

**Historic Preservation Commission Meeting  
Lewis House, 277 Main Street, Norwich, Vermont**

**Minutes of the February 13, 2013 Meeting**

**Attending** Nancy Hoggson, Bill Aldrich, Roger Blake, Peter Brink, Phil Dechert (CLG Coordinator), Cheryl Herrmann, Nancy Osgood, Anne Silberfarb (Planning Commission Liaison), and Stuart White. Also present were Judy Brown (Director of the Norwich Historical Society), Chad Finer, and Gregory Sharrow, Co-Director and Director of Education at the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury, Vermont.

Greg was scheduled to come to the HPC meeting on January 16, 2013, to discuss oral history projects with a focus on such a project in Norwich that would be within the CLG (Certified Local Government) grant application guidelines. Inclement weather prevented his attending that meeting.

Nancy Hoggson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:05

**The Three Grant Projects Update** Phil updated us on the CLG grant status of the 3 projects for which grants have been received: Beaver Meadow, Root District, and the website. Because of the reduction in the cost of the Beaver Meadow Project, monies that were allocated for that project could be transferred to the website project increasing the amount available for the consultant's portion from \$1,350 to \$2,400. We don't have to use the entire sum but rather could return the surplus and retrieve it again next year. The Town will sign new agreements for these 3 projects. Everything is in line – contract and money. Phil still needs volunteer reports from those who worked on the Beaver Meadow and Root District projects.

**Capturing Oral Histories** Roger spoke of the pleasures and rewards of reminiscing as he did with others at the Bugbee Center about businesses in White River Junction.

**Veterans' Project** Chad Finer spoke of his veterans' project which will be the focus of the next exhibit at the Norwich Historical Society. As in the past, Chad is combining oral history with a photograph of the individual. With the help of Richard Neugass, who is his liaison with the Lyman Pell Post of the American Legion, he is videotaping each veteran as he describes his service in the military. A black and white photograph of the veteran will complement the video.

**Discussion with Greg Sharrow centering on defining a potential HPC project within the CLG guidelines that would document past and present agricultural practices in Norwich. Oral history would be a major part of the project.** Nancy Hoggson introduced Greg Sharrow who led a wide-ranging, brainstorming session about what such a project could encompass. Below is a distillation of the many comments and observations that were made.

- Project could have multi-components including photographs of barns and other farm structures similar to what was done by the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation and their Barn Project.
- Could document changes in land use – ask Tom Wessels, author of *Reading the Forested Landscape*, to lead walking tours or lecture
- Could use maps to document farm sites and their evolution and tie it to the information gathered by the Ancient Roads Committee

- Could plan/offer a school program that would ask students to discover via maps how the land where their own home sits was used in the past
- In gathering oral history need to decide if we interview only people who currently live in Norwich or whether we broaden it to include those who have moved away and/or those who live elsewhere but might be knowledgeable about current or former Norwich farms and farming and land practices. Need to decide if we are gathering history of the present, past, or combination of both.
- Could research what has happened to prime agricultural land in Norwich. (In Norwich much of the farm land was subdivided in the early to mid-1980's. Also include impact of I-91.)
- There are fewer resources the farther back you reach. Richer record if you concentrate on the present.
- Key stories are often passed by generation to generation.
- Could use QR codes for stories
- Could have a "quest" component to the project
- Could revisit Lewiston via audio
- Project should focus on people and their stories rather than on structures.
- Important for project to have a public interface and have materials that persist across time with an appropriate storage mechanism. WAVE files are standard for saving audio.
- Need to come up with a framework for the project. Choose a topic that is large such as agriculture and then focus more concisely: produce/dairy/sheep/cattle farmer, farm-to-plate, effects of climate change on agriculture (past, present, future), influence of farmers' markets, CSA's, etc.
- Could compare emergent agriculture with older farming practices
- Peggy Sadler (former Norwich resident) and Lisa Johnson (farmers' markets and Vital Communities) would be good sources of information.
- Could focus on different agricultural practices – those intended to produce a living income, family vegetable gardens, gardens for ornament, health, etc.

**Next step:** As a result of the discussion, Nancy Hoggson and Peter Brink with the help of a couple of members of the HPC will distill the above ideas, determine what the primary objective is so that in the end the HPC can submit a grant proposal that is relevant, important to the Town and the HPC, and meets the grant criteria. The grant application deadline has yet to be announced but should be later this spring.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Osgood