

Gloucester Lyceum & Sawyer Free Library
Saunders House Committee – Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 1, 2017

The Monthly meeting of the Saunders House Committee was held on Thursday, June 1, 2017 at Sawyer Free Library.

In attendance: Mern Sibley (Chair), Prudence Fish, Deborah Kelsey, Jane Mead, David Rhineland, and invited guest, Meredith Fine

Welcome and introductions

Committee members introduced themselves and spoke about their reasons for serving on the Committee.

Current status

- Meredith explained the current Sawyer Free Library (SFL) structure. Meredith described different potential models for working with the Saunders House.
 - SFL is an independent public tax-exempt corporation created by statute. Open meeting and open records law apply to everything SFL does. The City pays for materials and salaries for most Library staff (who are actually City employees); exceptions being the bookkeeper and minute-taker. SFL has its own budget and bank account. It is governed by a Board of Directors.

Options for the Saunders House

- Meredith described potential models for working with the Saunders House.
 - Create a completely separate independent 501(c)3 for the Saunders House (SH);
 - Library Board/Corporation maintains ownership of the SH with this Committee making recommendations;
 - Place the SH into a trust with a tax id and fiduciary duties of a trust; would have to be voted on by the Corporation;
 - Something in between.

Some history

- The SH title states that “the property” must be used for library purposes.
 - We are not entirely clear on how “the property” is defined.
 - David Rhineland suggested that Meredith analyze the Saunders House title and report her interpretation to the Committee.
- Jane asked if an analysis has been done by the Architectural Barrier Board or another ADA commission for a definitive interpretation of what makes the building accessible or not.
 - Deborah stated that by 1976 standards (the most recent analysis for ADA compliance) Saunders House is considered accessible. It would not, however, be considered accessible by current standards.

- Any renovations now would require all parts of all connected buildings be accessible by current standards.
- In the past decade the Corporation has spent ~\$500,000 for SH renovation and stabilization.

Saunders House in the future

- Pru wondered if the SH has to be severed from Monell for the new Building Plan. There is no firm answer to that question and a couple of options have been discussed.
 - Both heating systems need updating and would have to be separate whether or not the buildings are connected.
 - It is not suitable for books and stacks as library use, and making it suitable for that would likely mean eliminating the historic features. Could be library usage such as public meeting space, etc.
- Mern suggested this discussion be one of the goals of this Committee.

More about the building

- Pru & Fred Cowan toured the building recently with Jim Laverdiere and Matthew Emerson of Fine Period Homes. They quickly found sections of rotted sill and observed that the chimney is holding the building up. The Anderson Room chimney was removed during a past renovation which is causing some sag. The third floor is stable, but should be left as is.
- Any renovations require an architect trained in renovation old buildings.

Next Steps

- The Committee discussed touring the building as a group. They will invite Bill Remsen, local renovation architect, to join the tour and the Committee.
 - They will tour the Saunders House on Wednesday June 14th at 10:00.

Next meeting: June 26, 2017 at 10:30 o'clock in the Byers/Davidson Room.

Respectfully submitted by Tracy Bowen

Actions Summary

David will invite Bill Remsen to join the Committee's tour of the Saunders House.

Meredith will do the title analysis in advance of the next meeting.