

MAINE BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION
Meeting Notes
November 15, 2018
2 p.m., Maine State Library

PRESENT:

Senator Bill Diamond
Representative Mark Bryant
Heather Perry, Gorham Superintendent of Schools
Alison Sucy, Maine Tourism Association
Peter Merrill, Maine Cultural Affairs Council (CAC) Chairman
Hayden Anderson, Maine Humanities Council
Bernard Fishman, Maine State Museum
Steve Bromage, Maine Historical Society
James Ritter, Maine State Library
Jason Libby, Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Samantha Warren, University of Maine System
Nina Fisher, Maine Community College System
Kristen Muszynski, Communications Director, Secretary of State's Office
Meredith Strang Burgess, Burgess Advertising
Dave Cheever, Maine State Archives

ABSENT:

Governor Paul R. LePage
Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap
University of Maine System Chancellor Jim Page
Sen. Jim Hamper
Sen. Roger Katz
Representative Jim Handy
Rep. David Haggan
Rep. Patrick Corey
Julie Richard, Maine Arts Commission
Dana Connors, Maine Chamber of Commerce
Jim Mitchell, Mitchell Tardy Government Affairs
Beth Gibbs, Thomas College

GUESTS:

Chuck Kruger, Thomaston
David Adams, Castine Historical Society
Alan Baker, Ellsworth American
Mari Eosco, Bath Town Council
Martha Mayo, Bath
Kim Clark, Maine State Library
Paul Wolf, U.S. Coast Guard,(Ret.) Tall Ships Maine
Steve Edmundson, Tall Ships Maine

Chairman Bill Diamond called the meeting to order at 2:06. He welcomed the Commission members and guests, and provided overviews of recent events.

He said that the election returns likely put the Bicentennial on good footing with a number of incoming and continuing political leaders, and that efforts are under way to communicate a wish list to Governor-elect Janet Mills. The list includes a \$2 million carve-out in the new state budget request. If necessary, he said, a separate funding bill will be submitted.

Diamond expressed his thanks and appreciation for the preparation and filing of the Commission's first report to the Legislature.

He asked Kristen Muszynski to report on the merchandising initiative. She described the pitch by a Maine-based marketing company to take charge of the array of merchandising opportunities, which would be done under a contract with the financial return split to be negotiated.

Muszynski said that three options need Commission consideration: retaining an outside company, assigning a Commission employee, or using a Commission Marketing Committee. She expressed urgency in reaching a decision to allow any of the choices to be acted upon in a timely manner so that merchandising beyond the Maine Made works can proceed. She said that the Maine-based provider expressing interest made a first offer and a proposed contract. The contract was reviewed by attorneys and modified, and negotiations would be in order if that was the preferred path.

The Commission was then informed that a group photo is scheduled for the next meeting.

Diamond again acknowledged the various guests and invited them to participate.

The *Ellsworth American's* Alan Baker chided the Commission for being slow to broadcast the Bicentennial statewide. He encouraged greater marketing of the Bicentennial license plate and said that the Commission could look to the Acadian Centennial as a program that was well-marketed. He exhorted the Commission to publicize its efforts and said that Maine has pent up enthusiasm to participate in the commemoration.

Bath Town Council Chairwoman Mari Eosco said that the Main Street Maine communities are adept at conducting events and asked how the Commission is bringing the Bicentennial to the local level. She remarked that many communities can undertake projects that have high visibility and impact but do not cost a lot of money, and that most towns have people who like to volunteer and who do not want to miss out on the bicentennial opportunity.

Meredith Burgess suggested that the guests check the Maine200.org website and begin to populate the calendar with the local events they wish to schedule as part of a home grown commemoration.

Tall Ships Maine's Paul Wolf spoke to the groundwork accomplished in having Tall Ships America vessels come to Portland and other ports in July of 2020. He described the possibilities of Class A nation ships from European and South American Countries sailing the Maine coast. He stressed that the dynamics of the Tall Ships is a true crowd-pleaser, but that the essential mission for Tall Ships programs is educational for the next generations of sailors and shipbuilders. Educating 200 sail trainees during the Bicentennial would be a point of emphasis. He said that the Portland piers are available for the event, and that enthusiasm is already evident in ports such as Bath, Rockland, and Portsmouth, to make it a Tall Ships summer along the Maine coast.

Dave Adams of the Castine Historical Society said the harbor there drew more than 15,000 people for a heritage ship event that tied to the French interest in the Maine coast. He encouraged consideration of Castine, and of involving the Native American population in recognition of the integral role played by the tribes.

Diamond then shared that Finance Chairman Dana Connors has made initial pitches for project funding for such initiatives as the Tall Ships, and is awaiting a reply.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE: Chairwoman Heather Perry spoke to the idea of recruiting Bicentennial Schools that would undertake projects using primary sources of Maine history to fashion learning modules that can be shared, replicated, and can foster a lead role for students and teachers using the Bicentennial as a springboard. Perry cited the Alabama bicentennial schools model as something that Maine could adopt because it was a bottom-up development. She envisions dedicating 20 percent of the Commission's funding to education, such that a \$2 million budget would redound \$400,000 to education projects and programs. She reminded the Commission that involving students is the key to success.

Jamie Ritter remarked that the Education proposal resembles the aims of the Cultural Affairs Council in providing mini-grants to help communities engage in the Bicentennial.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE: Chairwoman Alison Sucy reported that the Maine Office of Tourism has agreed to promote the Bicentennial with a full page ad in the Maine Tourism Association's *Maine Invites You* publication. She said that planning for the three specific Commission-run events on the 2019-2020 calendar – the kick-off, Statehood Day, and finale – is proceeding.

MARKETING/SOCIAL MEDIA COMMITTEE: Dave Cheever said that the Maine Municipal Association has agreed to serve as a communications conduit with town and city councils, and community leaders to inform and ascertain

interest in projects such as installing Tri-Centennial Pine Groves, and receiving Maine Bicentennial flags for display on municipal offices and schools. He added that Rep. Jim Handy and he had met with Peter Geiger of Geiger Brothers Printing, in Lewiston, and that the opportunity to participate in some fashion with the *Old Farmer's Almanac* and other printing projects, including help with merchandising, are in the company's interest.

Heather Perry remarked that the Commission's should foster opportunities for Maine's small businesses. That perspective received Commission support as well as general agreement that Bicentennial merchandising was intended more for raising awareness of the commemoration rather than serving as a Commission money-maker.

Treasurer Peter Merrill informed the Commission that the accounting firm of Baker, Newman Noyse is being asked to provide auditing and accounting services for the Commission. The auditing expense is far outweighed by the assurance that all expenses are done correctly and that everyone is comfortable with the Commission's financial transparency.

Meredith Burgess spoke to the traffic on the Bicentennial website, citing that since its launch, the website has received 619 users who averaged looking at three pages per use and remained on the site for 2:46 minutes per use. She said that is a strong indication that people were entering the site and reading it, as opposed to skimming, and that the length of time per use is a healthy sign. She added that Maine200.org pops up in Google searches, and she credited Kristen Muszynski with the work on the social media, notably Facebook and Twitter, in promoting the Bicentennial.

Muszynski then shared communications she has picked up from the media sites from interested Maine people and companies who wish to engage in Bicentennial activities. She said that she hoped to remain current in replying to queries, but that the arrival of a part-time staff person would be welcome.

The next Commission meeting will be at the Maine State Library, at 1pm, January 4, 2019.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35.

Respectfully submitted,
Dave Cheever, Secretary