



# Town of Chapel Hill

## HISTORIC TOWN HALL COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 22, 2017, at 8:00 a.m.  
Chapel Hill Public Library, Meeting Room C  
100 Library Drive, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

### 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), Moses Carey, Joel Curran, Richard Ellington, Josh Gurlitz, Commissioner Penny Rich, Alan Rimer, Lee Storrow and Chela Tu.

Staff Present: Megan Dale

Staff Absent: Travis Myren

##### b. Approval of Minutes

February 9, February 22, and March 9 Minutes Approved

##### c. Approval of Agenda

Agenda Approved

#### 2. Public Comment

None.

#### 3. Business

##### a. Discuss Museum Operations and Costs

Background: Emily Kass, former Ackland Art Museum Director, and Eric Muller, a UNC Law professor with experience starting a visitors center and history museum, will discuss museum operations and costs with the committee.

Action Item: Discuss needs related to museum operations and potential costs associated with locating a museum in Historic Town Hall.

- Action Taken: The committee discussed common funding needs for a local museum's operation and discussed important points of consideration if the

Council and community were to consider locating a museum in Historic Town Hall.

Emily Kass discussed the Durham History Hub's and Raleigh City Museum's operating budgets. The Durham History Hub's annual budget is mostly funded from individual support and contributions from businesses and local government. The City of Raleigh Museum's budget is funded by the City. Additional smaller revenue sources include support from the Friends of the Museum group and rentals.

Alan Rimer shared that the Chapel Hill Museum's revenues came primarily from community support, including grants, donations raised by the board, and corporate sponsors. The community helped develop the vision for the Chapel Hill Museum in the late 1990s, and those documents may be a useful resource when considering a revived history museum.

Committee discussion points included the higher costs associated with maintaining a collection, the significant startup costs that should be anticipated for renovating Historic Town Hall, and the importance of a stable funding source and advanced fundraising. Emily noted that ideally, a small museum would have the following year's budget raised in advance and would maintain a certain level of cash reserves and rainy-day fund.

Eric Muller shared his experience helping start a museum in Cody, WY on the history of the Heart Mountain internment camp where 11,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II. Funds required to open the museum came from donations, grants from US Department of the Interior and the State of WY, and an admission fee. A key component of this museum experience is that the story is told in the first person from the perspective of Japanese Americans who were incarcerated at this camp. The foundation viewed the narrative as a national story, with regional significance, so the museum is largely focused toward visitors from outside of the local community.

Discussions began in the 1970s to preserve the history, and the Heart Mountain foundation board went through multiple leadership cycles before the museum was able to be built and opened in 2011. Eric discussed that the fraught history produced this difficult, but necessary process to determine what and whose version of the story the museum would tell.

Eric shared the following key points to consider when planning for a new museum:

- the importance of articulating a focused mission, vision and coherent story to tell
- the importance of identifying the museum's intended audience (i.e., the local community versus area visitors).
- determining the story and central audience will inform exhibit choices and space needs
- the need to plan for space for the community's use and to consider renting these spaces as a potential source of income.

- the need to consider the full costs of different technology options, including maintenance costs and costs for regular upgrades

Committee discussion points included:

- long-term strategy for renovating the Historic Town Hall building and considering possible future opportunities for partnerships
- compatibility of the Visitors Bureau and a history museum's missions and audiences
- importance of engaging the community in building a new museum
- interest in a museum as a venue to convene difficult conversations about the community's history

#### **4. Public Comment**

None.

#### **5. Adjournment**

#### **Meeting Materials**

Minutes from February 9, February 22, and March 9, 2017 Meetings

“Measuring the Rule of Thumb – How Much do Exhibitions Cost?” Article

**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.