

**Culture & Heritage Commission  
Board of Commissioners Meeting  
November 25, 2025  
Museum of York County  
6:00pm**

**Person Presiding: Katie Rutland**

**Members Present: Katie Rutland, Jeff Lyon, Margaret Parson-Willins, and Annie Laurie Wheat**

**Members Absent: Dorothy Johnson**

**Ex-Officio Members Present: George Sheppard**

**Ex-Officio Members Absent:**

**Staff Present: Richard Campbell, Dabney Scholler, Michelle Thetherow, and Sarah Lewis**

**Others:**

### **Call to Order**

- Katie Rutland called the meeting to order at 6:05pm
- Katie Rutland presented the minutes from the October 28<sup>th</sup> meeting and asked for changes or corrections.
  - No corrections to be made.
    - Annie Laurie Wheat made a motion to accept the minutes as written.
      - Margaret Parson-Willins seconded the motion.
        - A vote was taken and the motion passed to accept the minutes as written.

### **Calendar Review**

- December- no meeting

### **Reports and Presentations**

- Director's Report
  - *Presented by Richard Campbell*
  - Visitation
    - CHM site-wide visitation for the month of October, totaled five thousand, seven hundred and ninety-six. Year-to-date visitation totaled twenty-two thousand, nine hundred and fifty-three.
  - School Groups
    - For the month of October, school group visitation totaled one thousand, two hundred and twenty-five and year-to-date visitation totaled one thousand, six hundred and seventy-seven.
  - Membership

- Membership has increased by eighty-four memberships and thirty-three renewals, with a total revenue of \$8,100. Year-to-date memberships total five hundred and thirty-eight and two hundred and thirty-nine renewals, with a revenue of \$43,090. The CHM overall memberships are at one thousand, four hundred and eighteen.
- Past Events
  - Boo-seum
    - This annual event took place at the Main Street Children’s Museum on October 25<sup>th</sup>, giving visitors the opportunity to enjoy magic-themed games, activities, and a magic show that featured a live bunny.
  - “Cook It ‘Til It’s Done” Living History Saturday
    - Every Saturday in November, Historic Brattonsville presented a Living History Saturday series that focused on cookbooks throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Recipes were featured from the Colonial Era, the Early Republic, African Influences, and the Reconstruction Era, bringing history to life through food.
  - Children’s Book Week
    - This week-long event occurred at the Main Street Children’s Museum during the first week of November. Every afternoon, a different children’s book was read every thirty minutes in the classroom, encouraging children to have lifelong love of reading.
  - Vernon Grant Ornament and Card Debut
    - On November 20<sup>th</sup>, the Museum of York County hosted the annual Vernon Grant ornament and holiday card during a special presentation to the Grant family in the auditorium. Afterwards, an opportunity to shop the collection and enjoy light refreshments took place in the Gift Shop.
  - Cookies with Santa
    - In the evening of November 20<sup>th</sup>, Museum of York County hosted members for the annual Cookies with Santa event. Members had the opportunity to take a photo with Santa and receive a special holiday cookie to enjoy at home.
  - Talk About Turkey
    - In preparation for Thanksgiving, Main Street Children’s Museum hosted a turkey-themed event on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Children made hand turkeys, practiced spelling seasonal words, counted feathers, and enjoyed coloring sheets to celebrate the season.
- Upcoming Events
  - Handmade Seasonal Wreath Workshop
    - On November 30<sup>th</sup>, a member-exclusive wreath-making workshop will take place at the Museum of York County. Participants will learn how to assemble a wreath using natural materials. Members are permitted to bring a guest for this festive event.
  - ChristmasVille
    - The Main Street Children’s Museum will play a major role for the annual ChristmasVille festival with activities scheduled for December 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>.

MSCM will host several events, take part in Santa's Main Street Workshop, and host its own festive programming.

- Gnome for the Holidays
  - This free, festive program will coincide with the ChristmasVille celebrations, and will offer a variety of seasonal activities and interactive holiday-themed experiences for the whole family.
- Christmas Candlelight Tours- Member Exclusive
  - Historic Brattonsville will host the annual member-exclusive Christmas Candlelight Tours event on December 12<sup>th</sup>, where members can enjoy complimentary concessions, receive a 2025 keepsake coloring ornament and have a personal visit with Father Christmas in a cozy, country setting. Members are also welcome to attend the events on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Christmas Candlelight Tours
  - The 2025 Christmas Candlelight Tours will be held on December 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, taking visitors back to 1841, where they can learn about the life and legacy of Catharine Ladd. Candlelit historic interpreter-led tours will provide a preview of the newly restored Brattonsville Female Seminary, the former Colonel Bratton Cabin where Ladd taught. In addition to guided tours, guests can participate in a variety of family-friendly, hands-on activities. Father Christmas will make appearances throughout the grounds. The gift shop will be stocked with holiday merchandise and concessions will also be available for purchase.
- Festivus: Seinfeld and the Natural World
  - On the evening of December 19<sup>th</sup>, Museum of York County will host the third annual Festivus event, where visitors will be invited to "air their grievances" while exploring connections between the popular television series *Seinfeld* and the natural world. Attendees are encouraged to dress as their favorite Seinfeld character, enjoy themed activities, and refreshments.
- Snow Globe Surprise
  - On December 20<sup>th</sup>, the Main Street Children's Museum will host a special workshop for young visitors. Participants will have the opportunity to create their own snow globe using water, glitter, jars, and winter-themed figurines.
- CHM Project Updates
  - Lowry Family Theatre Repair
    - The structural stabilization of the auditorium is complete and the auditorium lighting has yet to be completed. Additionally, the City of York must complete the final inspection, the engineers have submitted all of the required documentation to them. Scheduling the inspection remains contingent on the City's review of these documents. Bennett Preservation conducted a final site visit on October 29<sup>th</sup> to review progress on the initial punch list developed in September and to prepare the final punch list. To date, all structural work and miscellaneous tasks, excluding electrical work, have been completed, with BPE assisting in project closeout. CHM Preservation is currently

addressing the tasks required to re-open the McCelvey Center, ranging from upgrading the fire notification system, auditorium HVAC, and the elevator, to necessary repairs of the curtain and carpet. Quotes are currently being collected for the necessary work.

- Col. Bratton Cabin Preservation Project
  - The painting of the woodwork and plaster walls in the front room and classroom are complete, with only minor touch-ups remaining. In preparation for this year's Christmas Candlelight Tours, CHM Preservation has been focusing on readying these spaces for visitor viewing by a thorough cleaning of the floors and windows. The historical hardware is also being replaced by fabricating reproduction locks to match the existing hardware.
- Hightower Hall Projects
  - The gutter installation at Hightower Hall is scheduled to be completed prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. CHM Preservation plans to assess the full extent of decay in the structural members of the verandas to determine the scope of necessary repairs in early 2026.
- National Historic Landmark Nomination
  - CHM Historian Zach Lemhouse is currently working on the nomination for the National Historic Landmark. A draft of his work has been reviewed with feedback incorporated, and will be submitted to a regional representative for review. By the end of December, he will have prepared the comparative analysis. CHM Preservation has been assisting with the project by researching and drafting the architectural history and physical description of the structures within the proposed NHL district, which will be due by mid-January.
- Preservation-focused Webpage Development
  - CHM Preservation is working with CHM Marketing to develop webpages showcasing ongoing preservation efforts at Historic Brattonsville. A mock-up of the webpage has been created and is expected to go live in a few weeks. Content development and images showcasing a preservation timeline are also underway, which will highlight and provide visitors with a clear view of the preservation process and the efforts involved in maintaining Historic Brattonsville for future generations.
- Brattonsville Updated Sign Package
  - The new directional sign package for Historic Brattonsville has been reviewed by staff and CHM Exhibits constructed twenty-three post-frames, prepared seven single posts, primed and painted all components. The new signs have been installed, with the exception of three handicap parking signs and two gate signs. These will be installed after concrete barriers have been erected and the gravel path has been laid.
- Spanish Language Translation
  - The Museum of York County will be collaborating with Clemson University on a new project aimed at translating various exhibit texts at

MYCO into Spanish, to better serve Spanish-speaking visitors, whose attendance has increased over the past year.

*[Note: A full copy of the Director's Report is attached to these minutes as Addendum A]*

### **Committee Reports**

- Collections Committee
  - No items to present
  
- Finance Committee
  - *Presented by Margaret Parson-Willins*
  - Everything looks good, the Finance Committee met prior to the Commission meeting at 5:30pm
  - FY 25-26 Budget Amendment
    - George Sheppard made a motion on behalf of the Finance Committee to move the sum of \$2,591,871.11 to the Expense and Revenue budget for the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 to continue funding the projects approved by the Foundation of the Carolinas but not yet completed.
      - Annie Laurie made a motion to accept the recommendation
        - Margaret Parson-Willins seconded the motion
    - George Sheppard made a recommendation on behalf of the Finance Committee to move the sum of \$1,290,580.64 to the Expense and Revenue budget for the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 to continue funding the McCelvey Center, Lowry Family Theatre roof repair project funded by the State of South Carolina but not yet completed.
      - Annie Laurie made a motion to accept the recommendation
        - Jeff Lyon seconded the motion
    - George Sheppard made a recommendation on behalf of the Finance Committee to re-appropriate Fund Balance in the amount of \$128,233.34 to the Expense and Revenue accounts for the following:
      - Planetarium Renovation Project at the Museum of York County: \$39,233.34
      - Site-Wide High-Speed Wi-Fi, Fiber Optic and Power at Historic Brattonsville: \$75,000
      - Dump Trailer at Historic Brattonsville: \$14,000
    - Annie Laurie made a motion to accept the recommendation
      - Jeff Lyon seconded the motion
        - A vote was taken and the three motions passed
  
- Governance Committee

- *Presented by Annie Laurie Wheat*
- Nothing to report, everything looks good

#### **Executive Session**

- No Executive Session needed

#### **Old Business**

- None

#### **New Business**

- None

#### **Commission Member New/Non-agenda Comments**

- Happy Thanksgiving to all, we will reconvene in 2026!

#### **Adjourn**

- Katie Rutland entertained a motion to adjourn
  - Annie Laurie Wheat made a motion to adjourn
    - Seconded the motion
      - A vote was taken and the motion passed o Meeting adjourned at 7:16pm
      - Meeting adjourned at 6:45pm

**Prepared by: Dabney Scholler**

**Submitted by: Margaret Parson-Willins, Secretary/Treasurer**

## Culture and Heritage Museums Director's Report November 25, 2025

*Mission: to communicate and preserve the natural and cultural histories of the Carolina Piedmont, inspiring a lifetime of learning.*

### Total Served – October 2025

- Total Served: 5,796
  - Museum of York County: 2,178
  - Historic Brattonsville: 1,706
  - Main Street Children's Museum: 1,599
  - Historical Center of York County: 313
- Total Served year-to-date: 22,953
  - Museum of York County: 10,099
  - Historic Brattonsville: 4,075
  - Main Street Children's Museum: 8,067
  - Historical Center of York County: 712

### School Groups – October 2025

- Total school group visitation: 1,225
  - Museum of York County: 274
  - Historic Brattonsville: 908
  - Main Street Children's Museum: 43
- Year-to-date: 1,677
  - Museum of York County: 436
  - Historic Brattonsville: 1,111
  - Main Street Children's Museum: 130

### Membership – October 2025

- New memberships: 84
- Renewal memberships: 33
- Membership revenue: \$8,100
- Year-to-date memberships: 538
- Year-to date renewal memberships: 239
- Year-to-date membership revenue: \$43,090
- Total Memberships: 1,418

## **Past Events**

---

### **Boo-seum (MSCM)**

Occurred on October 25 from 10am to 4pm. This annual, family-friendly Halloween celebration featured magic-themed games and activities, including making a magic hat and wand. Visitors also enjoyed half-hour magic shows by Celebrations Magic, complete with an appearance by a live bunny.

### **"Cook It Til It's Done" Living History Saturday (HB)**

Every Saturday in November at Historic Brattonsville, historic interpreters, and costumed volunteers presented a special Living History series focused on cookbooks from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Each week highlighted a different historical publication, bringing history to life through food. On November 1, *the Colonial Era* was explored with recipes from The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy (1742), featuring dishes like Brown Fricassee of Chicken and Apple Pie. *The Early Republic* was the focus on November 8, with recipes from The Kentucky Housewife (1839), which included Sweet Potato Pie and Potato Pumpkin. On November 15, the influence of African cooking was highlighted with dishes from What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Southern Cooking (1881), including Chicken Gumbo and Coconut Pie. Finally, on November 29, *the Reconstruction Era* was explored through recipes from Mrs. Hill's New Cook Book (1867) and A Domestic Cookbook (1866), with dishes like Roast Ham and Lemon Cake.

### **Children's Book Week (MSCM)**

Took place from November 4-8, and celebrated the importance of reading with a special program. Every afternoon, a different children's book was read every 30 minutes in the classroom. With a mix of classic and modern stories, this program was perfect for children of all ages and encouraged a lifelong love of reading.

### **Vernon Grant Ornament and Card Debut (MYCO)**

Happened on November 20 at 11am. Attendees were among the first to see the new 2025 Vernon Grant ornament and holiday card during a special presentation to the Grant family in the auditorium. Afterwards, they visited the Museum Store to shop the collection and enjoy light refreshments.

### **Cookies with Santa (MYCO)**

Took place on November 20 in the MYCO auditorium. This popular CHM member-only event required online pre-registration, and all 200 slots typically filled within six hours. Members had the chance to take a photo with Santa and receive a special holiday cookie to enjoy at home.

### **Talk About Turkey (MSCM)**

Happened on November 22 from 11am to 2pm. Participants got into the Thanksgiving spirit with festive, turkey-themed fun! Children made hand turkeys, practiced spelling seasonal words like "turkey" and "gravy," counted feathers, and enjoyed fall-themed coloring sheets. It was a fun and educational way to celebrate the season!

## **Upcoming Events**

---

### **Handmade Seasonal Wreath Workshop (CHM)**

The wreath-making program is scheduled in the MYCO auditorium on November 30, from 2pm to 4pm. Participants will learn how to design, assemble, and decorate a wreath using natural materials such as pinecones, seedpods, and a bow. The workshop includes light refreshments and allows members to bring a guest. It is a member-exclusive program with a fee of \$20 per person and a capacity of 30 participants.

### **ChristmasVille (MSCM)**

ChristmasVille activities are scheduled for December 5-7. During the festival, MSCM will play a major role by hosting several events, including Night Before ChristmasVille and the VIG (Very Important Gnome) Club. In addition to these responsibilities, the Children's Museum will offer its own program, and staff will take part in Santa's Main Street Workshop as well as North Pole Nights.

### **Gnome for the Holidays (MSCM)**

This holiday-themed program is scheduled to coincide with the ChristmasVille celebrations in Rock Hill on December 6 from 11am to 4:30pm and December 7 from 12pm to 4pm. The free program will offer a variety of seasonal activities, including "baking" Christmas cookies, playing candy cane games, searching for stars, writing letters to Santa, and other interactive holiday-themed experiences for visitors.

### **Christmas Candlelight Tours — Member Exclusive (HB)**

The Christmas Candlelight weekend begins with a members-only evening on Friday, December 12, exclusively for Culture & Heritage Museums members. Members can enjoy complimentary concessions such as grilled cheese, warm tomato soup, hoop cheese and crackers, fresh popcorn, hot cocoa with toppings, s'mores, and creamy fudge. During the evening, members and their guests will receive a 2025 keepsake coloring ornament and have a personal visit with Father Christmas in a cozy, country setting. Members are also welcome to attend the Candlelight Tours on Saturday and Sunday, December 13-14.

### **Christmas Candlelight Tours (HB)**

The 2025 Christmas Candlelight Tours will be held on Saturday and Sunday, December 13 and 14. Visitors will follow candlelit paths through the historic 1841 landscape, guided by interpreters in period attire, and learn about the life and legacy of Catharine Ladd. Beginning in 1840, Ladd taught Dr. Bratton's daughters not only sewing, needlepoint, and painting, but also reading, writing, and arithmetic—skills that were uncommon for young women of the era. Ladd was also a poet, author, and entrepreneur, leaving a lasting influence on the Brattonsville community. Tours will provide a preview of the newly restored Brattonsville Female Seminary, the former Colonel Bratton Cabin where Ladd taught (the building will not open to the public until Spring 2026).

In addition to guided tours, guests can participate in a variety of family-friendly activities, including candle-dipping, creating cornhusk dolls, and coloring keepsake Christmas greeting cards. Father Christmas will make appearances throughout the grounds, accompanied by the cheerful sounds of a live brass band. Visitors can also explore unique holiday offerings from the gift shop and featured regional

artisans, including glassblower Phil Gilson and sweetgrass basket weaver Deadra Johnson. Concessions available for purchase include grilled cheese, warm tomato soup, hoop cheese and crackers, fresh popcorn, hot cocoa with toppings, s'mores, and creamy fudge.

### **Festivus: Seinfeld and the Natural World (MYCO)**

The third annual Festivus event is scheduled for Friday, December 19, at 6:30pm. The program invites visitors to “air their grievances” while exploring connections between the popular television series *Seinfeld* and the natural world. Attendees are encouraged to wear puffy shirts or dress as their favorite *Seinfeld* character and visit the selfie station. Activities include Blow-hole Putt Putt, the Dingo Ate Your Baby trivia game, Art Vandelay Animal Architects, and Marble Rye fishing. Additional offerings include Frogger, feats of strength at the Festivus pole, and a *Seinfeld*-themed planetarium show. Admission includes two beverages (wine or beer) and themed snacks.

### **Snow Globe Surprise (MSCM)**

A special workshop for young visitors is scheduled for December 20. Participants will have the opportunity to create their own snow globe using water, glitter, jars, and winter-themed figurines.

## **CHM Project Updates**

---

### **Lowry Family Theatre Repair (McC)**

Midwest Maintenance, Inc. (MMI) has completed the structural stabilization of the auditorium. Outstanding items include work by MMI’s electrical subcontractor, who must coordinate with Paragon Productions, Inc., an entertainment industry contractor from Rock Hill, to address issues with the auditorium lighting. Additionally, the City of York must complete the final inspection. CHM, Bennett Preservation Engineering (BPE), and MMI have submitted the required documentation to the city, and scheduling the inspection remains contingent on the city’s review of these documents and the resolution of the lighting issues. BPE conducted a final site visit on October 29 to review progress on the initial punch list developed in September and to prepare the final punch list. To date, all structural work and miscellaneous tasks—excluding electrical work—have been completed, with BPE assisting in project closeout.

CHM Preservation is concurrently addressing the tasks required to re-open the McCelvey Center following structural stabilization. These efforts include soliciting architectural and engineering services, particularly for mechanical system upgrades, due to the scale of work and necessary permits. Planned upgrades and repairs include the fire notification system, auditorium HVAC, and the elevator, which has been serviced by Carolina Elevator. Additional repairs and system checks by CHM Operations and County IT are required before the elevator can be inspected and returned to routine use. The auditorium lighting system continues to require attention; Paragon Productions conducted an investigation, identified multiple issues, and is preparing a findings memorandum to clarify the necessary repairs. Other facility improvements include replacement of the black backstage curtains, which are in poor condition, and replacement of the auditorium aisle carpets, which were also in poor condition prior to the stabilization work. Quotes are currently being collected for both the curtains and the carpets.

### **Col. Bratton Cabin Preservation Project (HB)**

Painting of the woodwork and plaster walls in the front room and classroom is complete, with only minor touch-ups remaining. In preparation for this year's Christmas Candlelight Tours, CHM Preservation has been focusing on readying these spaces for visitor viewing in December. The classroom wood floors are receiving a thorough cleaning, and all windows are being carefully washed. Regarding hardware reproduction, analysis of the original door surfaces revealed that the house originally featured surface-mounted rim locks measuring approximately 4¼" x 8". Reproduction locks are currently being fabricated by Ball & Ball of Exton, PA, to match the historical hardware.

### **Hightower Hall Projects (HB)**

Midwest Maintenance, Inc. (MMI) is scheduled to complete the gutter installation prior to the Thanksgiving holiday on November 27. In early 2026, CHM Preservation plans to assess the full extent of decay in the structural members of the verandas to determine the scope of necessary repairs.

### **National Historic Landmark Nomination (HB)**

CHM Historian Zach Lemhouse has completed the justification and narrative sections (5.1 and 5.2) of the NHL nomination. The draft has been reviewed, feedback incorporated, and will next be submitted to regional representative Alesha Cerny for further review. The next phase involves preparing the comparative analysis, with a target completion by the end of December. CHM Preservation is assisting Zach by researching and drafting the architectural history and physical description of the buildings and structures within the proposed NHL district, with the first draft of this section due by mid-January 2026.

### **Preservation-focused Webpage Development**

CHM Preservation is working with CHM Marketing to develop webpages showcasing ongoing preservation efforts at Historic Brattonsville. A mock-up of the preservation landing page has been created and is expected to go live in the coming weeks. Content development and image collection for a detailed preservation timeline are also underway, highlighting key projects, milestones, and the site's historical significance. The webpages will provide visitors with a clear view of the preservation process and the efforts involved in maintaining Historic Brattonsville for future generations.

### **Brattonsville Updated Sign Package (HB)**

Staff have completed the review process for the Historic Brattonsville directional sign package and made the necessary edits before sending the signs for professional printing. CHM Exhibits constructed 23 post-frames, prepared seven single posts, and primed and painted all components. Installation of the signs is largely complete, with the exception of three handicap parking signs, one gate sign, and the double-sided main site sign. The handicap parking signs will be installed once the concrete barriers are in place, and the sign directing visitors from the Brick House to the Visitor Center will be installed after the gravel path is completed.

**Spanish Language Translation (MYCO)**

Under the direction of MYCO Site Director Sarah Lewis, MYCO staff are collaborating with Clemson University on a new project currently in development. The initiative involves working with a Spanish language course at Clemson focused on community service to translate various exhibit texts at MYCO into Spanish. This effort aims to better serve Spanish-speaking visitors, whose attendance has increased over the past year.