



Maine Historical Records Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

April 5, 2023

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Location: Zoom

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

Board Members Absent: Kevin Johnson, Donald Soctomah

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

Guest: Anne Ackerson

Meeting called to order at 1:01 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. Kate mentioned that she, Anna, Jill, and Heather attended a New England Archivists conference last week. They were involved in SHRAB discussions, Anna did an amazing job describing the work of the MHRAB and where the Board is headed. Anna mentioned that Connecticut and Vermont SHRABs are doing the most exciting work. Vermont has two roving archivist positions that are paid by the state. Connecticut is collaborating with other cultural heritage organizations offering an assessment program. Because it is not

supported by NHPRC they worked with other grant programs for funding. Anna has notes regarding the SHRAB discussion if anyone is interested in hearing more. Jill mentioned there was interest in shared hosting. Rhode Island has started something with the intent of sharing with other states.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – The meeting minutes from March 29, 2023 were approved by the Board.

Overview of Past MHRAB Programs -

Kate mentioned that Larissa, Kat, and Heather could add information as well since they sat on the Board in the past. Kate mentioned that MHRAB has focused mostly on regranting. They put out a few surveys, one in the early 1990s and the latest one in 2012. There has only been one program (a few trainings) since MHRAB's existence in the early 1990s. The first State Archivist was not a fan of federal grant programs so there wasn't much support.

Anne asked in terms of alignment, can the MRHAB be better in line with the work of the State Archives? It was noted that MHRAB has not been a strong advocate of the Archives, using the Board to help promote the overall need and mission of the State Archives. These issues are not discussed in our Board meetings. There could be an advocacy role within the State Archives. How can the State Archives inform the advocacy work of the MHRAB? Also mentioned was that communication would be good.

Kate noted that there isn't a position to work with local government records. As much as there is a need to focus on municipal records, we wouldn't want the Board to focus on that, but there is a need to do a better job at bringing those records into the fold.

Kate was asked to provide information on the functions of the Archives Advisory Board (AAB) and the Maine Historical Records Advisory Board (MHRAB). Kate noted that the AAB focuses more on records management and retention schedules. MHRAB focuses historical documents and preservation of those documents. It is in our statute that the State Archives sets the retention schedules for local government agencies.

Advocacy requires coordination. Who does that? There is an advocacy committee at Maine Archives and Museums (MAM). Currently MAM is working on a strategic plan and sent out a survey asking for feedback on their work. Kate mentioned that Maine has a new Cultural Alliance of Maine advocacy group that is designed for advocacy with cultural institutions, not just archival, it's for arts, theater, museums, etc.

It was mentioned that the Board should structure an attractive and strong program and advocate for it.

Assumptions -

The Board referred to the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan which identified 17 Planning Assumptions. Of these, it was asked how many continue to be relevant today. What is missing? 1) acknowledgment of equity, inclusion, and accessibility as the primary motivator in the historical records field, 2) the work of the Archives, 3) community partnerships. This area will be picked up in the next meeting for more discussion.

Unique Opportunities -

Collaboration with other organizations, such as MAM (they are working on a strategic plan as well) is one way to work programmatic efforts going forward. It was mentioned there is a national celebration coming up in a few years, getting involved is another way.

Moving back into the Cultural Building (May 2024 is when construction is anticipated to be finished) and how to put focus on that, resource needs. The State has made a huge investment in the building, how are they going to leverage their investment? Anne mentioned this may be an area of advocacy.

Anne asked if there was a commission established for the 250th celebration. Kate mentioned that there is a bill in the legislature right now for this. Archives has asked for a position to work on this, administrative costs plus funds for travel.

Anne asked if there were other avenues open to the Archives besides the NHPRC grant or funds from the legislature. Kate mentioned MHRAB has a dedicated fund and can seek funding (public and private) that is used just for MHRAB.

It was noted that MHRAB has never done a good job with their public presence. It is currently hidden on the Archives website, and nothing is clear on what the purpose of MHRAB is and its members. There is no way to introduce the Board and its members and what they are working on including successes from the group. Kate mentioned MHRAB could have their own website and tie into Archives and Maine Historical Society website. Anne asked if there was a way to have someone build a website and have those funds tied into the NHPRC grant.

Universities and colleges within the state could be included as resources. There are technical skills that are concentrated, and they have public spaces that are accessible that could be utilized until the Cultural Building is available.

Kate mentioned that after weighing the options and availability of Archives staff, we feel that we could do a minimum of one year re-granting program (\$40,000) as MHRAB is familiar with this structure and organizations are already looking for funds. We could revisit other options (roving archivists) in the next grant cycle. The Board was in favor of

this idea. The Board could decide what amounts will be granted. Kate, Tammy, and our grant specialist will distribute checks and communicate with chosen organizations. Kate suggested the Board do a re-granting program with assessments as the focus. The Board would fund organizations getting professional assessments of their collections that will give them a plan of what they are going to need in the following years.

Anne suggested looking at NY Archives, they contract with a conservation outfit (CCAHA) in Philadelphia which is like NEDCC. At the next meeting the Board will discuss responses to the survey sent out to the members.

Adjournment - The group agreed to adjourn. The Board will come together again April 12th at 1:00 pm. Meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.