

Mile of History Association
2021 Annual Meeting
May 3, 2022

Attendees

32 members registered at the door (Attachment 1). A quorum was present.

Agenda Item 1. Welcome, Introduction and President's Report

Vice President Mauran, standing in for President Buonanno who was absent due to illness, called the meeting to order at 4:35pm.

Vice President Mauran read President Buonanno's report (Attachment 2). The report highlighted the progress of many projects which are in progress, and it looked forward to more in the coming year. Members were strongly encouraged to participate in at least one of the subcommittees of the Board.

Agenda Item 2. Election of Board of Directors

Acting Secretary Hewitt, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, presented two slates of candidates. He thanked Peter Allen, Bill Applegate, Carl Farmer, Roz Rustigian, and Bruce Tillinghast for their service on the Nominating Committee.

The following Directors were nominated to serve another of two years:

- Vincent Buonanno
- Dan Baudouin
- Bill Deveney
- Barry Fain
- Carl Farmer
- Grace Farmer
- Richard Gilbane
- Charles Hewitt
- Paul Kappel
- Wendy Marcus
- Liz Mauran
- Tim More
- Roz Rustigian
- Cynthia Ventre-Hewitt

Motion by Mr. Burriesci, seconded by Mr. Tillinghast, to elect the slate for an additional two-year term. Passed unanimously.

The following members were nominated as Directors to serve an initial term of two years:

- Harry Adler
- Lorne Adrain
- Steve Metzger
- Dietrich Neumann

Motion by Mr. Tillinghast, seconded by Ms. Rustigian, to elect the slate for an initial two-year term. Passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 3. Introduction of City Councilors

Vice President Mauran welcomed Helen Anthony (Ward 2) and John Goncalves (Ward 1). Each councilor said a few words of appreciation and support for the MoHA's contribution to protecting and promoting the historical heritage of the Mile of History district. Vice President Mauran also welcomed Sue AnderBois, who is running for election as councilor for Ward 3.

Agenda Item 4. Executive Committee Reports

The following progress reports were presented:

Liz Mauran: Federal Grant submitted to Senator Whitehouse to request funding to rebuild sidewalks to improve ADA accessibility

Steve Metzger and Tim More: I-195 Parcel 2 development. The Commission has selected Urbanica. MoHA has representation on the committee that is reviewing and suggesting revisions to Urbanica's design.

Tim More: 144 Benefit Street and 5 Benefit Street. MoHA opposes the proposals to rezone these locations to allow greater density. Discussions with the developer of 144 Benefit Street have been intense and are continuing.

Tim More: First Baptist Barrier update. There is no solution yet for eliminating the Jersey barriers which guard the southwestern corner at the intersection of Benefit and Thomas Streets.

Roz Rustigian: Upcoming Events. MoHA expects to organize another Holiday Stroll and decorate the street light poles along Benefit Street this year. Volunteers are needed to make it an event with food trucks and entertainment.

Agenda Item 5. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Rustigian. MoHA's funds are kept in accounts at two banks and PayPal. The total is approximately \$130,000. MoHA is solvent and able to fund its commitments to support the restoration of the streetlights and other projects.

Agenda Item 6. Membership Report

Roz Rustigian: There are 87 member households now. There are 187 lapsed members. Just get one of your neighbors to join!

Agenda Item 7. Streetlight Update and Streetscape Study

Liz Mauran: There has been much progress with the restoration of the street lights. We are in the final stages of the review and approval of the design. Expect installation to begin late this coming summer.

Liz Mauran: Bradford Associates (BA) has completed the Cultural Landscape Study (CLS). It is comprehensive and will serve as the basis for standards concerning sidewalks, tree wells, signage, and other elements of public infrastructure.

Agenda Item 8. Tourism Committee

Dan Baudouin: The Tourism Committee has been resurrected. Fifteen institutions are joining in enhancing the Benefit Street experience for visitors.

Agenda Item 9. Annual Meeting for 2022.

After a short discussion the membership indicated preference for the annual meeting to occur on a Sunday in October, late afternoon.

Agenda Item 10: New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

The Members expressed thanks to Wendy Marcus for the lovely decorations which adorned the tables at the meeting. Well done, Wendy!

Meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles W. Hewitt
Acting Secretary

Mile of History Association
Annual Meeting, May 3, 2022
President's Report

As many of you know, our President Vin Buonanno has tested positive for Covid. He feels fine, just under the weather slightly. As Vice President of our organization, I am happy to deliver his President's report and hope you will have patience as we move through our meeting. By way of introduction, may I tell you that I came to Providence 35 years ago and am a devoted preservationist here. I serve as an advisor to the Providence Preservation Society and the Newport Historical Society and have served as Chair of Preservation at Mount Vernon for twelve years. Here are Vin's remarks:

President's Report

I'm happy to welcome all of you who are members of the Mile of History Association which is in its 4th year of existence, and to those who are friends, who were may have lapsed in membership and to others curious to find out what we are about. You are all welcome.

I also want to recognize two City officials who join us from the City Council. Council woman Helen Anthony is a stalwart defender and helper of the Mile of History Association. John Goncalves represents the

southern end of Benefit Street and is a staunch advocate, also. We actually have a third ward where we are on the edge, in particular, where I live on the west side of northern Benefit Street which is a sliver which belongs to Ward 3 carrying over to Smith Street and west.

We welcome two observers, one is a candidate for election for Ward 3 which will be determined in November, Bradley VanDerStad. The other is Alex Ellis, who is our Principal City Planner tasked with street paving initiatives among other things.

The difficult period that we all know so well and need to say nothing more about, that is the pandemic and the many limitations that it has put on our freedom of movement and freedom to gather, whether to deal with listening to issues of the neighborhood or celebrating milestones or continuing cultural events that involve public gatherings and physical proximity. We've covered this with some zoom activity for the last Annual Meeting, but I think our last cultural event was about a year ago watching Claire Andrade's film about the Cape Verdean community of Providence which we did at an outdoor venue at Fox Point.

We are coming out of that period now. There is a lot of opportunity to gather and we have a couple of occasions of fixed dates and a few others just awaiting confirmation by their locations. First Providence Preservation Society's program the Music in the Garden of which Mile of History Association is the primary sponsor will begin May 18.

MoHA participated in a weekday afternoon celebration of the restoration of the Old State House on Benefit Street, probably the most important historic public building on the Mile of History. The RI Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission occupies that building which once was a Colony House for the supervision of Rhode Island by its British possessors. It then became the winter State House at the end of the 18th century, which lasted in that role until the great McKim designed State Capitol that we almost see from here came into full occupation in about 1912 and remains our State House. The 18th century summer State House is in Newport, another colony House.

Interim Director Jeff Emidy is here today and I would like him to stand so that you will recognize him. He has invited us to come to an outdoor briefing on the steps of the Colony House. We will schedule this outdoor occasion there in the coming weeks sometime before June 30th.

We postponed for over a year, the showing indoors of Divine Providence, Salvatore Mancini's prize-winning documentary on the restoration, removal and moving of the rivers in Providence and the rebirth of the City's downtown core. We are setting a date at the RISD auditorium to show that soon.

We have four new candidates for our Board who will be voted on a little later this afternoon. All of them bring a different perspective and talents which I'm sure will assist us.

When I walk or ride our street, I'm struck by the contrast between the private richness of Benefit Street which so outshines the public services which are essential and critical to our safety, beauty, and access to the neighborhood. When I speak of richness, I'm not speaking of family wealth or net worth, I'm speaking of the richness of the built fabric and just as impressive the care that is taken of it. You can't walk Benefit Street without running into a range of projects on the exteriors of houses. Ten going on at any time is no surprise. Then, there are do it yourself projects of gardens, window boxes, paint touch ups, and the skilled people who deliver services, of course, at the cost of our membership in chimney maintenance, gutters, clapboards, windows, etc.

Not for any lack of effort by our Council people, it has been so hard to make the City respond to projects such as the Street light restoration, the paving of Benefit Street, the condition of the sidewalks, the inadequate signage, the re-patching of the streets after utility excavation disruptions.

We've experienced some broken promises from some tremendously delayed projects made more frustrating by seeing projects carried out on other parts of the City, which we don't see as more meritworthy than ours. I think it is unusual, if not unique that The Mile of History Association has raised money for the refurbishment of the street lanterns. Many of its

members have donated to that cause privately on projects that are clearly the City's responsibility. We are grateful to our City Councilors for committing their Neighborhood Improvement funds to the cause. We do feel that recently we have engaged with city employees who understand and support what we are attempting here.

It appears that we are close to installation by July of new streetlights and where needed poles. We celebrate that happening, while the history of the project would lead to some understandable skepticism.

In terms of private what I will call "richness," not monetary but rich in attitude and inspiration, as the recent re-invigoration of the Tourism Committee. Tourism is intimately linked to safety and accessibility, of course. The greatest attractions of the Mile of History are not drive bys but are pedestrian pleasures. But pedestrian safety is not assured and we consider that we have well over 100,000 visitors to the street each year, not to mention our own children and elderly who are using it to move through their daily activities. Pedestrian safety is paramount and we are involved in it. We are paying for the study of it. We have grant requests in progress to help us with it and I'll leave further comments on that to my Executive Committee colleagues.

We made our own donations to causes such as the restoration of the Olmsted designed grounds at the RI Historical Society's John Brown

House right on the Mile of History and to the more modest, but still charming, Tillinghast Cemetery near the southern end of Benefit Street.

You will hear Roz Rustigian update you on our healthy treasury, even with losses in membership roles, which is being experienced by so many neighborhood associations. My appeal to you is to add just one new member, family or individual in the next three months. If we all did that, we could double our membership and speak with that much of a more resonant voice to the City. Public officials and rather importantly politicians running for office this year, of course, are sensitive to getting in front of and wanting to know what are the wants of the constituencies which they hope will elect them.

We had as many as 90 households here and I'm not sure of the exact number since we are in a period of harvesting dues, to know how many we have of dues paying members but encourage you to pay your dues so that we can count you in and think about that idea of just one new member. We are going to be designing a card to hand to people showing them how simply and inexpensively they may join.

So, I have summarized for you our recent activity and am grateful to all of you for support in many ways.