

## ASTM Minutes for December 29, 2020

In attendance: Carolyn Boudreaux, George Long, Courtney Blitch, Margaret Blitch, Larry Bergeron, Barbie Bergeron, Annie Weaver, Martha Gruning, Steve Davis, Stewart Eastman; Not attending with notice: Marian Roper, Peg Scimemi, GERALYN LIPS; Not attending without notice: Susan Foster; Emeritus member attending: Ron Blitch; Guest: David Blitch

- Meeting was called to order at 5 pm by Courtney Blitch.
- Minutes of the previous meeting were approved unanimously: motion to approve from Annie Weaver, seconded by Barbie Bergeron.
- Old Business:
  - George Long reports that no docents are needed at present but a recruitment push will be needed at a later date when the pandemic eases. While the town leadership has not officially canceled events, the parish has.
  - Financial report - Martha Gruning said there is nothing to report because there have been no deposits or other changes. Bank balance is \$30,466. There should be a financial gain forthcoming due to the fact that the old alarm monitoring fee is no longer being paid. Martha continues to look into an option to participate in a municipality account in order to earn interest.
  - Preservation Project - George Long - nothing to report
  - Grants - Annie Weaver reports that she is looking at options for government grants and is in discussion with town leadership to obtain documents that would show that we are eligible for such grants under the municipality of the township. Ron Blitch suggests pursuing the Eli Lilly Foundation for funds to build an elevator and the Briggs Foundation for additional funding. Ron Blitch agreed to assist Annie with her grant work. They will explore federal grant funding as well. Three major capital projects that need funding are the elevator, a bridge connecting to the Pavilion, and a shade option. The Bergerons suggested a parachute-type shade structure and mentioned that they have one at their property.
  - Proposed Quilt Exhibit - no report, but it was mentioned that this is a good time to gather ideas.
- New Business:
  - Election of officers: nominations were opened in November. The slate of nominated officers was unanimously approved by acclamation. The officers are as follows:
    - President – Courtney Blitch (one year term)
    - Vice-President – Barbara Bergeron
    - Secretary/Recorder – Margaret Blitch
    - Financial Manager – Marian Roper
  - Discussion of Museum Events:
    - Christmas Village Display - Town staff set up the Christmas Village display in the museum. Although the museum board had agreed not to display the village this year to ensure safety

during the pandemic, the Town elected to put up the display in the interest of encouraging Christmas spirit. In any case, the museum was not opened at any time for the public to view the display. Town staff agreed to disassemble it and pack it away until next season. It was suggested that clearer communication between the town and the Museum Board would avoid situations like this in the future.

- Ron Blitch reiterated that the museum board is charged with raising money for capital improvements and that the town is charged with providing funds for routine maintenance. He suggested a future meeting to decide on a list of priorities and to work together with the Town to implement them.
- There was additional discussion about ongoing confusion of the roles of the board and town leadership regarding the responsibilities for maintenance and decision-making about the museum and park. George Long and Ron Blitch both mentioned that clear communication and good working relationships with the town's elected officials and staff are critical to effectively managing the museum.
- George Long will continue to update events on Facebook and the website as needed even though the Town is now in charge of those events. George will work with them during this transition to ensure the correct information is provided but it is up to the town to make firm decisions on when and whether events take place during the pandemic. If anyone has ideas about how to safely have Push Mow, let George know and he will bring ideas to Town leaders. George mentioned that the next three months are a good time to plan for events for the fall or such time as the pandemic eases and public events are once again able to take place.
- Possible future events - Stewart Eastman proposed several events that may be developed after the pandemic is over. Possible events include a poetry reading, annual Abita-related photo exhibit, and some kind of event related to the railroad and its importance to the development of Abita Springs. Martha Gruning said that John Preble had previously offered the display cases in the gallery space of his hotel for satellite exhibit space.
- Larry Bergeron reported that he has a donor interested in giving a New Orleans City Park-style train to the museum and park. It does not carry passengers but is driven by an "engineer". The Bergerons will send photos of the train.
- There was additional discussion about placing more emphasis on the artesian springs and the role of spring water in the development of Abita Springs. There was discussion about possibly placing markers around town to direct people to the free water source near the roundabout.

Meeting adjourned at 5:58 PM

Next meeting scheduled for January 26, 2021 at 5 PM

Tentative ASTM events in 2021: Busker Festival 3/21 and En Plein Air 4/23-25

Local Events: Push Mow 2/7 and Whole Town Garage Sale 3/27