SPARTA HANCOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING MINUTES

1-19-19

The Historical Society opened at 2 pm. At Pierce Memorial Methodist Church fellowship hall. President Rick Joslyn welcomed a group of about 25 with a renewed interest in the history of the community and county. We want the society to be a leader in that inItiative.

Treasurer’s Report:

 General Fund. Current balance $968.95

 Restoration Fund. Current balance $2320.70

Treasurer Mauriel Joslyn collected dues for an updated membership list, and passed out membership cards. She also updated the attendees with our current 501c 3 status. The Society had been taken off the non-profit status because of a change in 2011 affecting non-profits. This was discovered when we applied for a Historic Preservation Grant with the Watson Brown Jr. Foundation. Paperwork was submitted and the Society is now back on a status that can received grants and all donations are tax-deductIble. We now have to file a 990 tax form every year disclosing what monies we received.

Program:

Member Dip Polaty brought everyone up to date with the newly appointed Historic Preservation Commission composed of 5 members chosen by the city and county to reinstate the older Commission that had become inactive due to politicians not appointing commissioners.

He gave a little history on his experience serving in other cities. The First Preservation Commission created in the US was in Charleston, SC in 1931. He addressed the good things a Commission can do, and how it works. The City of Sparta appoints 3 members and the County 2. Current appointees are Dip Polaty, Sherrard Kennedy and Rick Joslyn. The county will be appointing their 2 shortly.

One of the first projects will be the old Police Station building, located next to the Drummers Home on Broad St. The building was built in the 1840s and is sound and structurally stable. We have applied for a grant to restore it by first getting a new roof. Uses for the building have been discussed, with Allen Haywood suggesting it be returned to a city police use. Other options would be office space for a welcome center, Chamber of Commerce office and a meeting space.

Mr. Polaty also covered the purpose of the Preservation Commission to preserve the exterior appearance of properties, steps citizens must take to get changes approved and how this can boost our economic and civi pride in our community. He had guidelines from other communities including Lexington and Greensboro, Georgia. He hopes the Commission will be active in about 2 months. He is getting it back in good standing with the state HPD and Dept. of Community Affairs. A Comprehensive Plan has been approved so we can begin applying for government grants again. Also work on getting our Certified Local Government status back is ongoing since that designation was allowed to lapse by the city government.

Dip has surveyed all the properties in the Historic District that are over 40 years old. The city will be addressed first and it will eventually be expanded to the county for specific historic districts in smaller communities. The HPC and historic property designations will be eligible for a 25% tax credit for restoration, and freezing taxes for 10 years. Scenic Byways will have grants to work in hand with the Historic Preservation Commission.

At the conclusion of the program, questions addressed by attendees included what difference is there between the Preservation Commission and the Historical Society?; Is each property an individual case?

It was announced that Jim Youmans’ house is available for sale at less than $5,000.00. This property is significant because it was a dormitory for the Sparta Female Academy on Maiden Lane c. 1838-40.

Don Bevill mentioned someone who wanted to know how to find historic homes for sale in Sparta as they are not normally listed on MLS realtor sites.

Sarah Patillo asked how the Preservation Commission is going to work with city on building permits.

Nancy Stephens asked about the commercial buildings and how they will be affected by the preservation ordinance.

Will Matson asked if there is any discussion in the Comprehensive Plan on revitalization.

County Commission Chairman Sistie Hudson said the city has to create an Opportunity Zone. It has not helped property owners with dropping oppressive regulations that deter restoration of commercial properties to attract businesses.

New home owners have restored 2 homes in town.

OLD BUSINESS:

Don Bevil mentioned magazines done by the Hwy. Coalition will feature Sparta.

Tameka asked if we had a budget for brochures to promote our history.

Will Matson mentioned the library is doing an outdoor learning exhibit for gardening.

Maria Rodriguez suggested we do a citizens petition to present to council for saving the Police Station and repairing the roof.

It was asked who is cutting the grass at the Graves Barn. Rick has sprayed for some weeds but grass cutting needs to be decided.

NEW BUSINESS:

The first topic of discussion was the upcoming Lafayette Day on April 13. This event is spearheaded by the Chamber of Commerce and the Historical Society to begin celebrating events in our local history. The aim is to present a positive image of our community using our past, and attract people to come here for the tourism. This first event is a one-day recreation of the 1825 visit of the Marquis de Lafayette during his National Tour of the US on the 50th anniversary of our Declaration of

Independence.

Don Bevill motioned that the Historical Society endorse the event. Nancy Stephens seconded and the motion was passed.

Discussion followed:

Some ideas to get the community involved are

1. to have a school group day for local classes to attend and get hands on history from the re-enactors depicting militia, farm life and cultural arts.
2. Sponsor an essay contests for schools
3. Ask for corporate sponsors
4. City will proclaim the day as Lafayette Day. County will do the same. (Sistie Hudson presented a Resolution proclaiming the day as Lafayette Day and Rick Joslyn read it to attendees.)
5. House tour of limited homes that were here when Lafayette came.

The Lafayette Planning Committee welcomes any volunteers to help with this event. Plans are being formed and input from the membership netted some good ideas:

Will Matson suggested we offer a cash prize for school essays or an art show in conjunction with Lafayette’s visit.

Jan Garland suggested coordinating for school buses to take house tour attendees out to county sites.

Mauriel Joslyn suggested that we could have a cemetery tour in conjunction with the Lafayette event. There are about 20 Revolutionary War soldiers buried here, including Gen. David Mitchell. Also we could have some literature on “what was here when Lafayette came.” Milledgeville had commemorated his visit twice and they had homes designated that were there in 1825 as a sort of town tour.

Dip Polaty suggested to contact Augusta for Revolutionary War re-enactors and have an artifact identification table for people to bring items to experts for identification.

Nancy Stephens suggested using the history of the buildings on the tour. She also volunteered to put all our information on the Scenic Byways website to promote the event.

Other topics in New Business:

WEBSITE:

Mauriel Joslyn has been working to improve our website. Our hosting is through Egg Media in Macon, and Stephen Allen is the webmaster. He is very easy to work with and wants to add anything to make it better. Mauriel has tried to find out who owns the domain name to the old website. The webmaster cannot access it to move the information to the new site. It was previously created around 2004.

Mauriel announced the current correct website address is [historicsparta.org](http://historicsparta.org)

She also wants to add links for any history related sites and businesses such as the Jewel House, Mockingbird Farm, Della Smith’s Inn, Glen Mary and any other member businesses.

Sistie agreed to link it to the county website.

Rick Joslyn announced that the audio recording at Mt. Zion is activated. It was donated by Pews and Pulpits. Rick also promoted their (P & P) next tour. He also reiterated that Mt. Zion is available for events and weddings and that it continues to have many off the road visitors who sign the guest book. Pews and Pulpits plan on creating a Springfield audio historic.

Will Matson suggested we offer something different than other towns,

such as the “unseen” history of Sparta and Hancock county, including Native American history and the Springfield Community.

The Meeting adjourned at 4:30 and refreshments were served.

Next meeting will be April 7 at 2 pm at Mt. Zion Church for a cleanup day. We will also have elections for the organization.