

**TOWN OF WESTPORT  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING**

Kennedy Administration Building  
Community Meeting Room  
5387 Mary Lake Road  
Waunakee, WI 53597

**MINUTES** B June 4, 2015 at 6:00p.m.

Members present: Ron Bowen briefly (open the Town Hall), Ray Mejia, Nancy Schlimgen and Joe Pichette (1<sup>st</sup> official meeting with Joe taking Dave O'Malley's place on the committee)

Members absent: None

Public attendance: Janette Hermanson (Schmacher Farm) and Rebecca Bernstein (consultant)

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:00 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

April's minutes were not approved because copies were not present at the meeting. The minutes from May's meeting were for an informal gathering lacking quorum with discussion on those topics being postponed until the June meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Historic Resources Consultant:

Rebecca Bernstein presented a site map of the Ella Wheeler Wilcox site from her meeting with Mike Ruper of Dane County Public Works. This map shows the general concept of areas for potential ecosystem restoration. He noticed that the lower hillside site, closer to the road, retains some water in spring, potentially suitable for more wetland species. While the uplands were proposed as prairie habitat, in keeping with our suggestion for hiking trails along the perimeter. This could mean a more comprehensive plan for this parcel with likely more opportunities for wildlife viewing, like bird watching, combined with the cultural aspects we focus on.

Mike met with Kevin Connors, Dane County's Land & Water Resources Director, Darren Marsh, Park's Director, and Jeremy Balousek, Water Resource Engineering Division Manager, out on the site as described to Rebecca in a letter. He mentions getting a proposal from >someone= to develop a more formal restoration plan and that more meetings with the Town of Westport and Dane County and others interested will be forthcoming, with no specific time line given.

Ray wants the County Plan to keep the cultural design of the site in mind, especially for the shelter with features that in part mimic the Ella Wheeler Wilcox Home site.

Rebecca was asked to respond to Mike=s letter positively and to see if she could find out who that >someone= might be that develops the more formal restoration proposal. (It may be a collaboration requiring input from each of the County roles represented at this initial site meeting along with the cultural aspects presented by our Town of Westport HPC).

Rebecca reported on a site visit to Pope Farm Conservancy, a Town of Middleton Park, with Nancy where the signage and amphitheater seating using large limestone cut stones, was viewed as models for our project. In addition, the community sponsors for the project were considered remarkable. These included the Town of Middleton, the WI State Historical Society, the UW Arboretum, the UW in general, others like Rotary and Family Memorials and others. At the time of the visit, a field trip of Middleton 4th Grade Students was just getting underway, with visible presence of these supporters helping with the day=s activities including tour of and maintenance of a Native American Garden by the State Historical Society and the UW Arboretum/ Middleton Naturalist staff.

Relating the signs to our project, the backgrounds of the Pope Farm signs were kept simple and similar to unify the project. However, the sizes of the signs varied to some extent depending on need for information coverage, which encourages us to have some more flexibility with sign size combinations in our design based on Rebecca=s research and information on the life and poetry of Ella Wheeler Wilcox. Also, we discussed how the potential framing of her poetry with a more Ailluminated manuscript@ nature could lend significance to when her poetry is presented, in contrast to when her life is spoken about in our interpretative displays.

Joe asked about the date of her home site, Rebecca explained that she moved in, in 1853. Joe mentioned using aerial photos of WI in 1917 to locate her home site.

#### Informal Interviews:

Ray briefly described the interviews collected and the established process.

Joe mentioned Hank and Delores Acker as possible new candidates for interview of long-term Westport residents. Their farm once included the AFrederick=s Hill@, now part of Pheasant Branch Creek Conservancy, Dane County Park portion, and also was the site of where ABlackHawk@ spent his last night, all of which, adds interest to their history.

Janette mentioned Pat Vilbrant, as also someone of interest to interview. She was a Kennedy, sister to Bernie Kennedy, who served as the Town Chair for many years.

No dates or schedule for interviews were determined at this time.

#### Old Military Road:

Joe described the Historical Plat for The City of 4 Lakes: 2 sites proposed by G. Doty as to where to locate Madison and the Capitol Square. 2 surveys were done, one at the present day

Isthmus, but the other followed along the edge of the Old Military road within the Bishops Bay vicinity and by Mendota County Park. It was mentioned that if the route got matched up with Westport trails that exist or are planned for that area, this history would be worth including in signage along this (Fort Winnebago) Trail.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

After Joe inquired about the process for bringing items up for discussion, Ray explained that if you are passionate and interested, we're open to new ideas. He went on to explain that our Committee has chosen to narrow our focus at times to progress with our projects.

Joe presented website print out of AWright Studies: Robert M. Lamp Cottage, Rocky Roost, Lake Mendota A. Nancy mentioned that signage interpreting this information along the trails at Jackson's Landing, would be worth exploring as it overlooks the wetland edge out where a smaller version of ARock Island@ may still be visible. While fire actually destroyed this home in 1934-5, water levels were subsequently elevated in the Yahara River Channel and Cherokee Marsh and Lake Mendota at that time.

### **MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS**

Nancy announced: *Wright and Like 2015: Madison Tour* this Saturday:  
[www.wrightinwisconsin.org](http://www.wrightinwisconsin.org)

### **NEXT MEETING**

Next month's meeting will be moved to Thursday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to avoid holiday scheduling conflicts

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Nancy Schlimgen