

Meeting Minutes  
St. Louis Park Historical Society  
June 2, 2015

Attending: President Ted Ekkers; Vice President Bonnie Burton; Treasurer Henry Solmer; Trustees Sue Ainsworth, Jeanne Andersen, Dale Lapakko, Paul Linnee, Jeff Liss, John Olson, and James Robbins; member Don Schimmel.

**GOVERNANCE**

Review and Approval of Minutes: Ted moved for approval of the May meeting minutes. Dale seconded and the motion was passed.

Treasurer's Report: Paul moved for approval, Bonnie seconded, motion passed.

Membership Update: Bonnie submitted a written report (Attachment A). Ted moved to approve the membership report and Dale seconded. The motion was carried with Jeanne voting nay. Jeanne strongly advocated the sending of a thank you letter by mail for each and every donation or membership received by the Society.

Collections Update: Jeanne reported that a woman and her family had rescued some class pictures and other items from Most Holy Trinity School. Demolition had already begun so the items were somewhat damaged, but still most valuable to the collection.

Depot Hours: In the past we have had the Milwaukee Road Depot open on Saturday afternoons, and we discussed whether we would do this again this summer. Because our current office hours at the Dakota office are at the same time, and the reference materials that most people came to look at are now at our Dakota office, it was decided that we would have one Open House instead.

Annual Meeting: Our Annual Meeting is scheduled for September 15. Ted and Sue suggested that we hold an event in conjunction with the meeting to involve members, perhaps with a meal or other entertainment.

**KEY ACTIVITY UPDATES**

Monkey Island: Last month we heard a presentation by Diane Steen-Hinderlie, who is spearheading an effort to save and preserve the rock formation at the Minnetonka Blvd. roadside park area known as Monkey Island. Paul moved that we agree to act as fiscal agent for the group, with the understanding that they would do their own fundraising. Bonnie seconded the motion and it was passed.

Antique Parade Recap: Jeanne and Sue reported that the event on May 16 was a big success, with the appraisers evaluating over 100 items. Jeanne has sent thank you letters to all of the donors of refreshments, and will send letters thanking all of the participants.

Street Sign Fundraiser: The City has delivered a pallet of old street signs to the Depot, and the next step is to take inventory. Paul volunteered to assist Jeanne with this task. Ted will work out the ordering procedure.

Parktacular: Ted worked with the Ambassador organization on a treasure hunt for the candidates and reported that it went well. Jeff has lined up a convertible for the parade. Ted made up stickers to hand out and other handouts were discussed. Jeanne reported that pencils with our website on them had been used in the past. A vote was taken and it was decided to order pencils to hand out in addition to the stickers. Ted asked for volunteers to walk in the parade and to represent the Society at our booth at the Expo in Wolfe Park.

Administration: Jeanne's stepson has donated a new computer to run our phone, and hopefully it will work better. Ted has worked up a new stationery template and has had envelopes printed, both with our new logo.

## **FUTURE PLANNING**

Fundraising Feasibility Update: Paul reported on the results of his 17-question survey about the feasibility of conducting a capital campaign to raise money for a St. Louis Park History Center. 206 responses were received: 134 from people who had received it directly by email, and 72 who received it on Facebook. Of those, 76 percent responded positively about supporting a St. Louis Park History Center.

Business Membership Drive: Ted had a meeting with Bill MacMillan, who is on the board of Discover St. Louis Park, a member of Rotary and the American Legion, among other Park activities. They discussed approaching businesses about supporting the Society in general and a History Center in specific. Bill recommended that the first steps were to increase visibility of the Society in the community, increase membership, and raise funds to hire a professional to conduct a capital campaign. Ted, Bonnie, and Paul will investigate further. Ted will work up a letter, and he and Jim will follow up with phone calls.

Email Communication: Ted outlined his efforts to create an online newsletter that would be emailed to our members. A prototype has been worked up and the program will start this month.

Programming: Ted presented a proposal to establish a series of programs that would connect issues of today with St. Louis Park History. The format would consist of a panel, moderated by a member of the Society, with representatives from various viewpoints on a local topic. The Society would introduce the program with an overview of the history of the topic, and the panel will discuss current ramifications. Each program would last 90 minutes and be recorded by Park TV. The Society would seek a sponsor for each program, with Society members admitted for free and non-members paying a recommended \$5 donation. Other fundraising opportunities would be to sell merchandise or hold at a restaurant that would give us a percentage of the dining bill.

Ted presented a list of 20 potential topics, and each member indicated the five that they would be most interested in seeing. Topics included railroads, sports, liquor, schools, religious institutions, local government, etc. Ted proposed that the program start in September.

## **OPEN TOPICS**

Boy Scout Visit: We were contacted by a Boy Scout Troop that wanted to visit a Historical Society. Ted made a presentation to the Troop at their meeting place, since the Depot is now filled with street signs.

Hennepin Historical Meeting: The second meeting of Hennepin County Historical Societies is scheduled for June 27. Ted, Jeanne, and Henry plan to attend. The topic is how to convince your city to support your organization.

Volunteering and Board Seats: Five board seats will be up for election at the Annual Meeting in September. Ted has contacted the volunteer coordinator for the City, and will also investigate Boardnet, which is a service that lists open board seats and people wanting to participate on a board.

Junior Achievement: Jim reported that he has completed his six sessions with 30 sixth graders at the Middle School. He presented a curriculum developed by Junior Achievement, focusing on entrepreneurship in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Principal at the school is interested in finding old photos of the school, and Jeanne is working with Jim to find some.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting is on July 7 at 7pm at our office at 3546 Dakota Ave.

**Attachment A**

*ST. LOUIS PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP REPORT*

June 2, 2015 - By Bonnie Burton

1. Member count. The membership database shows 216 current paid members as of June 1, 2015. We continue to receive renewals as a result of a membership renewal mailing in April. Another membership mailing is planned for late June or July. The planned group for this round will be members who joined 2-4 years ago, but have allowed their memberships to lapse.
  
2. Administrative concerns. We continue to define the administrative process for handling memberships. I have confidence we're on track toward a system that is simplistic, cost-effective, and professional. Some of the steps of the process include:
  - New member welcome letter – determining the best format. Ted and I are considering experimenting with a welcome email from the President, in an effort to save time, office supply costs, and mailing expense. The board will recall that the organization no longer sends membership cards. I believe that practice stopped sometime in summer last year.
  - Book mailings to new members. Please note, most memberships are renewals, NOT new members. I had hoped for a better response with the 'free' book incentive.
  - Tax letter – is it really required? The members' cancelled check is what defines a contribution, not a letter from the organization. However, we'll likely remind members in their welcome email that their contribution is tax-deductible, in most cases, and they should check with their tax advisor. Alternatively, a reminder could be included with the year-end emailed newsletter.
  - Membership assistant. I intend to look for an assistant to help me with some of these tasks.
  
3. Annual Comparisons: 2011- 2015:

Year	No. of Membership Payments	Amount (\$)
2011	120	\$2,390
2012	94	1,860
2013	252	5,300
2014	236	5,526
2015 (1st 6-months only)	130	\$4,532

To summarize the above data, we're on track in 2015 to have one of our best membership years yet! This is likely due to a combination of: modest increases in membership rates; planned efforts to increase the number of business benefactor donors; continued renewal membership mailings; and hopefully, increased presence with our programming events.