**Riversdale Historical Society**

**General Membership Meeting**

**Saturday, September 9, 2023**

Patrick Gossett called the hybrid meeting to order at 10:02 AM. Present were:

 Patrick Gossett Howard Menaker Maria Cathell

 Anne Turkos Leigh Ryan Kay Holloway

Jennifer Flood Maya Davis Katherine Spivey

Joanne Calvert Godelieve Bartley Julie Rapp

Michelle Kretsch Tatiana Zepeda Esquina  Meghan O’Brien

Anna Schauermann Ann Wass

**Welcome and President’s Update--Patrick Gossett, RHS President**

 Patrick welcomed attendees, reviewed the agenda, and announced the dates for the general membership meetings in 2024. All those meetings will be hybrid like today’s.

**Approval of Minutes of General Membership Meeting of September 9, 2023--Anne Turkos, RHS Secretary**

Minutes approved as submitted.

**Treasurer’s Report—Michelle Kretsch, RHS Treasurer**

* Total funds available: $8,730.91
* Michelle reviewed expenses over the last several months, including Jennifer Flood’s salary, the salaries for our social media managers Maria Cathell and Kelley Keimig, software and internet service, grass mowing for Calvert Memorial Park, the digitization project funded by the Miller grant, insurance for the gift shop, and the services of our tax accountant.
* Treasurer’s report approved.

**Director’s Report—Maya Davis, Riversdale Director**

* Slides Maya used as illustrations are attached to the minutes.
* Staffing
* Part-time employees will receive time and a half for hours worked on holidays.
* Gina has been reclassified into a new position. Her hours will stay the same.
* Applications for the gardener position recently closed. Beth Alvarez assisted with preparing the job description/announcement for the position.
* Staff training and professional development:
* Maya outlined the staff training and professional development opportunities she, Gina, Anna, and Tatiana have participated in in recent months.
* Visitation
* 28 visitors in September, 20 in October. November figures not yet compiled
* 4 tour groups from September to November. Three groups were paid tours.
* Revenue (September-November): Tours $236, ECO Rent $500 with $250 payment pending, Donations $178
* Maya highlighted a number of outstanding volunteers, including Godelieve Bartley, Mel

Kornspan, Leigh Ryan, Michelle Kretsch, Patrick Gossett, and Howard Menaker, and provided a breakout of hours devoted to various volunteer tasks.

* Maya noted that she has received the Wilbur H. Siebert and Robert G. Stanton awards from the National Park Service.
* Current and upcoming projects:
* Tour guide training
* Tulip planting
* Workforce exhibition
* Riversdale reunion
* Gathering of men black history exhibition
* 30th anniversary exhibition
* Descendant silhouette project
* NHRD descendants project
* MD 250 commemoration planning
* Maya fielded questions about the silhouette project, the Riversdale reunion, and the gathering of black men. The Riversdale reunion is tentatively slated for the end of June 2024.
* Maya made a presentation kicking off Maryland’s year of civil rights with Gov. Wes Moore. She also invited the governor to visit Riversdale.
* A commemorative bench has been installed behind the garden. This honors the memory of a child from the Riverdale Park community. The project to install another bench funded by a member of the Calvert family will be moving forward.
* Plans to honor the two children killed near Riverdale Park Elementary School are underway. We want to be sensitive to their family’s wishes. RHS made a contribution via gofundme to help cover funeral expenses.
* Howard asked if there had been any progress on the development of a plan for Plummer Park. Maya said she did not know of any at this time.
* Programs:
* September—Senior Sip and Paint, open hearth cooking
* October—Riverdale Park Arts Chamber Concert, open hearth cooking, EOB Fall Festival
* November—Emancipation Day: A Gathering of Men, open hearth cooking, concert
* Anna and Tatiana were particularly helpful with several of these programs. They introduced themselves to meeting attendees.
* Tatiana is working on translating Riversdale’s signage and brochures into Spanish.
* Anna and Tatiana have been helping to cover activities in the garden.
* Sip and Paint will become an annual event. May occur more frequently throughout the year.
* Maya showed photos from a number of the events.
* Good Nik is sold out. Plans for Riversdale by Candlelight are moving ahead.
* Maya provided a list of upcoming programs, including the meeting of the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture on December 4.
* Ann Wass offered to provide some children’s clothing for use in the workforce exhibit that she had prepared for a small research exhibit she did on children of the enslaved.

**Kitchen Guild—Michelle Kretsch, Riversdale Kitchen Guild**

* Kitchen Guild will be cooking during Riversdale by Candlelight. This will be the last cooking session for 2023.
* Will cook in February for Plummer’s Kitchen.
* Kitty Marx and Michelle are talking to Anna about events in 2024.
* Several individuals have expressed an interest in volunteering for the Kitchen Guild. Michelle and Kitty will be talking to Anna about how to get these folks enrolled as volunteers and oriented/trained.
* Currently have seven members of the Kitchen Guild.

**Calvert Memorial Park—Anne Turkos for Beth Alvarez, Paint Branch Garden Club**

* Total number of volunteer hours as of 2023-12-02: 2372.5 hours
* Since last reported in September, volunteers have installed plants donated by members and friends, weeded, edged, watered, pruned, thinned perennials, dead headed, removed invasives, and picked up trash.
* The Good Neighbor Day 2023 project at Calvert Memorial Park took place on Saturday, October 21. Twelve cubic yards of mulch were spread on beds in the park, and more than fifty perennials were planted: mountain mint, goldenrod, turtlehead, New England aster, and golden ragwort. Good Neighbor Day volunteers included six University of Maryland undergrads, one graduate student, and a regular Riversdale House Museum garden volunteer. National Capital Area Garden Clubs First Vice President, Danielle Brabazon, once again was a valued volunteer. Paint Branch Garden Club members and spouses included Carolyn and Willard Larkin, Rosemary and Ron Blunck, Linney de Jaager, Anne Turkos, and Roy and Beth Alvarez. We were lucky with the weather, and we completed our work in about two hours. A great deal of effort was expended in planning for this event, but the University of Maryland Office of Community Engagement provided fewer volunteers than requested, the functioning of the computer application used for the event proved disappointing, and communication from the organizers less than optimal. Garden club members and spouses provided more physical effort than had been planned. It is unlikely that we will participate in Good Neighbor Day 2024, as it has proved easier and more effective to plan on our own, as witnessed by our successful Earth Day 2023 event.
* Also in October, a shrub and five trees were installed in the park. Purchased at Ciminelli’s Ecoasis Garden Center, a native inkberry was planted at the front of the park to replace a lavender that died. The five trees installed included two seven-gallon Green Giant arborvitae, two fifteen-gallon Nellie Stevens hollies and ten-gallon Betty cultivar deciduous magnolia. Purchased from and expertly installed by Patuxent Nursery on October 31, the trees were purchased with a senior citizens discount. Riversdale Historical Society and garden club member Carolyn Larkin funded the cost of the plants and installation. A helpful employee at Patuxent Nursery advised use of a simple PVC pipe system to water the five trees, and the Patuxent Nursery crew kindly installed the pipes purchased and prepared for that purpose. An employee of the town of Riverdale Park’s Public Works Department will water these trees as well as those installed last February. In addition, garden club volunteers will carry in water to supplement that effort.
* On November 14, a swamp white oak was planted in the park as a replacement for the one planted in February 2023; the first oak was among the five trees donated by Global Health and Education Projects, which provided the replacement tree as well. The newly planted oak has been fitted with a gator bag to facilitate watering by the Riverdale Park Town Public Works.
* The work at Calvert Memorial Park is a cooperative effort of Riversdale Historical Society and Paint Branch Garden Club. The Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations, first signed in 2020, has been reviewed, revised, updated and signed by both the PBGC and RHS and is in force for 2023. Volunteer efforts are ongoing and typically take place on Tuesday mornings. Volunteers are enthusiastically welcomed. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact, Beth Alvarez, alvarez@umd.edu, cell phone: 240-383-9682.
* Patrick complimented all the hard work that Beth and the volunteers from Paint Branch Garden Club have put in.
* Ann Wass asked what happened to the swamp oak that was replaced. Anne said that it died, likely due to poor soil quality at the spot where it was planted.

**Newsletter--Howard Menaker, RHS Vice President**

* There were some problems with the mailing of the most recent newsletter issue. Some members did not receive it, but there does not seem to be an obvious reason why. If you did not receive the newsletter, please email Howard and let him know. He can send out the pdf.
* Work will start on the next issue after January 1.
* Hope to put out four issues in 2024.
* Howard would like to have an assistant editor to help out with issues going forward, eventually taking over as editor. Contact him if interested.

**Social Media--Maria Grenchik Cathell, Social Media Manager**

* Maria’s notes and illustrations for her report are attached to the minutes.
* Maria came by Riversdale and took lots of interior and exterior shots that she has been utilizing in addition to images she already had from her past work at Riversdale.
* She was really impressed by the mirrors in the parlor and the floorcloth and Grecian lamp in the salon.
* Maria shared analytics for the RHS Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) accounts and usage for the RHS website.
* The results of our first #GivingTuesday fundraiser exceeded the stated goal of $1,000. Funds gathered will be used for conservation of the frame for the portrait of William Norris Calvert. Portrait, on loan from Joanne Calvert, was on display at the meeting.
* Howard credited Maria for initiating our #GivingTuesday fundraiser. We even received a contribution from someone in Seattle; we are not sure what this person’s connection to Riversdale is, but perhaps he/she is a Calvert descendant. Ann Wass noted that having a specific project targeted for these funds made the initiative a success.
* Howard reminded Maria that she needs to speak with Michelle about accounting for the #GivingTuesday contributions for tax purposes.
* Howard noted that our social media accounts and website are great examples of how we can expand our outreach. He encouraged everyone to like/share posts.
* Anne Wass commented that the RHS website is the primary place for people to find information on events at the house. Maya commented that M-NCPPC’s move to update websites for historic sites has not benefitted Riversdale.
* Maria has been using Mary Randolph’s book for recipes for X (formerly Twitter) for national holidays postings, e.g. National Fritter Day, National Maize Day.
* A number of older newsletters have been added to the website, from 2010 to the present.
* We have had some website visitors from Belgium.
* If we have ideas or information to share with Maria for postings, email her at info@riversdale.org.

**Collections and Acquisitions Update--Jennifer Flood, RHS Curator of Collections**

* Jenn and Meghan O’Brien from the Crowley Company provided an update on the Calvert Family papers and Stier/Calvert Family letters digitization project.
* Jennifer:
* Matt Ray loaned the Calvert Family papers to Riversdale in 2011-2012. They date from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries. Documents are primarily from Charles Benedict Calvert, some from his son George Henry Calvert, and a few from other Calvert family members.
* Six individuals worked for a year to provide a detailed inventory of these papers, which fills 290 pages of an Excel spreadsheet.
* Over 10 years, one part-time person and three volunteers scanned 2,600 documents.
* RHS received a $20,000 Miller History Fund grant from the Maryland Center for History and Culture in 2023.
* All Calvert Family documents not previously scanned and all the photocopies of the Stier/Calvert Family letters scanned by the Crowley Company—10,880 pages of Calvert Family and 6,034 pages of Stier/Calvert.
* Next step is transcribing all the scanned documents. This will be key to making the documents more accessible online.
* Attempt to show a video from the Crowley Company was not successful. Members can view the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZN7FrAu1yA>
* Meghan
* Jenn had described the collection and provided the spreadsheet, but Meghan did not see the collection until it arrived at the Crowley facility in Frederick.
* The Calvert Family documents were manually scanned by a scanner operator due to their fragility. The majority of the materials with which Crowley works are handled this way.
* The Stier/Calvert photocopies were run through an automated scanner.
* Crowley prepared a sign-off sample of scans, which Jenn approved.
* Next step was to scan all documents and save the scans to hard drives provided by RHS.
* There were some hiccups with identification of the documents. Jenn is now reviewing the scans and correcting the file names.
* Having the scans will really broaden access to these documents.
* Crowley would be happy to work with Riversdale again on future projects.
* Ann Wass asked about plans to make all these documents available online. Jenn replied that she can now share individual documents with researchers upon request. Broader access will depend on permission from Matt Ray. The Rosalie letters can be mounted online first.
* Howard noted that the Maryland Center for History and Culture is also interested in digitizing the Calvert papers they have. We may be able to coordinate with them.
* These documents are important for changing our interpretation at Riversdale.
* Jenn noted that we are much closer to being able to conserve the frame for the portrait of William Norris Calvert thanks to the success of our #GivingTuesday campaign. She thanked Joanne Calvert for the loan of the portrait. Joanne noted that her son expressed interest in the portrait.
* Joanne has two boxes of documents that may have belonged to Charles Benedict Calvert.
* Ann Wass asked about progress on the dairy project. Maya noted that this project has a very large scope of work, and Michelle said that RHS is working with Park and Planning to move this project forward
* Maya did not have an update on the exterior work. The gravel around the building has been a stumbling block.
* Ann asked about the possibility of doing a small exhibit of the items RHS received from the Charleston Museum and were conserved using funds donated in honor of Ann’s retirement. Ann would like to work on this after May 2024. Jenn suggested the Best Guest bedroom as an appropriate spot. Maya noted the need to bring Gina into this conversation. Gina still has the same work schedule but will be out on leave in early 2024.

**Other Business**

* Ann asked about what was happening with living interpretation at Riversdale, similar to what she and Katherine Spivey had done in the past, for example. Maya responded that Park and Planning is looking into reactions to living history and that the conversation is ongoing.
* Howard noted the upcoming visit from Sally Wood, a descendant of Caroline Calvert, and a small group of friends. Jenn will be pulling some Caroline-related materials for them to see and will call Godelieve to discuss what she has pulled, since Godelieve will be the docent for their visit. Howard suggested mentioning all this to Anna so she could put the materials back in Jenn’s office after the visit
* Patrick displayed the three signs that will be installed in Calvert Memorial Park in early 2024.
* Signs will be placed at the entrance to the park, near the cemetery, and by the brick outline of Riverdale Presbyterian Church.
* Signs are in production now and should arrive in mid-January.
* They will contain QR codes that visitors can use to link back to more information on the RHS website.
* RHS is paying for the signs.
* Patrick thanked Michelle for the loan of the owl equipment to facilitate our hybrid meeting.

**2024 General Membership Meeting Dates**

February 10, 2024

            May 11, 2024

            September 14, 2024

            December 7, 2024

                        All meetings will be held in person at Riversdale beginning at 10:00 a.m.

but will also offer a Zoom option.

Meeting adjourned at 11: 53 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Anne S.K. Turkos

Secretary

Attachments:

 Directors Report\_2023\_Dec 2

 Social Media & Website\_2023\_Dec 2\_Maria

 RHS Digitization presentation\_2023\_Dec 2