

DRAFT

Minutes –

Maine Bicentennial Commission meeting
Maine State Library July 27, 2020, 1:00 p.m.

Present: Sen. Bill Diamond, Chairman, David Cheever, Hayden Anderson, Steve Bromage, Kristen Muszynski, Bernard Fishman, Jason Libby, Peter Merrill, Heather Perry, Julie Richard, Jamie Ritter, Samantha Warren, Kate McBrien, Meredith Strang-Burgess, Rebecca Graham

Absent: Rep. Jim Handy, Rep. Chris Babbidge, Rep. Dick Campbell, Rep. Mark Bryant, Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap, Becky Smith, Donna Loring, Joanne D’Arcangelo, Alison Sucey, Dana Connors.

Guests: Bruce White, Alex Serra

Chairman Bill Diamond called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m., welcomed new Commission member Kate McBrien, and remarked that the COVID-19 impact on the events and programs for 2020 would not deter the Commission from commemorating Maine’s Bicentennial in 2021. He added that extending the life of the Bicentennial Commission and the availability of Bicentennial license plates enjoys the support of Governor Janet Mills, and that the necessary Executive and Legislative steps will be taken by January 1 to ensure continuity.

MINUTES from the February 25, 2020 meeting were approved.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Peter Merrill reported that the Commission has approximately \$650,000 in its Maine200 account to pay for proposed programs and events, and that \$278,000 in hand of the remaining General Fund appropriation is largely allocated to the Cultural Affairs Council agencies. The Treasurer’s report was approved.

FUNDRAISING: Bill Diamond reported for Dana Connors that Maine200 fundraising is in a pandemic-driven lull. The money raised to date remains committed, and additional funding will be sought once the state is relieved of the coronavirus threat.

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS: Although the Commission’s signature events have been postponed, planning continues on several fronts.

Bicentennial Parade - Kristen Muszynski reported that the Parade has been tentatively scheduled for May 15, 2021, in Lewiston and Auburn.

Statehood Day – the observance may be held on March 20, 2021, depending upon the availability of the Bangor Symphony Orchestra and the chorus. Julie Richard said that the “mass gathering” restrictions currently in effect may well extend into the new year, and that, regardless, there may be reluctance for the singers and musicians to perform in person.

The Arts Commission and Statehood Day sub-committee are exploring the option of a “virtual performance,” but early indications are that the production expense could exceed \$35,000, which Richard said the Arts Commission does not have.

Boston Pops - Dave Cheever reported that the producer/promoter for the December 2020 concert in Augusta has postponed the event but remains interested in rescheduling in 2021.

Innovation Expo - Planning remains under way, with a revised date of November 20, 2021, in Portland.

State of Maine Air Show - Community interest remains high in Brunswick for an August 2021 event, even though the Navy’s Blue Angels will be unable to participate.

MARKETING: Muszynski provided an update from the Advertising Specialists of Maine, who remitted a check for \$3,700 on July 22 for merchandise purchased through them. She said that activity is on-going through the webstore and they are seeking additional wholesale/resale interest from Maine businesses.

Meredith Strang-Burgess said that the website has undergone numerous updates relating to postponing and rescheduling, and that additional content has been added to the Watch page, including from Maine Public and Masthead Media, and Maine-based videos offered to complement Commission material. More material will be welcomed, Burgess said, even if the site itself is in a holding pattern because of the pandemic.

EDUCATION:

Community Grant Program – Heather Perry provided the Community Grant Sub-committee recommendations for the third round of grant funding. The committee reviewed \$281,843 in requests for seven small projects and 36 large project proposals. From the anticipated available funding, the committee recommended funding all seven small projects, and 12 of the 36 large projects for a combined outlay of \$80,684.

The Commission unanimously approved the recommendations.

The total amount for the three rounds of Community Grants exceeds \$660,000, including 76 large projects of up to \$10,000.

Chairman Diamond commended Perry and the Committee for their work and remarked that the community grants are a testament to the interest

among Maine people and organizations to engage in the stories and histories of the state.

Time Capsule - Jason Libby reported on the Memorandum of Understanding between the Commission and the University of Maine System whereby the Composites Division at the flagship campus in Orono will design and produce the central element of the Capsule, the Dirigo Star.

Libby expressed his and the Commission's appreciation of the University for its willingness to undertake the project, and in providing exemplary assistance.

Samantha Warren replied that the University was grateful for the opportunity to participate and to showcase the innovative Composites work. She remarked that the contribution by the university helped lower the Commission's cost for the Capsule, which, in turn, enable additional funds to be placed in the Community Grant Program.

The MOU states that the composite Dirigo Star will be completed by November 2020 for delivery to the Commission. to be placed on a pedestal of cabinetry now being produced by the Heritage Timber company in Millinockett.

Jamie Ritter informed the Commission that the cultural agencies would soon be moving to a temporary home in a state-owned building in Augusta while repairs are being made to the Cultural Building. The interim location will accommodate housing the Capsule until the agencies can regain their permanent residence, where the Capsule will be featured in the public section of the State Library.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Guest Bruce White, a 30-year State employee, expressed his continuing interest in the Bicentennial as a member of the Union Historical Society and a volunteer on the Parade sub-committee.

No date was proposed for the next Commission meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

Note: One of the unfortunate casualties of the pandemic was the lay-off of Alyssa Wood as staff to the Commission. Her contributions are much appreciated. The layoff was communicated to all commission members and associates via email on May 18, 2020, in conjunction with the initial notice of postponement of commission events (which was later updated to push all events to 2021). That email is copied below:

Bicentennial commission members, volunteers and friends:

Given the current state of affairs with the pandemic response, we have laid off our full-time business manager, Alyssa Wood. Alyssa did a great job for us, but it has become apparent over the past month or

so that there is very little work for a full-time staffer at this point, given all the cancellations and planning put on hold.

I felt it best for her to get the boosted federal unemployment money at this time, and best for the commission to save its funding for staffing until we can revive our efforts, either later this year or next year. If you would like to contact Alyssa directly to wish her well in her future endeavors, you can do so via email at *{redacted for privacy}*.

During this period, Treasurer Peter Merrill, Commissioner Jamie Ritter and Vice Chairman David Cheever will assist with maintaining the financial books as needed, and Kristen Muszynski at the Secretary of State's office will continue helping with administrative tasks as needed. You can email Kristen at Kristen.Muszynski@Maine.gov or direct your emails to info@maine200.org for general commission business/ queries.

Please also note that David Cheever has retired and is no longer a State employee. You can reach him at David.Cheever@Maine200.org for commission business.

Other updates:

- The State of Maine Bicentennial Parade subcommittee will make a decision by June 1 regarding the parade. At this point, it seems unlikely that mass gatherings will be allowed by the postponement date of August 15 and the subcommittee will continue to discuss how to move forward. There is a great deal of interest in Lewiston/Auburn to host the parade in 2021 if necessary, rather than cancel.
- Statehood Day is now slated for September 27, but is in the same situation regarding mass gatherings. The planning committee and commission leadership have interest in pushing it to March 15, 2021 to have a full, in-person ceremony if that is not possible in September.
- The Innovation Expo plans are moving forward for the Dec. 12, 2020 event date, with a weather eye on the pandemic situation as it develops. We will be sure to have a provision in the contract for the venue (Thompson's Point) that provides a full refund if cancellation is necessary due to mass gathering restrictions at the time.
- The sailing ships events slated for this summer have been postponed to next year.
- Work continues on the time capsule, with the subcommittee looking to have the physical capsule in hand by end of year, and have a sealing ceremony toward the end of 2021 when all Maine200 events are complete.
- In coordination with the Secretary of State's office, we are pursuing efforts to extend the operational period of the commission and the validity period of the bicentennial license plate, through 2021.

Stay safe and healthy during this trying time and we will keep you posted on further developments and planning.

Bill