

## Initial Minutes of a Meeting of the Brown Fisher Association, Inc. Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the Brown-Fisher Association (BFA) held its quarterly meeting on Saturday, June 30, 2018 at St. John's Lutheran Church in downtown Salisbury. President Stephen Brown called the meeting to order shortly after 10:00 a.m. **Attending:** Deane Brown, Larry Brown, Stephen Brown, Rod Kesler, Cathy Kirchin, Carolyn Miller, Norman Ribelin, Sandra Phillips, Doug Robinson, Linda Shelton, Debbie Brown Taylor, Paul Bryant Walker, and Keith Wolf. **Absent:** Candace Elliott Brown, Sarah Brown, and Ken Clifton. Aaron Kepley, Executive Director of Rowan Museum, was out of town.

### MINUTES

Minutes from the previous meeting were emailed to the Board in advance. Keith Wolf made a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes and approve them as sent. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Doug Robinson shared a copy of the letter that was sent to Pat Beck, thanking her for all her years of service and genealogical research.

### FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer Larry Brown reported that, as of 6/11/18, our money market account balance was \$80,473.00 and a balance of \$2,176.00 in our checking account, making \$82,649.00 total assets on hand. On June 11, 2018 \$4,000.00 was transferred from our General Fund, \$1,000.00 was transferred from our Memorials Fund, and \$5,000.00 was transferred from the MBH Improvement Fund for a total of \$10,000.00. This amount was disbursed to Rowan Museum to complete our financial commitment in the project to move the caretaker's house. Expenditures included \$1,592.35 to produce and mail the newsletter. Income included \$2,235.00 in donations to the MBH Improvement Fund, \$50.00 donation to the General Fund, \$680.00 in yearly memberships, \$500.00 for two Life Memberships, with another \$250.00 Life Membership to be deposited. Interest received to date was \$193.30. Remaining fund balances were as follows: General - \$25,012.00, Life Memberships - \$57,161.00, Memorials - \$938.00, MBH Improvements - \$61,094.00, Cemetery - \$1,500.00, Fisher Publications Fund - \$XXXXXX, Reunion Fund - \$10,000.00 which is invested in money market account (MMA) with interest transferred to General Fund. A discussion occurred regarding the interest currently paid on the MMA and President Brown agreed to shop financial institutions for a higher rate.

In looking at the overall financial condition he stated that total Memberships, our primary source of income, have declined significantly in recent years, while our primary expense, the production and mailing of the newsletter, has gone up. In the past, interest on Life Memberships added significant monies to our coffers, however the number of annual Life Memberships have dropped drastically as our cousins have aged and passed away. Keith Wolf suggested that we increase the fee for new Life Memberships then perhaps phasing them out. On the other hand, Doug Robinson noted that there's some appeal to giving Life Memberships to children/grandchildren. President Brown made a motion that we conduct a direct mail campaign to Life Members to raise money to offset the shortfall due to expenses. Motion was seconded by Paul Bryan Walker. Discussion then followed about direct mail versus postcard versus newsletter article. Doug Robinson noted that Life Members tend to read past the annual renewal appeal article since it doesn't apply to them and that most fund-raising efforts occur by direct mail, especially at this time of the year. President Brown then called the question and motion passed unanimously.

Regarding the upcoming reunion, Doug Robinson recommended that we consider contacting The Hot Dog Shack about providing the reunion meal. Owner Jason Smith is President of Nathan Brown House (NBH) and might be willing to provide his services at no charge if a portion of the funds could be donated to NBH. Larry stated that he'd rather continue managing the meal himself because in 2017 we served to both BFA attendees and to Germanfest attendees generating a total of \$2,113.00 that went into the MBH Improvement Fund. The reunion meal generated \$745.00 in payments which offset expenses of \$379.00, netting \$366.00 in income. Germanfest concession generated \$3,755.00 in sales, excluding beer sales, which offset \$1,642.00 of expenses, netting \$2,113.00 in income.

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### EDITOR'S REPORT

Editor Cathy Kirchin asked for a definition of the mission and goal of the newsletter. By-laws state that we are to "collect & abstract historical data; research public & family records; and publish such materials in books, journals & papers for the benefit of the membership and the public." We are also to publish notification of annual meetings, though not specifically in a newsletter. However, members are not submitting articles for publication, so Cathy and Sandra, co-editor, are struggling to fill the newsletter with content. One thing they plan to do is publish info found in old BFA scrapbooks. A discussion ensued regarding print date for the reunion newsletter. By-laws state that it must be sent two months in advance of the event, but since that deadline has been missed the group agreed to set July 10 as deadline for submitting info to Cathy and July 31 as the publication date. Doug Robinson agreed to update the reunion reservation form and provide it to Kat Clifton for website publication. Cathy noted that we need to include a return envelope as well, which are printed as we need them. Larry Brown recommend that we limit our newsletters to 3 per year, with 1 of those dedicated to the reunion. Stephen Brown recommended that we inform our members of the expense involved in producing and mailing the newsletter and ask for donations to offset that expense. He committed \$250.00 to offset the upcoming newsletter.

### COORDINATOR'S REPORT

A new coordinator had not been appointed since Juanita Lagg's death, so there was no official coordinator's report. However, Doug Robinson asked if we wanted to include membership renewal info with the reunion mailing. Keith Wolf asked, given our concern about newsletter production and mailing costs, whether we wanted to increase our membership prices. Larry Brown recommended that we address this question at our next meeting, since membership year is based upon calendar year. Doug Robinson stated that he will work on position description document to help clarify what is expected of each officer, appointed position and board member.

### OLD BUSINESS

1. **BFA Mailing Address change** – Larry Brown stated that the change of BFA mailing address had been completed as Rowan Museum had created a place for BFA incoming and outgoing correspondence.
2. **2018-2022 Board Nominations** – Members whose terms are expiring this year are Candace, Linda and Keith. They may be re-elected again, as board members have a two consecutive term limit. Keith and Linda both indicated a willingness to serve and Larry stated that Candace would serve if needed. Doug Robinson questioned whether the President, Vice President and Secretary have terms. Larry Brown stated that the term for all three is two years, with re-election of one additional term, or a total of four consecutive years. The Editor, Coordinator and Historian are appointed positions.
3. **Coordinator and Secretary Openings** – Larry Brown made a motion that Paul Bryan Walker be nominated as Secretary at the annual meeting. Motion was seconded by Norman Ribelin. There was no further discussion and motion passed unanimously. Larry Brown made a second motion that Doug Robinson be appointed coordinator. Motion was seconded by Keith Wolf. There was no discussion and motion passed unanimously.
4. **MBH Roadside sign** – A question was raised at the previous meeting regarding installation of signage along Stone Road in front of the property to identify it. Larry Brown reported that Aaron Kepley has been in discussion with Dunn's Mountain Park regarding getting a stone donated for this purpose. The stone would then be engraved with the name of the house and street address. Additional stones would identify the creek, the cemetery and recognize us along with major individuals who ensured that MBH was returned to family ownership.
5. **Membership Ledger** – A question arose at last meeting as to whether Juanita had kept a written membership ledger. Larry Brown indicated that he had not yet found a current one in her materials. Doug Robinson noted that it was unlikely one existed, as she was maintaining the list of members electronically.

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6. **Annual Reunion Planning** – A discussion occurred at last meeting regarding establishing a sign-in register and Doug Robinson distributed a proposed register for everyone to review. Additionally, significant time was spent last meeting discussing various concerns that arose at the 2017 meeting. The group agreed to implement the following measures to address those concerns:
- Seclude the reunion meeting area from Germanfest activities. Meeting area will be set up where carport formerly stood. The caretaker's house, which will not be moved before the reunion, will serve as a natural noise barrier.
  - Rope-off/Reserve meeting area until reunion is finished. Doug Robinson stated that he'll have a sign made noting the area reserved.
  - Address event entry issues – In 2017, the fence opening was used as entranceways by both BFA and Germanfest which created problems after the Germanfest line became long. At that time their attendees attempted to use the BFA line, causing confusion. This will be resolved this year by moving the BFA entrance to the driveway, while keeping the Germanfest entrance at the fence opening. (The driveway also needs to be such that it could be used for access to the site in an emergency or for handicapped drop-offs.) New signage will be in place directing attendees to the proper line.
  - BFA charge to attend Germanfest – There is no charge for BFA attendees to enjoy the Germanfest activities, which has an entry fee of \$5 for adults and \$3 for children. We need to be sure that Germanfest only attendees enter through their entrance so as to ensure Rowan Museum receives as much income as possible.
7. **MBH & Grounds Long Range Plan** –The team is working to have the house moved by the event but is dependent upon the mover's, Tommy Long Moving and Grading, schedule. Utilities to the house are being terminated & the carport will be removed before the event. A construction pedestal will be in place providing temporary power supply until the cultural center building is completed. Tommy Long is receiving the house at no charge with the agreement that he will charge Rowan Museum a reduced fee to disassemble & move the McCombs Cabin to the MBH site. Larry Brown stated that Rowan Museum had contracted with a company who performed ground penetrating radar inspections of certain areas around the house, but their reports have yet to be received. Rowan Museum is evaluating whether to allow the moving company to knock down the surrounding timber for RM to dispose of later or to contract a company which will cut the timber, sell it & reduce the overall charge with the proceeds. Larry reported that Rowan Museum had approved purchase of a modular storage building which will be placed against the woods behind the carport. The storage building will be used to store items until the new building is in place.

Stephen Brown questioned if a well ever was dug on the site by Michael Brown & his immediate descendants or did they merely use water from the underground spring. Members recalled seeing a spring house on the property as children, but the spring has been gone for many years. A well was dug in the 1950s to provide water for the caretaker's house. Larry Brown reminded everyone that bringing the cabin onsite will greatly increase the interpretative capabilities, e.g. blacksmithing, slave lifestyle, etc.

Regarding the proposed cultural center building, Norman Ribelin reported that the Landtrust had given their approval to proceed with the building & was very lenient with their requirements. The only caveat was that the exterior of the building be made to look appropriate to the period, to compliment the MBH itself. Larry Brown reported that the committee had met with Mid-State Metals regarding building the structure and applying a façade to meet Landtrust's requirements. The committee made site visits to an American Legion building in Harmony and an historical site in Rural Hill and was impressed with the quality. An additional site visit will be made to Old Salem to consult with their experts. They're considering subcontracting the rest of the work to reduce overall expenses. At present, Granite Quarry is planning to extend water and sewer lines down Stone House Road, but the project is 5 or more years away; therefore, the committee is exploring installing a septic system in the interim.

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Larry then distributed a drawing of the proposed layout of the proposed cultural center building, which is included as an attachment to these minutes. The proposal is a building 70' X 70', to contain an open area in the center to be used for various purposes such as our reunion, weddings, educational, e.g. school field trips, travelling historical displays, etc. Research indicates that the area needs a smaller wedding venue, which, when rented would greatly increase the potential income, e.g. \$3,000 per weekend at 30 weekends per year would generate \$90,000 annually to offset operating costs as well as provide some additional funds. The central area will be surrounded by a warming kitchen, storage rooms, other necessities, an office/gift shop which will be staffed a someone who would serve as a docent as well, locking the office while giving a tour. Finally, the building will contain a temperature-controlled room to store the extensive Brown and Fisher family archives, something was that enshrined in our by-laws when the combined corporation was created in 1994. The building is made possible by a \$240,000 designation from Mr. and Mrs. Lagg's estate to Rowan Museum for improvements to MBH. All spaces would be opportunities for selling of naming rights. Total projected cost for the entire project could reach as high as \$750,000. Mid-State Metals indicated that the Lagg gift would most likely cover the expense involved in building the shell. The committee's goal is to build it at a cost of \$80 per square ft. There will be a few handicapped spaces at the service entrance at back. The committee plans to have a 4' x 8' enlargement of the plans on display at the reunion.

### NEW BUSINESS

1. **Capturing member email addresses** – A discussion occurred regarding communication methods and Paul Bryan Walker encouraged the group to make a concerted effort to capture e-mail addresses. Doug Robinson responded that the next newsletter will request them along with several other fields not captured in the past so that we can better populate our database, or in business parlance, know our customer. However, he noted that his experience as coordinator of another family reunion revealed that you run the risk of “losing” your customer by solely relying upon e-mail communication. If someone changes their e-mail address and doesn't inform us and that's our only way of communicating with them then we've “lost” them, most likely for good. On the other hand, with printed mail, USPS provides an address correction service which, for a certain period and for a small fee, informs us if mail was undeliverable, address changed, etc. It's a balancing act.
2. **BFA email address** - Deane Brown made a motion that we create a dedicated e-mail address for Brown-Fisher Association so that we can be contacted in a manner other than phone. Paul Bryan Walker seconded. Discussion noted that the address can be used for all incoming/outgoing communication (photographs, genealogy questions, etc.) and the coordinator will then forward it to the proper person. Motion passed unanimously.
3. **Election to BFA Board and BFA membership** – Keith Wolf asked if just descendants could be members of BFA. He also recommended that we allow member non-descendants to serve on the BFA Board of Directors. Larry Brown responded that our By-laws already accommodate both: anyone may be a paying member of BFA and any member in good standing may serve on the Board.
4. **Germanfest** – Someone asked if we could capture the names of Germanfest attendees & send membership info to them. Given that Aaron Kepley was out of town, this couldn't be answered. Doug said we could certainly mail info to them but wasn't sure if Germanfest captured attendee info in addition to accepting admission fees. He noted it was doubtful considering the long entry line last year.
5. **Accepting online payments** - A discussion occurred about cash and check being our only existing payment methods. Larry reported on Rowan Museum's efforts to accept credit cards. Doug Robinson stated that Kat Clifton, our webmaster, had recommended we create a PayPal account to accept payments on-line. She would need to be involved and would need to obtain account info from Larry in order to set this option up on our site. Norman Ribelin made a motion that we post the reunion reservation form to the website and open an account (e.g. PayPal, Square, etc.) to accept online payments. Paul Bryan Walker seconded the motion and, with no discussion, motioned passed.

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6. **Ancestor info** - Doug Robinson noted that several years back the newsletter address label contained a person's ancestral connection, e.g. Descendant of Michael, but hadn't in a few years. He asked Juanita about this prior to her death and she stated that she'd had a computer crash and lost all that data. Stephen Brown said he'd like us to attempt to rebuild this info. Doug agreed to add something to the reunion reservation form to start this process.
7. **Brown Book status** – Stephen Brown said he'd like to see the next edition of the Brown books published because it's common knowledge that the earlier versions had numerous errors. About 20 years ago the Board began an effort to do this and it was decided that several books should be written, one for each of Michael's children & their descendants. Betty Dan Nicholas, official BFA historian, began working on the first of those books, the Moses line, and published much of her work in the newsletter at that time but the current status is unknown. Betty Dan is curator of much of BFA's genealogical research. She is the guardian of over 150 binders of research documents that the family has created through the years. These will ultimately go into the Archives Room in the proposed cultural center on the grounds of the Michael Brown House.
8. **New By-Law Proposal** – The group discussed the important role the Executive Director of Rowan Museum has with our organization. Stephen Brown made a motion that our by-laws be modified to add this position as an ex-officio member of the Board. Motion was seconded by Norman Ribelin. Doug Robinson pointed out that we're required to notify the membership in advance of any proposed changes to the by-laws. Given that Aaron wasn't in attendance, the group agreed to table the motion until it could be discussed with Aaron. If he has no opposition, the by-law change will be proposed at our 2019 annual meeting.

### NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for November 17, 2018, from 10:00am until 12:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Robinson  
Interim Corporate Secretary