

RESIDENT CURATOR PROGRAM – STEMPSON HOUSE

July 19, 2017 PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

MEETING SUMMARY

A public meeting was held at the Laurel Hill Golf Club on July 19, 2017 to introduce the community to the proposed use for Stempson House. The meeting convened at 7:01 pm and was facilitated by Judy Pedersen, Public Information Officer for the FCPA. The names of 5 attendees were captured on the sign-in sheets. Also in attendance were:

- Linwood Gorham, Park Authority Board Member, Mount Vernon District
- Christine Morin, Chief of Staff, Mount Vernon District Board of Supervisors
- David Buchta, Heritage Conservation Branch Manager, FCPA
- Denice Dressel, Resident Curator Program Project Manager, FCPA
- Michelle Meadows, Senior Right of Way Agent, FCPA
- Elizabeth Crowell, Archaeology and Collections Branch Manager, FCPA
- Robert Beach, Robert E. Beach Architects, Fairfax County History Commission

OPENING REMARKS & INTRODUCTIONS

Judy Pedersen welcomed all in attendance and asked people to fill out a comment card if they had questions they may want to ask. She ran through the agenda for the night and introduced Christine Morin from Supervisor Dan Storck's office, Mount Vernon District Park Authority Board Member Linwood Gorham, and the Resident Curator Program's Application Evaluation Team members.

Mr. Gorham spoke about his excitement about the Resident Curator Program being in its infancy, and that Stempson House has a few less hurdles than other structures throughout the county. With such a great applicant, he encouraged everyone to do anything they can to get this application to go through as smoothly as possible.

The floor was turned over to Christine Morin. Ms. Morin expressed her interest in this program as a way to improve a building that has been fallow for quite some time. Living in close proximity to the house, her husband spends a lot of time in the orchard and checks in from time to time. There is hope that this project will launch some of the other publicly-owned homes needing attention in the Lorton area. Having reached out to the Lorton Heritage Society and several HOAs, she has not received any negative feedback, concerns, or questions. She thanked the Park Authority for the opportunity and offered her assistance.

Ms. Pederson took the stand and announced that it is always a good sign when the room is not full of unhappy people.

Mr. Buchta discussed the process, goals, and conservation efforts of the Resident Curator Program. He announced the final meeting of the Evaluation Team is scheduled for August 7 at 9 a.m. in the Park Authority Board room of the Herrity building. He also added that the applicant, Mr. McCullough, is the ideal candidate that the Resident Curator Program is looking for, with the personal touch to get the project completed.

Steven McCullough was then introduced to the attendees.

APPLICANT PRESENTATION

Steven McCullough began his presentation by introducing himself and describing his education and training background. He spoke of his past renovation projects and how he could incorporate this experience into the Stempson House project.

Resume

- Stationed in upstate NY, got orders to DC area. Application surprised committee because he's from out of state. Background on him:
- Graduate of St. Mary's College of Maryland (BA in History and Economics)
- Graduate of Coast Guard OCS
- Graduate of Naval Flight Training
- Graduate of Colombian Southern University (MS in Emergency Services Management)

Proposed use:

- Private resident, long-term occupancy
- Public Benefit:
 - Rehabilitation/renovation to preserve historic significance
 - Regular maintenance (protect from further decay and future vandalism or misuse)
 - As the pilot resident curator, he would assume an active role and participant in the Resident Curator Program
 - He would communicate with community on house renovation via a blog.

Renovation Details

- Aggressive 1-2 month project to get the home habitable. Initial projects include paint, floors, kitchen, baths and laundry facilities. Will contract out in order to complete on shorter timeline.
- Will move in after several months and occupy house during renovation.
- Renovation includes addressing any utility issues (water heater and furnace), repair/replace doors and windows, install new garage doors, improve curb appeal with exterior renovations (remove overgrown vegetation, paint, deck,

screened porch, siding, gutters, landscaping), replace fluorescent lighting fixtures with residential lighting, enlarge master bedroom to create true master suite, change fixtures to residential instead of commercial).

Experience and qualifications:

- Have owned five homes, two are still rental properties
- Four of the five homes were DIY renovation projects.
- Current home is a 1930s farm house in Upstate New York, with 5,000+ square foot barn and 50 acres.

Estimated Project Costs for Stempson House: \$165,000

- \$50-60K in material costs
- Close to 2,000 hours of labor (personal labor billed at \$50/hour)
- Estimate \$15-\$20K in contractor labor
- Estimate a 10 percent overrun cost

EVALUATION TEAM QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD

Denice Dressel thanked Mr. McCullough for his presentation and also for his offer to help future curators. With unknown boundaries for the property, she asked how much land he would want to use.

Mr. McCullough answered that less is better due to property taxes but that he enjoys spending time mowing and taking care of the yard. He envisions that he will maintain the grass space from the house to the orchard trail, including the tennis court and driveway gate. He wants to make it look like a residence again, specifying that he would want one to three acres at the most.

Bob Beach asked how Mr. McCullough plans to make the house open to the public since it is a requirement of the Resident Curator Program.

Mr. McCullough answered this by offering himself as a resource to future candidates. His current circumstances make it an opportune time to have an open house as the pilot house for the Resident Curator Program, especially in the early stages of the project so that the public can see the process to show off the program. As the program progresses, he is open to showing the house for the program and not just for its historic value.

Bob also asked about the extent of the historical sensitivity of his past projects.

Mr. McCullough responded that his past renovations have not been historically significant and described the reasoning for each house. At the time of each renovation, he was not looking for the history of the home, but he does enjoy history and looks forward to preserving a historically significant house.

Bob's last question inquired about the most difficult task Mr. McCullough has faced during renovation and how he overcame the issue.

Without hesitation, Mr. McCullough replied. Drywall was the most difficult task, but luckily, he stated, Stempson House is mostly plaster. Other challenges included maintaining the rental properties and handling bad tenants. In regard to renovation, there are always unforeseen challenges, and he is familiar with those issues and finding the source of the problem. (Mr. McCullough later came back to this question to add that living in a renovation is extremely hard, and his goal is to try to get the house move-in ready before he starts to live there.)

Elizabeth Crowell mentioned that, due to the Memorandum of Agreement that has been set up for Lorton, certain changes need to go to the Architectural Review Board.

Mr. McCullough assured the evaluation team that he is prepared to follow any requirements.

Denice Dressel reminded Mr. McCullough that the Park Authority will help with anything that needs to go to the Architectural Review Board.

David Buchta stated the importance of learning and following standards.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

With the question and answer period with the Evaluation Committee over, Judy Pedersen opened the floor for questions from the audience.

Linwood Gorham started the comment period with a question about Mr. McCullough's interest in history based on his degree from St. Mary's.

Mr. McCullough elaborated that he grew up in Hagerstown, Maryland near Civil War battlefields, and was inspired by his high school teacher. He started college with a biology major but fell back on his interest in American history.

A member of the community asked Mr. McCullough if he intended to stay in the area.

Mr. McCullough explained that he originally was not prepared to stay in the area until he found the Resident Curator Program. His family is in the area. With the surrounding parkland, the house still feels like it is in the county and satisfies his need for open space. He submitted his application in March and has had a lot of time to think through the decision. Feeling that it is mutually beneficial for himself and the county, he is committed to stay in the area for the length of the lease. He stated that there are ample career opportunities for him in the area after he retires from the Coast Guard.

CLOSING REMARKS

Judy Pedersen thanked everyone for their courtesy and for attending the meeting.

Public comment will be accepted through Friday, August 3 via ParkMail, and the next meeting is scheduled for August 7 at 9:00 a.m. in the Park Authority Board room of the Herrity building to make a recommendation to the Park Authority Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.