



Maine Historical Records Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

April 12, 2023

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Location: Zoom

Board Members Present: Howard Lowell, Kevin Johnson, Jill Piekut Roy, Larissa Vigue Picard, Anna Faherty; Pat Dunn; Earle Shettleworth; Kat Stefko

Board Members Absent: Donald Soctomah, Steve Bromage

MSA Staff Members Present: Kate McBrien (ex-officio), Heather Moran, Tammy Marks

Guest: Anne Ackerson

Meeting called to order at 1:03 pm by Kate McBrien.

Welcome and Land Acknowledgment

Kate McBrien welcomed everyone to the meeting and recited the land acknowledgment which is offered by the Maine State Archives at each Maine Historical Records Advisory Board meeting.

Welcome

Kate welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized a quorum. Earle mentioned an article written by Larissa that was in the Kennebec Journal and Portland Press Herald. The article was about the importance of local history in relation to major concerns of today such as native American and black issues, it was a classic story that history begins at the local level and works its way up. Larissa shared the links to the article with the Board.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – The meeting minutes from April 5, 2023 were edited by request from Howard Lowell. There was a reference to the MHRAB in years past that was worded in a way that made it confusing to understand.

Board Survey Discussion –

(A compilation of responses from the survey were provided to the Board members)

Anne asked the Board what their initial impressions were from the responses to the survey. It was mentioned that viewpoints were consistent amongst the Board members, which was a pleasant discovery. Anne felt it showed cohesiveness with the Board and thought it was fantastic. She felt going forward it was good to see there is a solid foundation with the Board in their new role as a group.

Anne mentioned that based on responses to the survey there is a need for a new or updated job description for members and felt this would be a relatively simple task when the Board gets to that point. There should be an onboarding process for new Board members in the future. This would include an orientation to the Board as well as a copy of the job description.

There were varied responses to the statement *‘the programming the SHRAB supports is relevant, interesting and impactful’*. Responses showed that half of the Board agreed, and half didn’t agree and/or didn’t know. Members mentioned that regrants in the past were small and went for things like archival boxes and folders, which is fine for local institutions, how that moves the preservation and access of historical access to the State moving forward doesn’t really have a lot of impact.

Another question/rating was *“The Board challenges the Archives leadership in healthy ways”*, this also had varied responses.

Another question/rating was *“Regularly setting aside time at the end of the Board meetings to discuss the needs of the Archives”*. Some members felt that was done already and others did not. Howard mentioned that at some point they need direction from Kate. How engaged in that area she wants the Board, where she sees the board, what role she wants the Board to play. He mentioned, the second question to think about is what kind of resources out of her program is she thinking about carving out to support the Board if any. There is no appropriation to support the Board. Kate updated the Board regarding the Archives’ budget request. Archives asked for \$20,000 as a match to the NHPRC federal grant. It made it through the State and Local Government Committee but didn’t make it through the first baseline budget. Currently Archives is advocating for this as an important budget need. Archives is trying to get money to support MHRAB, but it is solely as a grant match, which the legislature seems eager to support.

Anne asked the Board what the key elements were necessary to build and strengthen this Board. Anna reflected on what other SHRABs discussed at the NEA Conference. Other states (CT SHRAB had 19 members) have more people on their Board. The size of the MHRAB is in statute and could be changed. The Governor wanted more of a role in choosing members of the MHRAB and changed members originally selected for appointments. Anne mentioned that the NY SHRAB, which she is a member of the appointments come from the Commissioner of Education but did come from the Governor many years prior.

Three Overarching Themes -

Anne noted that there were three themes that have been cited in the Board conversations and the Board survey as being key elements of MHRAB's current and future work: Advocacy and Public Awareness; Outreach, Programs and Services; and Funding and Board infrastructure.

Anne looked for discussion on raising money. Does the MHRAB have leeway for raising money? Kate shared the statute language for the MHRAB which mentions there is a fund, the Board can get money from private and public sources. The statute says money can be accepted by MHRAB but doesn't mention that MHRAB cannot solicit.

The Board was asked if the three themes made sense to build the strategic plan or are there other themes to consider. Howard mentioned that the words advocate, educate and coordinate are used a lot. The words collaborate and coordinate appear a lot and can be seen as an overarching thing.

Anna suggested adding the words collaboration and sustainability. Anne mentioned these could be woven throughout the plan so that every goal needs to address collaboration and sustainability.

Anna added to the chat a draft of a new mission statement using the old statement. Anne encouraged the Board members to comment and/or edit the document. Kate said she would like to incorporate into the mission statement in some way that the Board is proactive in engaging with organizations.

Anne mentioned that Board members in other SHRABs are encouraged to speak on challenges and successes they are experiencing in their areas to engage the members. Earle mentioned that IF&W starts their meetings this way, hearing from each member.

Anne asked the Board how they would measure their success in these areas:
-Advocacy and public awareness – Kat mentioned as having discussed previously having a web presence for the Board. Clarifying job descriptions and onboarding new ones. Anna talked about having a staff member to do administrative work for the Board. Reporting of who won awards and how much was granted by posting on the website, have online submission capabilities for reporting as well.

-Outreach / programs / services – Anna mentioned having a roving archivist one day (for programs) would be ideal.

-Funding / infrastructure – Reports were never received from organizations that received funding. Transparency was not present in the past with the MHRAB.

Kate mentioned that she had folders from Janet Roberts and had copies of final reports filed from those that received funding. Once Janet left, there was not a trail of funding received.

Anne is hopeful that strategies discussed in the Board's conversations can fit under more than one of the three goals. If you can pick a strategy that goes under more than one goal, then you have a strong strategy. Public awareness and advocacy, go hand in hand with one another. The funding needs to be addressed as the third piece in the plan somehow. Use the word sustainability instead of funding. Oversight needs to be part of the job description re-write.

Kate provided an update on the grant she is seeking from NHPRC. She mentioned her goal is to draft a narrative by next week to share with the Board. She feels the Archives in their current state with projects and staff, cannot do a roving archivist at this time. She was intrigued by the idea of contracting with someone like NEDCC that could do assessments and build sustainability with organizations. She is trying to create a narrative with that in mind and share with the Board for ideas.

Adjournment - The group agreed to adjourn. The Board will come together again in two weeks, April 26th at 1:00 pm. Meeting adjourned at 2:32 pm.