

# Friends Report

Annual newsletter of the Friends of the Locktown Stone Church, Inc.

December 2023

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER & WAGON SHED UPDATE

Mark Zdepski

In a busy year for the Friends of the Locktown Stone Church, highlighted by our concert series and educational program for the township school children, as well as the removal of dead ash trees that threatened the property, the Wagon Shed Rest Room project has been a particular focus. And despite some challenges, great progress has been made towards achieving that project goal. Earlier in the year, FLSC, Inc. executed a contract with the state of New Jersey to initiate our Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation grant and worked on attaining the remaining State and Local approvals for the project. In some correspondence the proposed building has also been called the Visitor's Amenities Building (which is a defined category from the Grant process), as it will also provide a private on-site space for, meetings, bridal preparation, warmup space for musicians, temporary storage of performer's bulky items, and finally records storage. The proposed building will be a significant

enhancement to this preserved historical property. The first physical step in implementing the grant project was the installation of the required project sign. This was not easy, and I would like to thank Robert Roop for doing the final installation. The permit approval process has been long, but we have kept moving forward; at the time of this writing, we have cleared the last obstacle to filing for building permits. When the construction drawings are complete and approved by the New Jersey Historic Trust (NJHT), which administers the grant, the project will be ready to go out to bid, we think this will be early in the New Year.

The last obstacle appeared during October when our architect demonstrated that we need to increase the building size. In order to achieve compliance with ADA clearance requirements inside the restrooms and kitchenette, while maintaining functionality of the design Chris Pickell had to increase the footprint of the building from 702 to 746 sq. ft. This presented our last hurdle in the permitting process, namely verifying that this change in the building size is compatible with our approval. We received an answer from the legal professionals that the increased square footage is consistent with the previous approval, and we should proceed accordingly.

Securing site plan approval from the Delaware Township Zoning Board of Adjustment for the project has been one of our biggest challenges and required considerable effort and expense. An application had been made to the Board of Adjustment during July of 2022, but the Board workload was such that the first hearing did not occur until December 2022. Completeness checking by the Township Consulting Engineer and Professional Planner resulted in the addition of establishing a variance that allows a meeting hall within a residential zone. This was a regulatory defect that likely should have been corrected at the time the site was leased to the FLSC, Inc. in 1989. The meeting hall variance led to unanticipated expenses for



The east-facing elevation of the proposed building is shown. There are a number of choices to be made in order to reduce costs and one is prominently displayed as either a raised seam metal roof, or asphalt shingles. The shingles were used in the cost estimate to reduce it. The open bays that mimic the former wagon shed are shown with a dashed outline. As described in the article, we deferred the construction of the above-ground portion of this portion of the building to try and bring the estimated cost down. However, we must complete our ground disturbance within the Wetlands Buffer prior to December 17, 2025, so the foundation will be built before then, in anticipation of completion in the future. Another choice is whether to specify manmade pavers, or bluestone for the walkway from the Wagon Shed to the Church; again, the cheaper pavers were used in the cost estimate. Only after we have builders' bids will we be able to predict how much this building will cost, and we will make our choices accordingly.

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**President's Letter 2023 (continued)**

us. These included an increase in the escrow account, hiring a Professional Planner to respond to the Township's Planner, having architectural revisions made to an ADA site drawing showing parking stalls and the location of proposed handicap parking, a calculation of parking requirements in accordance with the ordinance, illustration of outdoor lighting plans and hiring an experienced land-use attorney to present our application before the Board. This was followed by telephone conversations between our Architect and Township's Consulting Engineer, revisions to the site drawing and the eventual acceptance of the information. We finally achieved approval of the Board during November 2023, which cleared the way for securing our Building Permits. It all cost an unanticipated \$18,000; funds which had to be taken from the FLSC operating budget.

At the conclusion of the discussions with the Township Engineer, our architect John Bolt retired for personal reasons and advised that we engage the services of Christopher Pickell Architecture, LLC, of Flemington, which the Trustees did in July 2023. Chris Pickell is a well-established historic preservation architect who has worked on many projects funded with New Jersey historic preservation grants, including the Dvoor Farmstead, the headquarters of the Hunterdon Land Trust, in Raritan Township. Refining the concept plan prepared by John Bolt submitted with the grant, Chris prepared a draft final design that has been reviewed by the FLSC Long-Range Planning Committee. Final construction drawings are currently being prepared and once completed will be submitted to the New Jersey Historic Trust for review and approval. We hope that this process will be completed by early in the New Year and that we will be able to solicit contractor bids during the first months of 2024. We have made contacts with three local contractors to provide bids.

Without final construction documents or contractor's bids, we have had to rely on projected costs developed for the state grant application by a well-regarded construction estimator we retained who used a computer program and our concept plan. Since the original estimate was so high, we reduced the scope-of-work (by deferring the open-shed section originally planned and substituted less expensive materials) to a reasonable level for the grant application, one for which we would be able to supply the required grant matching funds. The reduced estimated project cost of a little less than \$250,00 has generated an intense internal debate as we have been reviewing the draft architectural bid documents, as well as discussing future fund-raising goals. What still appears to many to be a high project cost results from a combination of factors: current economic conditions, challenges unique to the site (wetlands, sewage, water supply and Township ownership), requirements for the State grant (a required archaeological survey, and architectural oversight) and the ADA requirements for public facilities. We will only know the real cost of the project once we have received bids from contractors.

The Preserve New Jersey grant has a 60/40 match formula, and for the estimated \$248,119 project cost, a grant of \$148,869 was awarded. Although this significant funding comes at "no cost" to our patrons, or the Township, the money is not entirely free. Besides the considerable effort by FLSC members to prepare the grant application, there is a significant "sweat equity" investment in complying with a detailed, bureaucratic process of Grant Administration. These grant administration requirements recur quarterly, and the responsibility falls on both the FLSC President and Treasurer.

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## FALL 2023 CONCERT SERIES

Caroline Beidelman

The Friends of the Locktown Stone Church are pleased to have experienced an absolutely wonderful concert series this Fall! We could not have done this without our dedicated sponsors and support from our loyal concert-goers. It was wonderful not only to see familiar faces, but also to welcome new ones!

Our concert season began October 1st, with a wonderful performance by *Filament*, with Evan Few on violin, Elena Kaufman on Viola da Gamba, and John Walthausen on harpsichord. In September 2019, the three members of *Filament* gave their first public performance together as a trio with a program interweaving sonatas and cantatas of Buxtehude, with unpublished music from the Düben manuscript collection. Thus began their love affair with music of the late 17th century. The trio brought their characteristic verve to the Locktown Stone Church with "Never Odd or Even," a program in palindrome featuring sonatas from Buxtehude along with works of Samuel Schmidt, and Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre. The acoustics of the Locktown Stone Church made it seem like the program was meant to be performed for this specific venue! The musicians discussed the music styles and how they differed from music of later periods.



The following week, *Blue Jersey Band* offered us quite a different program with their performance of the music by Django Reinhardt (1910-1953), who blended his native gypsy music with American jazz to create a new genre of music known as "Gypsy Jazz". He wrote many unique and original melodies which lend themselves to improvisation. *Blue Jersey Band's* performance, with Ellen Wolff-Ruck on guitar, Frank Ruck, on guitar and mandolin, and Kai Gibson on bass, was enjoyed by the audience, with each band member's amazing improvisation skills and the narratives they gave on the pieces.



Closing our Fall Concert Series was *City Winds Duo*, with Meredith Coleman on harp and Crispian Fordham on the flute and penny-whistle. They announced their program from the stage and gave a synopsis for each piece. Their program went from waltzes, such as two of Schubert's waltzes, to Irish Music (Irish Airs played by the penny whistle and harp) to Opera tunes from Verdi (*La Donna è Mobile*) and Puccini (*Musetta's Waltz* from *La Bohème*), ending with *La Paloma* (*Habanera*), offering their audience quite an array of styles. The musicians stopped to take questions about their instruments

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**Fall Concert Series 2023 (continued)**

during which they spoke about the pedal harp, the rose-gold material of the flute, and the penny whistle.

We would like to thank the following sponsors for their continued support which makes our concert series possible:

John Martin Excavating, LLC

[idarchitecture.com](http://idarchitecture.com)

Richard Yard Plumbing and Heating

Valerie Tucci

If you wish to become a concert series sponsor for the Fall 2024 season, please email us : [info@Locktownstonechurch.org](mailto:info@Locktownstonechurch.org)

## Delaware Township Schoolchildren Visit Locktown Stone Church

*Moira Ganun & Dennis Bertland, November 2023*

On May 26, The Friends of the Locktown Stone Church were delighted to once again host third-grade students from Delaware Township School. The day-long program of activities was based on a curriculum prepared by teachers Moira Ganun and Stella Maltese. Led by Ms. Ganun and fellow teachers Cindy Weil, Andrea Gristina and Ann Weinoffer, the third-grade classes toured the church and nearby cemetery. Locktown Trustee Dennis Bertland guided the group on its tour. The students took part in a "scavenger hunt" which aided them in learning about the history and architecture of the church. Students deciphered the inscription on the church date stone, pondered the use of the short flight of stone steps by the roadside in front of the church, discovered how the shutters functioned to regulate air circulation and sunlight and learned why the ceiling is curved, as well as looked for names carved on the backs of the gallery benches.

Following lunch, the students then broke into several groups to engage in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) projects. For one project, students had to design their own version of the table whose top holds the flat rectangular memorial stone of the Rev. David Bateman, who died in 1832 and was buried beneath the church. Working under a time limit, participants used newspapers and other simple materials to construct a replica that had to remain standing for one minute. For another project, students had to design and construct a new churchyard wall (utilizing glass blocks) that could withstand for one minute "hurricane force" winds simulated by a hair dryer! Students also could elect to make "stained glass" windows from clear plastic sheets and crayons and to write short essays, poems or stories inspired by the names they found on the gallery benches or gravestones.

The Friends look forward to hosting students from Delaware Township School again next year.

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## Capital Campaign Update

*Wil Wong*

Thanks to your support the Capital Campaign has raised over \$58,000.00 towards the Rest Room Wagon Shed Project since April 2022. However due to unanticipated project fees & costs (\$18,000.00) and to build back our now low savings account which dedicated funding to the project (\$50,000.00), the Trustees hope to raise an Additional \$50,000.00 by the end of 2024 when actual building construction will begin.

I hope that Friends, Supporters, Advisors and Trustees can again give generously to not only support the Wagon Shed Project but also to fund concert programs, community events and maintain the church's beautiful exterior and interior environment.

*Online gifts can be made on our website:*

[www.locktownstonechurch.org](http://www.locktownstonechurch.org)

THANK YOU !!!!

### **Treasurer's Report:** *Robert N. Roop, Treasurer*

This has been a year of heavy expenses to get the Wagon Shed project underway. A required land use variance had to be supported with professional engineering and legal services. We also engaged a firm to perform an archeological investigation at the wagon shed footprint to discover historical artifacts. Our architect is in the process of final design and preparing construction documents. We have suffered donor fatigue after a strong response to the capital campaign in 2022. The net is an operating loss for the year as of the end of October of almost \$29,000.

On the bright side, our concert series was graciously supported by four businesses and individuals with \$1,000 in donations. Please visit the Locktown Stone Church website to learn who those sponsors are and support them as they continually support us and help keep our concert tickets a bargain.

The concert ticket sales raised almost \$2,000 and essentially covered the cost of the performers. Many attendees subscribed through PayPal. Thank you for accurately describing what performance and how many tickets you are buying. It makes my job of notifying the door attendants who to expect much easier. Some PayPal participants have discovered they can add the PayPal fee to their donation. When a donor pays the PayPal fee in addition to their

contribution the increment is small but meaningful.

Our income also included a donation from the longtime supporter the Large Foundation. Headquartered in Flemington they support many local charitable organizations.

For several years our invested savings in CDs earned very little. Now we are investing regularly in layered maturity US government Treasury Bills. Maturities range from four to twenty-six weeks to make sure we keep adequate liquidity to cover any unplanned Wagon Shed expense. So far this year our interest income has totaled over \$1,000.

Our other than Wagon Shed major expenses are insurance, concert performers and printing of posters and new office supplies.

Your support is needed for the annual fund. It provides the resources to maintain the building and grounds. Most of the work is accomplished by volunteers. For example, our next door neighbor cuts the grass and the trustees clean the building in preparation for events. We do need paid services for preparing our tax return, maintaining our website and publishing our newsletter.

We recognize with gratitude your trust in our stewardship of the site and the resources that you contribute.

### **President's Letter 2023 (continued)**

Our fund-raising goal for the required grant match was \$100,000 (\$60,000 from patrons; \$20,000 from the township; and \$20,000 from a foundation). While we nearly reached the private donation goal (\$58,165) we fell short in the other two categories; which required FLSC to meet the short fall from its own operating funds. We applied for another foundation grant, but will not learn whether or not we have been successful until later in 2024.

Addressing dead ash trees on the church property also have been an additional cost for the organization. During the last two years we have expended several thousand dollars to remove trees that endanger the building. There is one very large and now dangerous tree that is subject

to a tree removal contract with First Energy (JCP&L) because they had used this tree to secure an anchor cable. The presence of the cable prevented us from addressing this tree, and JCP&L seemed to take charge of dropping it when we signed their contract, however it is unclear why they have stalled in this process. Township Committeeman Charlie Herman is helping us to contact the correct individuals within JCP&L.

Finally, we still need new Trustees to complete our Board. Could you please help us find some individuals to join us? As stated before, the Board members are ageing, and we will benefit from new and younger members.

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