

**Rhode Island 1663 Colonial Charter 350th Anniversary Commission
CONSERVATION & PRESENTATION COMMITTEE**

Meeting minutes: Thursday, April 23, 2012 2 p.m.

Attending: Gwenn Stearn, Jonathan Stevens, Ken Yellis, Alison Maxell, Ruth Taylor, Steve Lubar, Paul Campbell, Ted Sanderson, Pieter Roos

Not attending: Paul Caranci, James Hall, Jennifer Wood

1. Draft Champlin Foundations letter. A one-page proposal is due by the end of April to be eligible for the 2012 grant round cycle. The initial guidance from Foundations staff is that the idea of the Charter as a project is appealing; it has a very important place in constitutional history. The proposal should include a statement that the Commission, on behalf of the State, would be working in partnership with the State House Preservation Society, which has a complementary mission and 501c3 status. The letter should specify that professional staff time and capital improvements by the state would be offered as a match. The application should state the full scope of the project, most likely a multiple-year venture, telling the story of an iconic, unique, important, once in a lifetime legacy opportunity.

Jonathan read aloud a draft letter to Champlin. The Committee expressed a general sense that the Commission should move forward with an application, with a request of between \$80-100K toward the

cost of a new encasement for the Charter.

2. Charter Encasement. The Massachusetts State Archives in 2009 completed a new micro-museum exhibition space for their 2 Colonial Charters and 3 other founding documents. We have reached out to the Massachusetts Assistant State Archivist Michael Comeau, and he has referred us to the project coordinator Rick Slocum to assess the comparative value of their project to a possible re-encasement of the Rhode Island Charter. Gwenn discussed this matter with Rick, who recommended budgeting at least \$275,000 for the new encasement. The cost is based on specifications first developed by scientists at the National Institute of Standards and Technology and National Archives for the \$5.5M rehabilitation of the Charters of Freedom exhibit (US Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights) in 2001-03, and improved upon by a team from MIT for the Massachusetts State Archives in 2005-09.

Each encasement is made for a specific document, and is highly engineered. The first leaf of the Charter would be presented in a glass-covered vault (resembling a large I-Pad) including low light (3-5 lumens) and an automatically controlled microclimate. The Charter would be set at a 25 degree angle (to minimize stress on the document and provide great visual access). The vault fits on top of a tubular frame, covered by custom-designed panels.

3. Future Site for the new Charter and Encasement. While the Charter

in its new encasement could remain in its present location on the second floor outside the Senate Chambers, it would be far preferable if it was relocated to a room on the first floor of the State House so it can be the featured exhibit in a micro-museum space, accompanied by other documents and artifacts that tell the story of Rhode Island's history. Further, a room would enable better conditions for security, climate control, interpretation, lighting, and public presentation. Room 140 has been identified by the offices of the Governor and Secretary of State as appropriate for this purpose.

4. The Entire Project Scope. There are three elements:

- a. Preservation of Charter and high resolution digital image**
- b. New vault for Charter**
- c. New signage for Charter**

5. Budget. A budget is needed. In addition to the Champlin Foundation, other funders must be solicited for this project. As Secretary of State Langevin had the document conserved in 1996, not more than \$2000 of preparation work is presently needed for a re-encasement of the Charter. Other potential funders include: the National Constitution Center, Gilder-Lerman (NYHS), and Albert Small, in Washington, DC, who is interested in supporting work on historical documents.

6. Next steps. Possibly a planning grant from the RI Foundation. A half-day charette with some design-build firms, would enable some

visioning as to what Room 140 could be redeveloped to look like. A case statement for this project needs to be written.

7. It was agreed the Committee will meet Thursday, May 3.

Approved 5/21/2012