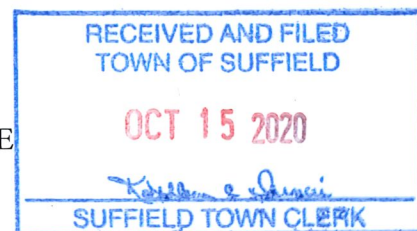


MINUTES OF THE 350TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 28, 2020 - - - 7:00 P.M.
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM CONFERENCE



Present: Beth Chafetz, Cari Cieri, Kacy Colston, Matt Joyal, Norm Noble, Caroline d'Otreppe, Eric Remington, Art Sikes and Lester Smith

Also, in attendance: Sharon Bruno, Kris Lambert and Kathy Werth

Meeting of the 350th Anniversary Committee called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Review Meeting Agenda – Beth Chafetz moved to approve the agenda as proposed, motion approved unanimously.

Review and approve the minutes of the 9/9 meeting – Postponed to the October 14 meeting to allow more time for committee members to review.

Public Comment – None

Events, Programs & Projects Updates

Commemoration Program – October 12 commemoration program will be an all-virtual event. It was not possible to make a compelling case to justify the cost of a drive-in event because we were not able to offer assurances of how many people would actually attend.

Viewing draft on shared screen - 9 sections of the program as discussed at our last meeting. Suffield High School may have a band performance for us to add. As suggested, historian Bill Hosley was able to provide a five minute "keynote" presentation for us. Do we want to include a short introduction to *Our Town: The Story of Suffield, Connecticut*. Beth suggested that we ask Producer/Director Paul Sanderson to say a few words. Kacy committed to contact Paul. The film has been unchanged since final updates were made in mid-July.

Fireworks – Arrangements have been made to have The Friends of Suffield host the fireworks and secure the insurance coverage required to protect the town and its residents. The Board of Selectmen agreed to authorize a grant of 350th Anniversary funds to the Friends to cover the cost of the event. Caroline asked about coordinating parking for people who want to have a good view. There will be some parking available in the McAlister Intermediate School, but the point of arranging for the 600-foot high fireworks is to keep people from gathering in large groups during the pandemic.

Beth asked about fire concerns since our area is experiencing a drought. The Suffield Fire Department will deploy trucks all around the school property to be able to respond immediately to any fire. Pyrotecnico and our Fire Marshall will track the shells to make certain that all shells have been accounted for before Pyrotecnico leaves the site on Saturday night.

Lester recommended that promotional material for the Fireworks be updated to make it very clear that this year the fireworks will be several hundred feet higher than in previous years and can be viewed from a greater distance.

Car Parade - Lots of additional signups since the October issue of the Suffield Observer was published. We will accept new entries until October 9 or until we have 50 vehicles. - *Viewing draft poster on shared screen* - We have a call into the town attorney to find out how strongly we can enforce our request that no political or partisan content be allowed on parade vehicles.

The Suffield Police Department assigned Ryan Burrell and Geoff Minor to coordinate the parade. There will be a meeting later this week to finalize the parade route with them, and to see if it's possible to add Halladay Drive in the west and Suffield Meadow Drive in the east. *Viewing proposed route on shared screen* - Art asked about the direction the parade route will take. The parade will proceed counterclockwise from SHS so that South Main, Main Street and North Main are fairly early in the parade route.

Norm asked about including *Miss Ellie* the birthday cow in the parade. There is some interest in doing that. Norm and Kacy will discuss outside the meeting.

Is there any part of the parade route that could be viewed by people living in the Suffield House and Suffield by the River? Concern is that it would be very awkward to send the parade down Canal Street, and that the way the buildings are laid out, few residents would have a window where they could look out and see the car parade.

Caroline asked if there is a marker to highlight the first cigar factory on Ratley Road, which is on the parade route. The marker is small and tough to see. Caroline suggested that we find a way to exaggerate the marker to raise community awareness.

Lester asked about a reviewing stand, and there will not be one. Caroline asked if we needed extra help at SHS. Eight of nine committee members are planning to be in town for the festivities if help is needed.

Outdoor Decorating Contest – To participate in the contest properties must be decorated by October 7 and decorations need to stay up at least through October 13. To participate people have been asked to sign up via email, voicemail or Facebook message.

Viewing the Suffield 350th section of the Suffield Observer on shared screen - Cari and Sharon purchased 8 gift cards from local businesses to be given as prizes for the contest: Bar Fore Grill, Feather & Bloom, Highland Park Market, Pentimento, Suffield Pizza, Three Figs, Tosca and Zantos. The businesses were excited to have been asked. Hopefully it will help increase business.

Caroline asked about who would be judges for the contest, and she suggested that the judges not be committee members. Caroline offered to recruit artists in town. Beth suggested that we mix and match committee members and others. Cari offered to contact Michelle Zawawi about recruiting an SHS student judge.

Do we want to ask contest participants to submit a photo, or do we prefer to send judges to view the properties? The committee decided to provide the judges with the addresses and ask them to view the properties by Sunday, October 11.

Suffield Stories from Another Half-Century – 350th committee members were invited to attend the Board of Selectmen meeting on September 23 where the Suffield Stories book was a topic of discussion. As a follow-up from that meeting the committee was asked to have every member review the book and consider their support for it as a product of the committee and a representation of the Town of Suffield.

There was a question as to whether Selectwoman Kathie Harrington had been tasked with proofreading the whole Suffield Stories book or just the commemoration keepsake program.

Note: Subsequent review of the 9/23 BOS minutes indicates that the assigned task is for review of the keepsake program.

There are several stories in the book where a statement by an individual author may have legal implications for the town. The town attorney has been asked to read the entire book and identify all potential legal risks so that we can get them addressed. The book needs to include a disclaimer making it clear that the stories included are in the words of the individual authors, and do not represent town policies or the opinions of town officials. The town attorney will draft this language to be added to the beginning of the book.

There are also concerns about including notes on COVID and social equity in the book because they are not topics that are not purely related to Suffield. Beth Chafetz wrote both topics and did her best to make them factual and to relate them to Suffield impacts.

Matt pointed out that members of the Board of Selectmen would not support publication of the Suffield Stories book if it includes content on COVID or social equity. Beth stated that Suffield Stories is intended to be an informal history of the past 50 years of Suffield told by residents, and that it would be a disservice to the town to not address things that are currently going on. COVID has clearly affected the functioning of the town and many people in Suffield are very invested in social equity concerns and regularly attend board and commission meetings to comment that these concerns be to be expressly addressed.

History is not always pleasant. Biography of a Town, published for the 300th anniversary addressed the role of the Ku Klux Klan in our community. Caroline pointed out that in the Wikipedia page for Suffield there are several paragraphs about slavery in town.

Matt stated that because we are including a disclaimer that these stories are the opinions and recollections of the writers, it's really not a factual book. Beth shared that much of the content covering churches and community service organizations are written by the people who are deeply involved in those organizations. The education and history chapters are largely a compilation of data from 50 years of town reports, with little editorializing. Matt asked if the Suffield Stories book becomes a work of fiction, does that eliminate any of the bind that we are in? Beth responded that until we hear back from the town attorney, we don't have a good sense of how big the legal issues actually are.

Caroline shared that she thinks that we would be doing the history of Suffield a disservice if we don't address COVID, and that it has had such a huge impact on how we are celebrating the 350th anniversary.

Beth reiterated that the legal issues are one thing and the inclusion of the COVID, and social equity issues are another, and she would like to have a sense of what the members of the committee think.

Lester wanted to comment that the first time ABAR Suffield (anti-bias anti-racist) came into The Observer several months ago, it was very clearly defined as to what that meant. What has been around for decades is BLM, black lives matter, and it has been rejuvenated because of recent killings, and that led to the group in Suffield being organized. For months ABAR Suffield has been demonstrating every week. It's really part of Suffield and it's important that it be reported.

Matt understands that social equity is a hot topic right now, but it is political, and he thinks it does not belong in the book. It's not just Suffield, it's the world, and the book should just be about Suffield. Matt asked if we wanted to make a motion to take a vote about whether the disputed topics should be included in the book.

Eric voiced a concern that these are huge issues today, but that we are suffering from recency bias, giving greater importance to recent issues, but if we were writing this book 5 years ago it would be a different topic that we don't even remember now. Because it's what we are dealing with today it clouds our judgement. This is not the forum or the group to have that political debate. Our purpose is to build a sense of community, and if we take on a political issue, regardless of what side of the issue we are on, we are creating divisiveness, and we are going to fail in our mission. He recommends that we do not include the social equity issue, but he could live with including the COVID topic.

Matt made a motion to vote on the inclusion of the COVID topic, yea or nay, whether it stays in the book, and Caroline seconded the motion. The motion passed with 6 votes in favor of including the COVID topic in the book, 3 votes opposed and no abstentions.

Matt made a second motion to vote on the inclusion of the social equity topic, yea or nay, whether it stays in the book, and Art seconded the motion. Norm shared his opinion that he is sure that in writing about the social equity topic Beth tried to be as neutral as possible, but that the issue is political, and he does not think it should be included in the book. Beth reported that during public comment at the 9/23 BOS meeting, the members of the public there were vociferous in their support of having both topics included in the Suffield Stories book and they did not understand why we would choose to leave out either topic in a history about Suffield. The motion passed with 6 votes in favor of including the social equity topic in the book, 3 votes opposed and no abstentions.

If you notice something else in the book that you think needs a second look, please contact Beth directly.

Field of Flags – Work is underway to have all 350 flags go up on the green on Friday, October 9. They will stay up through Veterans Day, November 11. As of right now 273 of the flags have sponsors. This is a better sponsorship ratio than the initial FOF budget was based on. Norm asked if there were enough volunteers to assemble the field of flags. The team organizing the FOF work have a group of volunteers identified. Norm said he would be willing to help as well.

Community Outreach

Suffield anniversary beverages at local restaurants and Suffield anniversary beer – Cari, Sharon and Caroline recruited 10 local businesses to do special things for the commemoration

including adult beverages, special sandwiches and entrees, floral arrangements, and even an anniversary beer.

Business tie-ins with the 350th - One local business is interested in giving away Suffield 350th tee shirts with the 350th logo on the back and his business logo on the sleeve. Do we have a policy on the use of the 350th logo in a way that promotes our celebration and their own business? Eric pointed out that the logo belongs to the town, and that we should make sure that it's use benefits the celebration or the town in some way. We need to get back to the business and ask if they would like to become a 350th sponsor. Recommendation is that we review our sponsorship solicitation materials, and that we reach out to the town attorney for an opinion on how to address this. Caroline thinks we should be really careful about use of the logo since we have another year that we will want to use it.

Communications & Publicity

The October issue of the Suffield Observer – Feedback has been positive so far on the 8-page Happy Birthday Suffield section.

The commemoration keepsake program - Question for the group, the plan for the keepsake program has been to include much the same material as was just published in The Observer. The committee agreed that it made sense to hold off on finishing the keepsake program until later in October so that material from commemoration weekend can be included.

Other ideas for building excitement around the October 10-12 weekend – Town of Suffield Communications Director Kim Worthington is going to do another email blast to the community and another press release that will be picked up by the Journal Inquirer. Caroline asked about coverage in the Hartford Courant. The Courant usually includes local events in a regional community news section on Thursdays. They are also among the news outlets that receive town press releases.

Fundraising

Commemorative merchandise – *Viewing Shop Suffield "swag" on shared screen* - These are some of the Suffield products that we have been selling at the Farmers Market on Saturdays. We just put this flyer up at Suffield350.org so that people can order products now that the farmers market is shutting down for the year. We will be adding the new Kent Memorial Library ornament and the Hilltop Farm ornament to the flyer shortly. Cari suggested that we promote our swag at the schools too. Caroline suggested that we promote our books and the film on the order sheet as well.

Suffield in Stitches Quilt Raffle – The library does not currently have enough staff to be able to sell quilt raffle tickets for us, but we are invited to set up our Shop Suffield store in front of the library and they will help us promote sales.

Grants - The Suffield 350th recently received a \$5,000 grant from the J. Gladwin Cannon Trust to help with the cost of the commemoration program.

Suggestion - we should ask Highland Park Market to use some of their display space to help promote sales of the Suffield Swag. We might also approach Chuck Alfano about borrowing some space in the plaza near Dunkin Donuts.

Finance

Updates to the budget proforma – Recent activity includes the addition of the JGC Trust grant, a reduction in the estimated cost for the drive-in commemoration, and about \$4,000 gross income from the sale of our history books and Suffield swag.

Public Comment – None

Adjournment - Motion to adjourn made at 8:43 pm by Beth Chafetz, seconded by Art Sikes. Motion approved unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Kacy Colston, Committee Chair