



Summary Report

Report of the Secretary

on 2020 Achievements

submitted to the

FHB Annual Meeting

Held on March 15, 2021 via ZOOM

Friends of Historic Bristol held its third Annual Meeting on March 15, 2021. During the meeting, the Report of the Secretary was received. This report focuses on the accomplishments of the organization during 2020 as its Board of Directors, Advisory Board, and members sought to implement its Vision, Mission, and Initiatives.

During 2020, Friends of Historic Bristol carried out the following initiatives:

- FHB became aware of the work of the Middle Passage Port Marker Project, which at that time saw its goal as creating and installing an historic marker that described Bristol's relationship to the enslavement of Africans. FHB passed a motion to pay for needed professionals and to work to bring Bristol's history into focus without harm, to bring people together to facilitate the discussion by the participation of an expanded number of groups to include descendants of the enslaved peoples and to help find ways to most comprehensively research and reach consensus on the "hard history" of Bristol's role in enslaving both Africans and American Indian populations.

Marianne Berganholtz carried out research on locating and contacting descendants of enslaved Africans associated with Bristol and, as a result, Descendant Voices in Action, a nonprofit of these descendants, was formed.

As a result of this FHB planning, the Sites of Conscience Summit took place on February 1, 2021 to promote consensus among all major parties to the issue of what slavery and its aftermath means to Bristol and how best to communicate Bristol's "hard history" related to its treatment of enslaved black people and indigenous peoples. FHB brought in the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience to facilitate an initial discussion with leaders of the Pokanoket Tribe, Descendant Voices in Action, Bristol Town Administration and Councilors, heads of nonprofits that interpret history, church leaders from multiple faiths, arts organizations and local historians. More than 40 people attended the video conference. A report of this Summit was written, including the results of an

Evaluation Survey of Summit participants. The full report was posted on the Resources page of the FHB website. This project promotes FHB's educational mission and vision for Bristol.

- FHB planned and is currently finalizing a research project and recommendations regarding Flood Zone designations that impact insurance rates for Bristol property owners located near Bristol Harbor.
- FHB carried out field research on the location of empty storefronts in the historic district and is in the process of researching tax abatement policies and practices that impact may commercial properties in the downtown historic district.
- FHB participated in the Bristol Charter Review process by publicizing the Commission application process to the FHB contact list and by submitting multiple applications for membership on the Commission. Steve DeLeo was selected as a member of the Commission and participated in the Charter Review.

During this period of COVID-induced social isolation, the FHB Boards also brainstormed possible programming for the post-pandemic period, including:

- Further meetings/programs to facilitate the efforts by Sites of Conscience Summit participant groups to research and reach consensus on Bristol's hard history regarding enslavement of Africans and indigenous peoples.
- Further efforts to achieve a change of flood designation from VE to AE with the goal of reducing insurance rates for affected properties.
- Further efforts to reduce the number of empty storefronts in the historic district through a variety of initiatives, including the research of the impact of tax abatements on commercial property rentals.
- Program, to be co-sponsored by FHB and Grow Smart RI for a statewide audience, that would provide a presentation of the new proposed statewide Main Street America program currently being undertaken by GSRI, with FHB participation to focus on economic development of historic downtowns at local, state and national levels. A panel might include Scott Wolf of GSRI, Patrick McMahon of CN MSA, Ben Bergeholtz and Brian Travers from FHB, and others. GSRI would serve as the Host of the Video Conference program. (GSRI currently hosts weekly ZOOM meetings.) An in-person meeting could be held at the Bristol's Old Court House if it has WiFi Internet connectivity. A guest appearance by Rep. David Cicilline, who reportedly is in favor of a Main Street America statewide program, is possible. A Task Force of Business Owners was mentioned. Outreach to Chambers of Commerce and Merchant Associations statewide is envisioned.
- Workshop by Sally Zimmerman, who developed the Benjamin Moore paint charts, on the whole story of historic paints, how colors are identified and reproduced, etc.
- Program focused on Unity Park, the Wood Street project owned by Mr. Brito.
- Program focused on Longfields, the historic Dana home on Hope Street. John Lusk is the architect for both the Unity Park and Longfields development projects and already has presentations and graphics/videos for both projects. The program could be in interview format, with an FHB interviewer, with graphic materials spliced in. Questions could be solicited in PR materials and submitted in advance.

- Workshop presentations by Alex Papo. One would cover “What Does It Mean To Live in A Historic District?” Another is “Energy Efficiency in Historic Structures.”
- A “Meet Friends” Wine & Appetizer gathering at the DeLeo residence on High Street, hosted by Steve and Berta.
- A second “Meet Friends” Wine & Appetizer gathering, hosted by Brian Travers at the Bradford Dimon Norris Inn at the corner of Hope and State Streets.
- A major community educational presentation by a notable speaker such as the RI SHIPO (Historic Preservation Officer) or representative of an organization, such as the Sasaki Group.
- A community “Best Dressed Dog” event on the Commons, which could become an annual event in Bristol. Awards. Sponsors and food purveyors will be sought.
- Possible community presentations related to either or both of the research studies being implemented by FHB:
 - Flood Zone Designation at Waterfront
 - Tax Abatement Impact on Empty Storefronts

Planning for the promotion of a Bristol Main Street America initiative during 2020 included:

- The submission of a Main Street America proposal to Bristol Town Administrator and Council was considered and ultimately tabled.
- Ben will draft an email to Scott Wolf, ED, GSRI, about FHB interest in filling a seat on their statewide MSA (Main Street America) board, and how to work together to realize an MSA program in Bristol, including possible participation of Scott Wolf in an FHB MSA program under consideration. RI is currently the only state without a statewide MSA program.
- Brian Travers will talk with the E. Bay Chamber of Commerce, Explore Bristol and Bristol Merchants Association to see if they will join us and help us in promoting an MSA or MSA-like program to the Bristol Town Administrator and Town Council.
- Marianne Berganholtz will contact the Newport Chamber of Commerce and Grow Smart RI to see if they will join us and help promote an MSA or MSA-like program to the Bristol Town Administrator and Town Council.
- In May, one potential format for an introductory MSA video program in Bristol, for possible future use, was planned out, including how MSA is likely to benefit Bristol and comments from a variety of MSA experts and Bristol business, nonprofit and municipal leaders.

Communication initiatives to carry out our Vision, Mission and Initiatives included:

- The FHB website, created jointly by our Technology and Marketing Committees, has continued to serve as an effective communications vehicle for our nonprofit, providing an interactive base for receiving community input and broadcasting issues of importance in achieving our mission, as well as serving as a fundraising vehicle to support our ongoing efforts. The Resources page of the website provides access to all previous Bristol

economic development studies, current community development research relevant to Bristol, and the community input from all of the roundtables, calls-to-action, and other programs undertaken by FHB.

- FHB has served as an important agent to further communication and community input through our Technology Committee, which has designed and sent out multiple email campaigns to our membership and hundreds of additional contacts focused on upcoming community actions and events.

Respectfully submitted,
Caroline Jacobus
Secretary

Our Vision

Our Vision for Bristol is to be an informed and inclusive community that preserves Bristol's cultural assets and maximizes the quality of life for all citizens through:

- *Smart-Growth*
- *Involved Citizenry*
- *Economic Vitality*
- *Caring Relationships*
- *Government Accountability*

Our Mission

Friends of Historic Bristol is a volunteer nonprofit organization that engages the community to enhance the quality of life and advance the vitality derived from Bristol's cultural, historical and architectural heritage through initiatives and educational programs.

Initiatives

- *Work to create a collaboration of business owners, industry owners, civics groups and local government to develop proven, winning strategies and tools we can use to boost our local economy.*
- *Celebrate our industrious working-class heritage through initiatives that honor it.*
- *Initiate ideas that promote and support heritage tourism.*
- *Inform our community of projects that jeopardize the integrity of our culture and heritage.*
- *Alert the community with a Call to Action when our community assets are in danger.*
- *Gather and provide data to determine economic impact of preserving our community's heritage resources.*
- *Promote the Smart Growth policies embodied in Bristol's Comprehensive Plan that preserve the character and viability of our Town's Historic District.*