffle or making them available to city hall staff.

The Chair also asked both Ms. Feren and Ms. Jackman about any plans for a student exchange with Thedford Mines in Canada. Ms. Feren reported that nothing specific had been planned after the initial excitement died down with Mayor Hilliard's discussion with the Mayor of Thedford Mines. Ms. Feren explained that in order not to overburden students the SHS planned its trips on alternating years; thus 2021 would be the year for the music department. The next available year for international trip would be in 2022; Ms. Feren could attempt to plan an excursion to Thedford Mines then during the student trip to Quebec. Discussion was tabled until a later time.

IV. Other projects:

(1.) The Chair suggested establishing smaller, attainable goals for the Commission in order to get its identity known in the community.

(2.) Road Signs/Historic Markers:

The Chair recommended identifying historical places within Somersworth for which a road sign paid for by the State of New Hampshire could be erected. The Chair would be in touch with the responsible state government department to get more precise information such as the application deadline. From his past correspondence, he remembered that the local community was responsible for identifying a site or sites, writing a short description of the site's importance, and recommending where on a state highway the historic marker would be placed. The Chair also stated that he thought the state would furnish up to ten such historic markers each year; the final decision was based on whether a community had previous markers, and how many previous markers a community had.

The general consensus of the Commission was to consider requesting such an historic marker for the Hilltop School and environs. Other potential sites included Forest Glade Cemetery which is already on the National Historic Register and perhaps Horne Cemetery, although the Commission believed that its non-notoriety was part of its charm which could also prevent unwanted vandalism and visitors traipsing through private property to get to the cemetery.

The top three community sites to consider were: (1) Hilltop School; (2) Forest Glade Cemetery; and (3) The Mills.

(3.) Calendar listing of Flag Raisings for 2020:

Councilor Michaud said that he would get a list to Mr. Murray for inclusion in the minutes. Councilor Michaud was under the impression that the Mayor wanted the Cultural Commission to assume sponsorship for all of the flag raisings this year. In the past, the Cultural Commission sponsored the cultural and ethnic flag raisings only. There was a general consensus to make the flag raisings a priority for the Commission whereby as many Commissioners as possible would attend.

(4.) Banners:

Ms. Holmes mentioned that at one time the Commission had planned to hang banners downtown celebrating the five founding groups of Somersworth. Price could be a determining factor as well as how many banners would be flown downtown, on what schedule they would be changed, and who would put the banners up and take them down. This initiative merited further discussion the Commission agreed.

(5.) Youth Cultural Arts Show:

Ms. Jackman suggested that the Cultural Commission consider sponsoring a Youth Cultural Arts Show. Ms. Jackman further suggested that such a event would be held in conjunction with the Children's Festival in June and entail a contest of Middle and/or High School students. Additionally, adding youth art to the annual Somersworth budget book could serve as an additional way to get students involved and to highlight student achievement in the arts. Once again, the Commission remained open to further discussion.

(6.) Cultural Commission Mission statement:

Before proceeding to assume too many projects, the Commission decided to create a brief Mission Statement to inform the community of its purpose. Suggestions should be sent by email to the Chair who would synthesize them before the next meeting.

(7.) Regularity of Cultural Commission meetings:

The general consensus of the Commission was to hold quarterly meetings after the March 2020 meeting.

V. Next Cultural Commission meeting: Wednesday, 18 March 2020, at 5:00pm.

VI. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn at 5:55pm was made by Ms. Holmes and seconded by Ms. Feren. Motion was adopted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Pius Charles Murray

(Mr.) Pius Charles Murray
Secretary