



Meeting Minutes
St. Louis Park Historical Society
November 4, 2015

St Louis Park Historical Society
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Attending: President Ted Ekkers; Treasurer Henry Solmer; Secretary Jeanne Andersen; Trustees Sue Ainsworth, Jane Hagstrom, Dale Lapakko, Paul Linnee, John Olson, and James Robbins; members Don Schimmel, Lucille Thornsjo, Diane Steen-Hinderlie and Nancy Gertner.

GOVERNANCE

Review and Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the October 6, 2015, meeting were reviewed and approved as written.

Treasurer's Report: Jim noticed some discrepancies in the budget and Henry will make corrections.

Membership Report: Ted presented the membership report on behalf of Bonnie Burton. The current membership number is 293. Give to the Max is coming up on November 12 and NordicWare has promised to provide \$25 gift certificates to their store to donors of \$25 or more. Jeanne pointed out that this was not technically a "match" but a "premium," and the tax deduction for the donor would be reduced by \$25 if the offer was accepted. We will include some general language in our thank you letter saying that the donation will be tax deductible as admissible by law.

Communications Report: Ted reported that Jane, Bonnie, and Joanna McPeck are working on the next *Re-Echo* and are making decisions about the number of copies printed, whether to print it in color, etc.

Collections Update:

- Buildings are being demolished for the Shoreham Development, and the Society has excellent documentation of them: Bader Development provided a historical report, photos, and building plans for the ASAP building; Jeanne and Emory Anderson interviewed the owner and took photos of the Battlefield Militaria store; and the other houses are included in the Manhattan Park study that Jeanne and Emory did last summer.
- Jeanne inventoried our collection of Park High Homecoming buttons, which grew considerably with the Mutchler collection. She also went to the High School and went through the *Echos* to collect Homecoming information and created a spreadsheet that lists our opposing team, button slogan, and date of game for each year. We also have two buttons from other schools that played Park for their Homecoming.
- A woman came in for office hours with photos that she found inside her wall. They turned out to be of the family of Ted Felber, who enlisted in World War II in 1943, five days after his daughter was born. He died in the Battle of the Bulge in 1944-45. This started much research into the Felber family and their homes on Oxford Street.
- Photos of the inside of the building at 4601 Highway 7 were posted on Facebook, prompting research into the history of that building and of Professional Instruments, Inc., which occupied it for many years. It will likely be demolished and was included in a study of buildings along the light rail route.

- We have sold four *Echowan* yearbooks for \$50 each and hope to sell more after we conduct an inventory of the many extra copies that are in storage at the Depot. According to Facebook there is a great demand for them and these could be a good source of income. Donations of yearbooks continue to come in; we received four immaculate copies of books from the 1980s this month.
- Our grant request to purchase the second phase of our microfilm wish list was turned down; MHS preferred that we complete the first phase before going on to the second. We are still awaiting receipt of the 37 reels of microfilm that were ordered with the \$3,000 grant we received previously.

PROGRAMMING

Discover St. Louis Park will be providing us with an additional \$500 for programming costs.

Family Archiving Workshop: Kathy Spence Johnson will be holding a workshop that will give advice on how to safely store and display family artifacts. This workshop will be held on Saturday, November 14, at 2pm.

Depot Lighting: Ted reported that lights have been purchased and are at the Depot; the City will be installing them. After conferring with the Elmwood Neighborhood Association it was determined that the lights would be timed to go off at midnight. Jane and John will organize the refreshments, including hot chocolate. Jeanne will provide 8x10s of historic photos with winter themes.

Historic Connections: Kathy and Joanna will work on a program for February.

Ideas or Organizers: Ted asked board members to come up with program ideas and to volunteer to organize events.

SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Ted noted that any involvement in school curriculum would need to be discussed with the school's International Baccalaureate coordinators. Mayor Jeff Jacobs has made SLP history presentations to second graders for many years but will discontinue the program and we may want to ask new mayor Jake Spano if he intends to take it over. It was mentioned that Deb Wold was creating themed displays in the High School and we may want to participate in that effort. Jim did participate in the Kids Voting initiative of the League of Women Voters again this year.

BUILDING COMMITTEE UPDATE

1. PLACE

The City bought the Skippy/McGarvey building at 5725 Highway 7 with the intent for it to be demolished and redeveloped. A non-profit developer called PLACE has been working with the City to build a 14 story building (yet unnamed) with residential and retail space that would be located between Highway 7 and the light rail station. Paul and Ted met with developers at PLACE and gave us an overview of the project. They are very receptive to the idea of the Historical Society being a tenant of the building, but have an aggressive timeline and would need to know by the beginning of February, even if it is in the form of a Letter of Intent.

2. The Walker Building

Sue reported that the Walker Building is for sale. This is the two-story portion, built between 1892 and 1898. The building had many upgrades in 2000 and we could move in right away. It has a total of 18,000 square feet, including 5-6 offices on the second floor. Behind the building is a garage that could be made into a meeting space. There is also ample parking. The asking price is \$825,000; with a 30-year mortgage, monthly payments would come to \$4,026. The only way we would not have to pay property tax is if everyone in the building was also a non-profit entity; one idea is to turn it into an Arts and Cultural Center with other groups in the Park. If there was a third party purchaser who would then rent to us, they might be able to take a tax deduction for the cost of any free or discounted rent, and/or tax credits to make improvements to this highly historic building. There are other interested parties, so we would have to act soon.

3. The Former Reformation Church

Nancy Gorman talked about the importance of the architect of the building and that it is included in a book by Larry Millett about Midcentury Modern architecture. There is a pending purchase offer by a developer, but the proposed development is unlikely to be approved. The property, taking up three acres, is zoned R-1, which is low density, for single family homes or civic use. In order to get the amount of money the church wants for the property, it would need to be rezoned, but the City has said on record that it has no intention to rezone the property.

4. Park Theater Building

Jeanne reported that she got in contact with a mutual friend of the building's owner. He has offered to set up a meeting with the owner to talk about any alternatives there might be to rent part of the building at no or low rent in exchange for tax abatement or tax credits. She will report back when her friend contacts her.

Next Steps: Ted will be talking to Kevin Locke, the Community Development Director for the City, and Susan Schneck from Friends of the Arts.

ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING

Being no further business the meeting was adjourned. The December board meeting will be on Tuesday, December 1, at 7pm at the SLPHS Office.