

G.A.R. Memorial Hall Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes September 19,2017

National Guard Armory Room A, 50 Skyline Drive, Worcester, Massachusetts

Meeting Began at 5:32 p.m.

Present: Daniel McAuliffe, Michael Baker, Linda Hixon, Reynaldo Rodriguez, Timothy Boucher

Minutes from the June 13, 2017 meeting was approved.

Old Business:

1. Chairman Daniel McAuliffe reported that on April 26, 2017 that City Solitor Jennifer Beaton assigned Assistant City Solicitor Janice Thompspon to assist the Board with legal matters in regards to filing G.A.R. Board controlled property with the City Clerk and renewal of current loans.

2. Chairman McAuliffe attended the City Council meeting held on July 18, 2017 with an agenda item specific to placing on file with the City Clerk all properties under the Board's care. Chairman McAuliffe was allowed to speak to the Council to give updates on the artifacts as well as loans. The Council gave the Board praises for its work. At the meeting the Council moved to accept the inventory of the G.A.R Board's items being stored at the Worcester Historical Museum. Councilor Lukes added having the issue of the property also refered to the Veterans & Military Affffairs Board for informational purposes. Chairman McAuliffe then showed the Board the completed document that is on file with City Clerk which lists all the G.A.R. property to include the Confederate Flags and the Bell of the CSS Albemarle. Further, he reported that T&G reporter Nick Kotsopoulos wrote a great article about the Board and the artifacts. The City Manager even commented that the Board members are "Deligent Guardians".

3. Chairman McAuliffe reported that he met with the Veterans & Miliary Affairs Board on August 15, 2017. There he explained to the committee members the role of the G.A.R. Board on the preservation of the Civil War artifacts under its care. The V&MA Board took no action. The praised the G.A.R. Board for our work.

4. Treasurer Linda Hixon gave an update on the disposition of the books stored in the Worcester Auditorium. According to Treasurer Hixon the person that she was to work with, Robin Conway no longer works for the Worcester Hisotrical Society and is now at Clark University. So far there has not been a replacement as the Museum staff is stretched out. Chairman McAuliffe volunteered to find out if there is going to be a replacement. Treasurer Hixon requested that the Board give her to at least until Veteran's Day to continue the project.

5. At a July 25th meeting, Chairman McAuliffe met with City Manager Ed Augustus. The purpose of the meeting was the possible disolving of the G.A.R. Board and transfereing responsibilities to the Historical Commission. Prior to Chairman McAuliffe's meeting, the city manager did

research on the G.A.R. Trust. Legally what was discovered is that any movement from the Trust is a process. During the meeting Chairman McAuliffe did give the city manager suggestions made by Treasurer Hixon in regards to added responsibilities for the Board which include city monuments.

6. Chairman McAuliffe and the Board's City Liaison Tim Boucher attended an August 30th meeting with Assistant City Solicitor Janice Thompson at City Hall to discuss the legalities in dissolving the G.A.R. Board and transferring responsibilities to the Historical Commission. The meeting which lasted about 45 minutes involved various scenarios and considerations. There were pros and cons according to Mr. Boucher. One highlight as to the Trust is the power shifting of ownership of the artifacts. Chairman McAuliffe believes the Trust itself should protect the artifacts. Treasurer Hixon requested that the Board get some more information and an explanation of how it would work. According to Treasurer Hixon even Trusts can be manipulated. Chairman McAuliffe assured the Board that Ms. Thompson will be at our October 10th meeting to explain it us in better detail. Chairman McAuliffe added that he will be attending the October 5th meeting of the Historical Commission in order to speak to them and will invite them to our October 10th meeting.

7. Chairman McAuliffe handed out documents at the beginning of the meeting which he wanted everyone to look at as he addressed the items. Three were emails between himself and Alyson Rhodes-Murphy the Director of Collections at the Tryon Palace, Lindy Cummings the Research Historian and Bill McCrea the Director of Regional Museums (Division of State History Museums) in North Carolina. All three emails addressed the loans of the Board's controlled Confederate flags. Tryon Palace being located in New Bern, North Carolina is close to the actual battle field where the flags were captured by Union forces that included soldiers from Worcester.

- Initially at the April 11th meeting, the Board had voted not to allow artifacts currently in Elizabeth City, North Carolina to be moved to the Tryon Palace. Chairman McAuliffe explained that he did not have all the information due to a lack of communication in a timely manner with Tryon Palace. It was pointed out that as long as four months passed by without any answers. A length of time that is unacceptable with today's technology. Of concern was the request of Tryon Palace to place the flag in a "school house" known as the Academy Museum. The Board collectively did not believe that the flag would be protected from both theft and or fire (destruction).
- Chairman McAuliffe reported that he has been and now in contact directly with a people such as Alyson Rhodes-Murphy. The various concerns were discussed via email.
- One of the documents distributed by Chairman McAuliffe is entitled "Tryon Palace: New Bern Academy Museum Facilities Report". The report explains the facilities security and fire prevention measures, its environment, and where the flag would be located and its additional security measure. The Board read the flyer. A discussion started with

Secretary Reynaldo Rodriguez feeling satisfied with the security measures which was his chief concern. The location of the flag away from contact with UV rays in order to protect the flag from fading was also mentioned. Treasurer Hixon pointed out that the report does not really address if there is fire suppression. She informed the Board that it is important to know how long it would take for a fire to be put out and/or the fire department to respond in case of fire. Trustee Michael Baker likes the idea that the museum is accredited. Accreditation means that specific high standards are being met by the museum.

- Chairman McAuliffe stated that the museum will cover all transportation and insurance costs from Elizabeth City to New Bern. Chairman McAuliffe explained that for 12 years he wanted the flags to make it to New Bern. He said that he has been in regular contact with Skip Riddle, a North Carolinian in the possibility of making that happen. He said by having it near the actual battlesite it adds a lot more exposure to the flags. Chairman McAuliffe added that the word "Confederate" is not very popular today even though it's the battleflag which is chiefly what anti-Confederate flag folks often imagine. Chairman McAuliffe would like to keep the flags down in the South as long as possible while the climate changes and any unjustified fuse is made over them. Chairman McAuliffe said that members of the Sons of Confederates and Sons of Union Veterans have both expressed to Skip Riddle their admiration for the flags. Treasurer Hixon added that with regards to insurance the Board should make sure that floods are included especially with the question of hurricanes in that area and being so close to the ocean. Chairman McAuliffe said he will get the answer to that as well as fire suppression being used at the Museum.
- The April 11th vote to not loan a flag to the Academy Museum was discussed. A new motion to rescind the April 11th vote was made. A roll call to vote to rescind the April 11th vote (the vote to not loan a flag to the Academy Museum) was made. By a roll call vote: Secretary Reynaldo Rodriguez "Yes", Treasurer Linda Hixon "Yes", Trustee Michael Baker "Yes", Chairman Daniel McAuliffe "Yes.", Trustee George Maple was not present to vote. By a vote of 4 yeas and 0 nays, the motion to rescind the April 11th vote which would have denied the loan of a flag was passed.

8. The Board then had a discussion on loaning a flag, "The Freedom Flag". Chairman McAuliffe read the proposed vote: **"VOTED, that the G.A.R. Memorial Board of Trustees hereby authorizes its chairman to execute an agreement between the G.A.R. Memorial Board of Trustees and the State of North Carolina, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (D.N.C.R.) to loan certain of the Trust's historical relics including the three (3) Confederate flags for display in up to two (2) museums operated by the D.N.C.R., specifically the Museum of the Albemarle and the New Bern Academy Museum, on terms and conditions deemed by the chairman to be in the best interest of the Trust."**

There was a discussion prior to a vote. During the discussion, Secretary Rodriguez pointed out that the flags are 'war prizes'. The soldiers brought them back and were very proud of them. They kept them and they were passed down as memorials. However over time they have become more valuable to the South. Just as our flags now located in the South would be to us up here in the North. Secretary Rodriguez reminded the Board that the flags would be much safer in the South than up here considering how things are currently going. Secretary Rodriguez said that when the North was putting up monuments, the South also got into the monument building. Some monuments went up in the South even though they lost and many living there did not want to see them. By today's standards however the people of today are making different choices and as popular as putting them up were then, taking them down is becoming popular in the South. Treasurer Hixon told the Board as long as the items are held in proper 'context', meaning as a part of history. She added as long as they are in museums where they belong. Trustee Baker commented that as long as they are on display getting foot traffic then Worcester is on the map. Chairman McAuliffe pointed out that we still have ownership. He relayed a story where he felt the Bell of the Albemarle could have been brought back to Worcester and that there could be events in the future that would make it appropriate for Worcester to put the items on display here.

After the discussion a motion was made to Chairman McAuliffe's bolded statement above. A roll call vote was made:

Secretary Reynaldo Rodriguez, "Yes", Treasurer Linda Hixon, "Yes", Trustee Michael Baker, "Yes", Chairman McAuliffe, "Yes", Trustee George Maple was not present for the vote

With a vote of 4 "yeas" and 0 "neases" the following passed:

"VOTED, that the G.A.R. Memorial Board of Trustees hereby authorizes its chairman to execute an agreement between the G.A.R. Memorial Board of Trustees and the State of North Carolina, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (D.N.C.R.) to loan certain of the Trust's historical relics including three (3) Confederate flags for display in up to two (2) museums operated by the D.N.C.R., specifically the Museum of the Albemarle and the New Bern Academy Museum, on terms and conditions deemed by the chairman to be in the best interests of the Trust."

New Business:

1. Trustee Michael Baker said that he was asked to mention to the Board by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War the General Charles Devens Statue. The Board was asked because of the Board's involvement in the refurbishing of the Soldiers & Sailors Monument located on the Worcester Common. Chairman McAuliffe said that the Board did talk about the monument. Treasurer Hixon confirmed that it was mentioned before as a possible project. However the Board recognizes that it has to be outside the Board. The monument is the Worcester County Civil War Memorial and there is no county government. Mr. Boucher pointed out that the monument does not belong to the city. Secretary Rodriguez informed the Board that the State

has responsibility for it. Treasurer Hixon said maybe the Board outside its own entity could organize a plan to clean it up.

2. Chairman McAuliffe closed out the meeting showing a T&G (Telegram & Gazette) photo of the Davis Monument. The monument used to exist near Lake Avenue. Chairman McAuliffe said there were great views from the tower. He said that the city owned it but didn't take care of it. It could have been fixed but like many things it was ignored. It was taken down in 1969. Chairman McAuliffe pointed it out as a reminder of how important it is to preserve artifacts.

Being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6:25 p.m.

The next meeting will be October 10, 2017, to be held at the National Guard Armory on Skyline Drive.

Respectfully Submitted,

Reynaldo Rodriguez

Secretary, G.A.R. Board of Trustees