



## Maine Historical Records Advisory Board

### Meeting Minutes

February 16, 2022

3:00pm – 4:00pm

Location: Zoom

**Board Members Present:** Earle Shettleworth, Howard Lowell, Patricia Dunn, Larissa Vigue Picard, Jill Piekut Roy, Anna Faherty, Kat Stefko, Donald Soctomah, Kevin Johnson, Steve Bromage (ex-officio), Kate McBrien (ex-officio)

**MSA Staff Members Present:** Tammy Marks, Samuel Howes

**Public Members Present:** Rodney Gagnon (Topsham)

Meeting called to order at 3:03 pm by Kate McBrien.

### **Welcome and Land Acknowledgment**

Kate McBrien welcomed everyone to the meeting and recited the land acknowledgment which is offered by the Maine State Archives at each Maine Historical Records Advisory Board meeting.

### **Welcome**

Kate welcomed everyone to the meeting, did a roll call and recognized a quorum.

## **Discussion of Priorities and Goals**

Kate wanted to start by talking about priorities and goals to have a purpose and to provide a path forward; and decide as a group. There is an opportunity to apply for federal funding through a grant from the NHPRC, the funding is for state historic records boards like us; the draft is due April 1<sup>st</sup> and the final draft is due June 8<sup>th</sup>. That is why it is important to have these conversations,

Howard, Tammy, and Kate sat in on a Zoom call with the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) who met with the national archives staff person who runs all the SHRABs and this funding program. He shared their goals for the coming year and what they fund and what they are hoping Boards like ours will do across the nation which may help Boards like ours have insight on what we need to do to get some funding.

Howard mentioned that we are not the only state board that is trying to reconstitute itself. There are others in a similar situation. Howard noted that for us to really move forward we need to have a mini strategic plan in the works, so we have a basis for what our priorities are. One of the opportunity areas, which we have had success in Maine before, is a re-grant program to support libraries, archives, and museums though out the state, or at least the potential for that. He thought we could move ahead with a grant proposal that does both of those these things. Everything ties into the upcoming Declaration of Independence anniversary that is coming up in 2025. Howard mentioned we might want to think about the state's assessment of archival collections if we wanted to bite off a little bigger project.

Kate mentioned that Dan Stokes, at NARA, wanted everyone to have a strategic plan but they need everyone to be able to fund a project a long side of it. They want you to do both to show direct activity within communities with the funding. Whatever we decide, as a group, we need to make sure there is direct action clearly with that as well as whatever else we want to do.

Steve asked what they said about the level of funding available through the grants. Kate mentioned there were two levels. She shared her screen to show the Board what the grant entailed. A level one grant is for one year and up to \$12,000 or you can apply for a level two grant for one year up to \$40,000 or for two years up to \$80,000. You can apply for either level, but not both. They plan to award a total of 30 grants. Kate mentioned they seemed eager to fund the states that are regrouping and pull them back in. We need to make sure that what we are creating fits with what they want to do as well.

Anna asked if we had an idea of which level we want to shoot for and that said what we would like to use the money for specifically. Kate mentioned that is what we need to decide right now. In the past, Kate mentioned that they have attended to apply for the level two grant around the \$40,000 level. Steve agreed that seems familiar. Kat

mentioned that the Board never saw the budget in the past as part of consideration. Kat asked if there was concern about the cost share. Kate mentioned she would investigate this. She stated we have had success going to the legislature and asking for funds for cost share. Steve mentioned there is in kind contributions, with Kate's time being the administrative leader it might satisfy that question.

Anna asked what is the amount that would typically be regranted. Kate mentioned in the past they have gone around that \$40,000 level, each grant award was around \$1000 to \$2000, they were small. She mentioned we wouldn't have to do that. Steve mentioned that for all these reasons it would be useful to go back to focus on four areas previously mentioned by Kate and Howard. See what the Board thinks would be useful for the archival needs and opportunities are in Maine and see what funding opportunities are available by this grant.

Howard mentioned besides writing the grant what are we capable of doing to prepare in the next six months before the funds are available. Some of the things we need to do can the Board do on their own he asked.

Steve mentioned there may be a few stages to it. First year do a strategic plan, an assessment of the State as a baseline. Regranting is a critical part of this plan as well. This grant program has been the real reason for the Board's existence but if the State was providing some funds and allow for \$50,000 to \$100,000 for the Board to distribute to archives that would be a pretty great thing.

Anna mentioned she felt the first step should be the archival assessment to better understand what to offer the regrant money for.

Earle mentioned it might be helpful to have a definition of what people envision a statewide assessment would be. Earle thought an important part would be an inventory of the existing resources in the digital age we live in constructing a system were people can more easily access these collections and resources from a statewide standpoint.

Kat added that having been around for the regrant era she would be more interested in a model of having a dedicated employee, like a roving archivist model, which has worked well in other states, to cut down a lot of overhead for small institutions trying to construct grants and would give us more opportunity to an assessment on how the money is used. The grant line doesn't seem robust enough to support a position, at least a full-time position, but if there was a one-to-one match it could actually do that.

Jill liked the idea that Kat mentioned. This ties in with what she would consider the biggest concern for the state which is whether the concern is the workforce capacity or the availability of funding – its either one or the other or both. It seems like Kat's suggestion address that. Jill also added that our capability needs to be addressed before we can have a statewide catalog or an understanding of what is actually here.

Kate asked Pat what she thinks the immediate need would be for the Irish Heritage. She liked the idea of a roving archivist coming to talk with them and they are all volunteers. Helping to decide what things they should take in if they just want it or need it.

Larissa says that the challenge of a roving archivist is that they could spend a year with her facility. Her facility has so many items, a massive archive, none of it digitized or online in anyway. They are hoping to move to PastPerfect this year. Her question is what the position of a roving archivist entail would. The regrants could be done a lot better than in the past. It was handled sloppily in the past, there were not many applications submitted. A tighter theme or structure might be compelling for people.

Recently two organizations reached out to Kate for funding, a small historical society and the other a library. Looking for funding to purchase a scanner or purchasing archival materials. In 2020, Kate and Tammy ran a regrantsing program at the start of the pandemic. We had \$6000 to give away with over 50 applications.

Rodney shared that Kate's remarks made him think of the Millinocket Historical Society. They are looking for a scanner to do things in their facility. The local library has a newspaper collection from 1900s. They are trying to digitize the newspapers.

Kate mentioned as a group what can be managed, she is still hounding some grant recipients for final reports. She wants to set up the Board to manage the regrantsing well and successful.

Jill mentioned as wonderful as the grant programs are, it is frustrating to just cover the basics with funds provided.

Kevin mentioned that he feels the assessment is important. He asked if there was a hard list of institutions around the state that have archives; an assessment would be helpful. Larissa mentioned that Maine Archives and Museums has a list of at least 200 institutions in the state.

Donald shared that he thinks everyone's comments are good; look at the dollar amount and what can you accomplish. The survey would be a good direction, it will help find people that are interested in working together. Having an archivist travel to the sites with the most endangered documents that need help would get assistance first.

Kate recapped that she was hearing that there was a great need for grants, but we are not totally sure how effective those are or exactly how those can be targeted and used right now. We need some sort of a strategic plan of where we want to go but maybe we need to use this grant money to hire a contract archivist, as a roving archivist, to begin this work and reach out to see what is needed out there.

Anna stated she felt it would be helpful. She asks if we think this position would be ongoing or contracted for one year until the assessment is completed or a more

permanent fixture in the state and would be going around to assist some of the small organizations. Kate noted it would be more of a temporary position based on the grant funding and then based on the strategic plan if it is thought to be more long term then go in that direction.

Steve mentioned it would be interesting to see how other places have gone and what it takes to do this. He thought the first year could get this up and running and the next meeting could focus on scope of the strategic planning process and how to conduct the survey. As opposed to hiring someone, maybe someone on his or Archives staff could do the surveying in year one.

Kate provided some sample narratives from NHPRC's website to provide more information to the Board. She mentioned Vermont has a successful roving archivist program. Larissa felt that it was easier to travel around Vermont compared to Maine. Larissa offered to reach out to Vermont and ask about their roving archivist program. Kat offered to reach out to Massachusetts and ask the same questions.

Jill asked if there was a model of a regional traveling archivist that the Board could apply. Could there be several for different parts of the state. Kate mentioned she was asked a similar question regarding a regional traveling archivist; so, there is a need out there.

Earle mentioned he liked both approaches. He favors a statewide approach to see what the resources are. He has seen over the years the model of more than one could be useful. He mentioned Maine Preservation had situations that were like this where they had individuals in parts of the state to help people. He felt this conversation was excellent so far.

Howard asked what we can do in the next six or seven months so that we are in a better situation when the resources come. Steve agreed and mentioned five or ten years out how can we build some capability and infrastructure in Maine so that in five years from now we could imagine something sustainable and cost effective.

Kat added a link to the program that Massachusetts is using. She also linked to an article that her contact co-authored which is [Best Practices for Roving Archivists](#). Kat mentioned when she suggested a roving archivist, she was thinking more along the lines of someone to help with the strategic plan but also the writing of grants where seems to be where people get stuck – not so much doing the work but helping others to do their work.

Sam said he agrees that many people get stuck on writing the grant application.

Donald mentioned he sees a lot of small organizations apply with the Stephen and Tabitha King library funds – this seems to help the small organizations. Maybe getting good scanners for these organizations as part of the project building collaborative relationships.

For the next meeting, Kate will check on the existing account and the current funds available. Larissa and Kat will check with their contacts in Vermont and Massachusetts. Let's all think about the timeframe before the funding comes in and what we could be building as an organization ourselves as a strategic plan or any outreach to communities as well.

The Board meets every month until June, maybe before April we could share a rough draft of what we envision for funding. The next meeting is scheduled for March 16<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm, Kate will send out reminders and agendas prior.

**Approval of January 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting** – The group unanimously accepted the minutes. Kate thanked those that came to the Archives in person and mentioned that their mileage could be reimbursed and she would look into how that works and let them know.

### **Adjournment**

The group agreed to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 3:58 pm