



Town of Chapel Hill

HISTORIC TOWN HALL COMMITTEE

Thursday, March 9, 2017, at 4:00 p.m.
Durham History Hub
500 West Main Street, Durham, NC 27701

Meeting Minutes

Members: Council Member Sally Greene (Chair), Moses Carey, Joel Curran, Richard Ellington, Josh Gurlitz, Commissioner Penny Rich, Alan Rimer, Lee Storrow and Chela Tu.

1. Opening

a. Roll Call

Members Present: Council Member Sally Greene (Chair), Josh Gurlitz, Commissioner Penny Rich, and Alan Rimer.

Members Absent: Moses Carey, Joel Curran, Richard Ellington, Lee Storrow, and Chela Tu.

Staff Present: Megan Dale

Staff Absent: Travis Myren

2. Public Comment

3. Business

a. Tour Durham History Hub

b. Discuss Museum Operations

Background: Katie Spencer, Director of the Durham History Hub, will meet with the committee to discuss details of the museum operations.

Action Item: Discuss museum operations and potential benefits, challenges, and questions of locating a museum in Historic Town Hall.

- Action Taken: The committee toured the History Hub and discussed the organization's founding, evolution, and current operations. No action was taken.

The Durham History Hub is a nonprofit non-collecting museum located in a former bus transfer station owned by the City of Durham. The History Hub opened its doors about 3½ years ago. The Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau was instrumental in starting the museum and has continued to work with the museum to create maps from the Hub to Durham cultural destinations.

The building is 900 square feet of gallery space and 1200 total square feet. The museum's budget is approximately \$200,000, including building maintenance. The museum is run by a 20-member board, two staff members, and many volunteers. The museum often works with partners, including universities and local schools, and it outsources design and fabrication of some exhibits.

The History Hub operates as a "museum without walls" and focuses on piquing the curiosity of its visitors to encourage them to explore Durham's local history outside of the museum. The museum's main exhibit reflects this principal by highlighting the history of downtown buildings visible through the windows.

The museum's primary focus is on community engagement and using personal storytelling as a window into local history. One museum exhibit reserves space for community members to curate their own exhibits. Other exhibits tell the stories of individuals who contributed to shaping Durham. The museum also has a touchscreen timeline exhibit and encourages visitors to leave feedback and other topics they would like to see in the exhibit on post-it notes. The museum's Story Center provides a space for individuals to record their personal stories to be archived. In addition to exhibits, the museum also leverages its partnerships for events and activities, such as the popular bike history tours.

The committee's discussion points included

- the need to consider whether a Chapel Hill museum would be a collecting or non-collecting institution
- the importance of understanding potential funding sources and the donor base
- the importance of cultivating community buy-in and support, alongside support from board members
- the need to develop partnerships and consider whether any museum functions may be appropriately outsourced
- how a "museum without walls" experience could work in the Historic Town Hall facility to encourage visitors to explore the town
- how a collaboration with the Visitors Center might work in conjunction with a museum built by and for local residents

4. Public Comment

5. Adjournment

Opportunity Statement: The Inter-Faith Council for Social Services is proceeding with plans to vacate Historic Town Hall. A recommendation is needed regarding the future use and occupancy of this building.

Goal: A Historic Town Hall Committee will represent the interests of the Town of Chapel Hill and Orange County to consider the opportunity to renovate the Historic Town Hall building at 100 West Rosemary Street as a Visitor's

Center, a History Center, or both for possible occupancy by the Chapel Hill and Orange County Visitor's Bureau, Chapel Hill Historical Society, and/ or Chapel Hill Museum.

Public Charge: The Historic Town Hall Committee pledges its respect to the public. The Committee asks the public to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous manner, both with the Committee and with fellow members of the public. Should any member of the Committee or any member of the public fail to observe this charge at any time, the Chair will ask the offending person to leave the meeting until that individual regains personal control. Should decorum fail to be restored, the Chair will recess the meeting until a genuine commitment to this public charge is observed.