

## State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB)

### Skype Meeting

January 25, 2021

9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**Board Members Present:** David Carmicheal (SHRAB coordinator), Dominique Luster, Robert Stakeley, Celia Caust-Ellenbogen, Nancy Avolese, Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh, Jack McCarthy, Martina Soden, Adam Bentz, Richard Jenkins, Jack Ertell, John Paul Deley.

**PA State Archives Staff Attending:** Cindy Bendroth, Josh Stahlman, Tyler Stump

David Carmicheal (DWC) began the meeting at 9:33 by welcoming everyone and going over a quick orientation for new members (Dominique Luster, Robert Stakeley, and Celia Caust-Ellenbogen). He then did a quick roll call for all members present.

DWC brought up the minutes from the previous SHRAB meeting (10/15/2020). He noted one minor change that John Paul Deley (JPD) had already requested and asked if any other members had any other questions or comments. With none, Jack McCarthy (JM) moved to approve the minutes and Nancy Avolese (NA) seconded. The board voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

DWC then moved on to discuss the Historical and Archival Care (HARC) grants. These are grants that SHRAB members award competitively to historical record repositories in Pennsylvania. This year SHRAB received 61 total applications and after review is planning on awarding funds to 31. DWC noted that SHRAB does not approve the grants themselves- the SHRAB review subcommittee decides which are the most worthy grant applications and then the PHMC Commissioners officials approves the grants. The Commission will approve these grants at their upcoming March 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

DWC also noted that for this HARC cycle, \$197,000 will be awarded to grant recipients. \$150,000 was originally allocated for grant recipients, but PHMC allowed additional funds to help ensure that there was a good geographic distribution of recipients across Pennsylvania. If SHRAB members would like to see the full list of proposed recipients for this cycle, they should contact Josh Stahlman (JS) or Cindy Bendroth to get a copy of the list (it is confidential until officially approved by the Commissioners). Once approved, a formal announcement will be sent to all state legislators first, and then to the general public shortly after. Grant money should be distributed to recipients in July 2021.

JPD said it would be helpful if in future SHRAB meetings, the PA State Archives could prepare a brief summary chart to compare previous HARC cycles to future ones (number of recipients, funds awarded, location of recipients, etc.). DWC said that was a good idea and that will be shared at the next meeting.

DWC then asked JS to talk about previous HARC cycles. JS reported that there are currently two active HARC cycles: 2019-2021 and 2020-2022. The first cycle is due to conclude their projects this coming May. Recipients from both cycles have encountered issues stemming from the pandemic: general delays, funding issues, vendors not able to continue work as scheduled, etc. The State Archives is going to reach out to 2019 - 20201 recipients in February to determine which projects will need extensions.

The archives is currently in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office to determine how this extension process can be done effectively..

JS also reported that he recently received interim reports from first cycle recipients and will review them soon.

JS also discussed proposed changes to the HARC grant program as a whole including changes to the grant announcement, application grading criteria, and workflow for the reviewing committee. He will send SHRAB members a list of proposed changes via email and ask for comments via email. If needed he will schedule another SHRAB meeting to discuss proposed changes. He also noted that some changes may not be feasible due to technical limitations of the ESA system used to review applications and legal constraints from the state. JM asked if this list would include changes discussed at the last subcommittee meeting? JS said yes, it does. DWC noted that the State Archives is required to use the ESA system to review grants and that does limit what could be changed.

DWC moved on to discuss visits and on-site reviews of HARC recipients. SHRAB has talked about this in the past few meetings; SHRAB members have expressed interest in visiting HARC grant recipients to see their progress and encourage them in their work. JPD, Adam Bentz (AB) and NA previously drafted a checklist of things for SHRAB members to look for on visits. JM is currently reviewing the checklist. When the checklist is finished and its safe to travel after the pandemic ends, DWC encouraged SHRAB members to go and visit repositories in their areas. DWC also stressed that these visits are to foster encouragement and will *not* be audits (that would have to be a formal process done by State Archives staff).

JPD asked if HARC site visits could be virtual? Repositories could give short 10 minute presentations to show their progress and show off their projects. SHRAB could create a PowerPoint template of a few slides and repositories could fill them in so presentations cover the same kinds of things. This would be a good way for SHRAB to congratulate and encourage repositories, and if presentations are recorded we could use them to promote their work/collections to wider audiences as well.

DWC said he would check with his staff to see which HARC repositories would be good fits for this idea. Some smaller organizations could be intimidated, but if they see an example from a pilot repository it could work out well. JPD said this should only happen if repositories are willing to volunteer, it should not be mandatory. But perhaps future grant cycles could build this in as a requirement for grant recipients? Martina Soden (MS) said she liked this idea, it would allow her to see projects across the state she normally wouldn't be able to visit in person.

Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh (RGR) suggested that in future grant cycles, SHRAB could ask recipients to present their work at a conference or some other public event. She has seen this work well with other grant programs and it's a good way to promote grant projects. Several SHRAB members agreed this was a good idea. DWC also suggested that SHRAB could record short 5 minute "highlight" videos on Zoom or a similar technology and PHMC could post it on their website. He will check with PHMC Communications to see what is feasible.

With no other agenda-specific business, DWC moved on to discuss the proposed directory of historical repositories in Pennsylvania. In previous meetings SHRAB has expressed interested in establishing a state-wide directory of historical records repositories. PHMC recently added a comprehensive cultural

directory to the strategic plan. A SHRAB taskforce is meeting to create a pilot—specific to historical records repositories—that could be applied to the larger PHMC directory. The taskforce is currently negotiating what sorts of information should be collected from repositories listed in the directory. So far the taskforce is erring on the side of starting small and expanding information gathered over time if feasible. The taskforce will send their proposed collected pieces of information as soon as it is ready (or it will be shared at a future SHRAB meeting).

JS moved on to talk about NHPRC grants. Dan Stokes at NHPRC is looking for volunteers in Pennsylvania to review four grant applications they've received recently. Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Dominique Luster volunteered.

JPD asked if Dan Stokes had responded to previous SHRAB requests for information on matching funds for HARC grants? JS said that we've had trouble communicating with NHPRC; we recently found out that PHMC was awarded a board grant via press release but never received formal notifications or performance objectives. JPD said he is concerned with the time it has taken NHPRC to communicate with PHMC and suggested writing a letter to express these concerns. DWC said he would gather all SHRAB/PHMC questions for NHPRC and share them with Archivist of the United States David Ferriero.

DWC then opened up the floor for any other SHRAB business. JPD brought up the SHRAB strategic plan. The plan currently says that SHRAB should have a statewide method of communication. JPD previously wrote a proposal to create a communication tool. DWC said that SHRAB needs to determine what form will the communication take? Would it be a website or a "Penn Notes" style blog or newsletter? NA said SHRAB definitely does need a communication tool. She would like to have something like Penn Notes on a website so smaller repositories could easily see it. This website could also be a place to promote primary sources in the state for teachers.

DWC said that PHMC could put a Penn Notes style communication tool on its website and can let the public now know its there. Any content SHRAB writes would have to get approval by PHMC though. That would also require SHRAB members to write content for it.

Celia asked for clarification on Penn Notes. JPD said that in the past PHMC had a paper newsletter called "Penn Notes" that was issued from the 1980s-late 2000s. He would like to post all Penn Notes back issues online and then going forward aggregate news from historical repositories in PA who submit their own information. He envisioned this as a foundation for future surveys of historical repositories and other SHRAB initiatives.

Celia asked if SHRAB would consider creating a listserv? JPD said that is an option, but there are already regional archives listserves in PA (Philadelphia-area, Three Rivers, etc.) so an additional listserv for the whole state may be redundant.

DWC said that if SHRAB wants to revive Penn Notes, it will need a SHRAB editor. Someone to compile content, post it, etc. The State Archives will work with the editor to get content online. He asked for volunteers. No one volunteered, so DWC asked everyone to think on this. If someone would like to volunteer or if anyone has other ideas about a revived Penn Notes to contact Cindy Bendroth or Josh Stahlman and proceed from there.

DWC then moved on to talk about the SHRAB strategic plan. In recent meetings a few SHRAB members volunteered to look at the latest strategic plan and make recommendations on an update. NA said she was one of those volunteers. Anyone who would like to assist with this should contact NA and they can work over email initially and later report proposed updates in a future meeting.

RGR asked for an update on the new State Archives building. DWC said that construction is still underway, largely on schedule. The ground floor is complete and work is currently underway on the first floor. He still expects the building to be opened in June 2022 and fully open for research that fall.

DWC then asked for any new business. With nothing, the meeting was adjourned at 10:35.