Findings Report & Resources for Skowhegan History House

June 2019

Rebecca Krucoff & Natalie Milbrodt

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Site Visit Goals and Activities

Goals

The Skowhegan History House Board is interested in gaining an outside perspective on interpretation and preservation activities at HH, with the help of experienced practitioners in the field. They expressed a desire to explore the topics of audience expansion, artifact storage, and strategic partnerships. The Board was also interested in creating a clear roadmap for the activities of the three organizations within the Bloomfield Trust. A new Chief Operating Officer position is in the works, with hiring on the horizon as early as 2020. With that in mind, it is a good time to take a step back from the seasonal activities of History House to reflect on its interaction with the Library and the Bloomfield Academy to consider opportunities for collaboration.

Becca and Natalie are dedicated to exactly the kind of community-engaged work that History House does so well. They strive in their work to leverage historical artifacts to enhance a community’s understanding of itself - and to make that learning experience engaging and meaningful. As a newly formed consultancy, Becca and Natalie have an interest in field testing methods for working with clients to discover what is most effective and where adjustments can be made to improve their practice. They took the opportunity of working in Skowhegan to discuss, document and evaluate their approach. A brief survey at the end of this report will help them to gain additional insight on which aspects of their work were most and least useful. They hope the ideas and observations collected in this report will be useful to the many stakeholders who support the Skowhegan History House.

Activities

In May 2019, after reviewing newsletters, strategic planning documents, Board member bios, and doing some general research about the Skowhegan area, Becca and Natalie met by phone with Patricia to discuss areas of interest that would help them prepare for their visit.

The goals for the phone call were to:
1. Gather some background information on the mission, history, programming strengths and challenges of History House
2. Make plans and a schedule for the time we were to visit Skowhegan History House
3. Set up expectations for the visit

The phone call yielded the following schedule for Becca and Natalie’s Site Visit:

*Friday, May 31:*
  - 6pm: Potluck at Patricia and Sam’s home for HH Board members & stakeholders

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Saturday, June 1st:
- 9am – noon, HH tour and conversation with Kim & Mariah
- Lunch @ Miller's Table & meeting with Bill
- Afternoon: Visits to the Bloomfield Academy Building & Public Library
- 6pm: Lake George Benefit supper – Canaan Farmers' Hall

Sunday, June 2nd:
- 9-11am: Board meeting with Becca & Natalie @ HH

Site Visit Findings

Mission
While board members and staff have a strong understanding and high value for History House artifacts, it was notable that everyone’s top priorities were about people. Nearly every stakeholder expressed their understanding of mission as providing a service to current and future residents, descendants of past residents, and visitors interested in the area’s history. Additionally, there is an understanding that History House offers residents and visitors the narratives and stories that keep the town’s memories alive and engaging to people from different generations and places.

Strengths
Skowhegan History House enjoys a sizable cohort of stakeholders who genuinely care about its success and possess a wide-ranging set of skills to address its needs. This includes an active board, members of the Bloomfield Trust and Skowhegan Main Street, and a number of volunteers. Of particular note, there is a dedicated staff of two who demonstrate passion, deep knowledge and excellent interpretive skills and instincts to engage audiences visiting the house.

Another core strength of History House is the unusually broad subject matter represented in its core collections. Unlike a historic house museum focused on one, famous person or family, HH can stay true to its original collecting mission while interpreting artifacts and histories from a wide variety of people, time periods, and local activities. HH has the freedom to celebrate a range of human experiences to connect with any audience.

History House also has a systematized, organized photo and document archive as well as a genealogy service. These services attract visitors interested in their own history and connections to the town. In serving as a museum, archive, and genealogical service,
Skowhegan History House becomes a physical manifestation of the town's memories and history.

Some strengths identified during the closing meeting:
- People: both staff and volunteers
- Board - lots of skills, dedication; they show up and work
- Easy to access facility - close to downtown, walking distance from schools and libraries
- Collections
  - Timespan of artifacts is good: many eras represented
  - Well labeled, organized
  - Systems in place for access
- Founding premise of the HH is a collection of artifacts about many people, not just one family; this affords greater opportunities for flexibility
- Physical setting is appealing and in good condition, both gardens and building
- Spirit of cooperation amongst stakeholders, shared desire for new COO
- Connection to Maine state library for preservation resources
- Stakeholder depth of history and collection knowledge

Challenges
The board identified several areas of challenge that we observed and discussed while visiting. One struggle was how to maximize opportunities for coordination and partnership with the Bloomfield Academy Building and the library to bring efficiency and better service to the public. Additionally, there was concern about how to best create an interdependence and seamless service model amongst the three organizations within the Bloomfield Trust. Other areas of concern included attracting new audiences, fiscal stability and fundraising, and care of collections through adequate storage and display.

Some challenges identified during the closing meeting were:
- Audience: Bringing people in, especially local residents
- Storage for artifacts
- Room for displays
- Coordinating within Bloomfield Trust to move forward on clearing space at the Academy for storage and exhibitions
- Need for more volunteers: mostly cataloging, putting things into past perfect, also doing tours, clean-up/set-up, gardening, conservation work for collections
- Taking money from operations and library funding to allocate it to the COO position
- Finding enough time, energy and resources to support effective marketing
- Avoiding stakeholder burn out
Identified Areas of Interest

During our visit there emerged four main areas of concern gathered through numerous conversations with stakeholders:

1. Audience Development
2. Partnerships
3. Storage and Display
4. Fundraising

The following are ideas generated during our Sunday morning meeting to address these four areas of concern. The ideas often connect to more than one area.

Audience Development

Goals: To attract and maintain new audiences, develop new programs, potential funders and board members

“Friends before Funds”
  — Bonnie Chamberlain

Opportunities/Ideas:
1. French Canadian Heritage collection development
2. Create virtual walking tours (see Resources below for walking tour apps)
   a. This could be done quickly using content you’ve already developed for your in-person walking tours. The Virtual tour could then augment your in-person tour as well as allowing a self-guided experience
3. Develop sports exhibits with artifacts stored in Bloomfield Academy
4. Host a Home Movie Day (http://www.centerforhomemovies.org/host)
5. Table at Library and Academy events, and at other events around town, like the annual State Fair.
6. Host a children’s story hour make-and-take activity at the library using antique children’s books from HH collections as inspiration for maker activity.
7. Create free-standing mini-exhibit kiosks with HH branding that could be loaned to local businesses, schools, medical offices, government offices (like the DMV)
8. Hold another “What to do with Grandma’s stuff” workshop at the library or other venue
9. Book a monthly History House-branded, free public program in the library during the 8 months History House is closed. Share artifacts and stories about local topics of interest.
10. Host story sharing circles where participants sit in a circle and each give 3-5 minute story shares from their memories of Skowhegan.
11. Local History Day program for classrooms during the school year.
12. Host a story sharing event about Mr. Dostie - outdoors, games for kids
Partnerships

Goals: Share resources, leverage partnerships, attract new audiences, and expand outreach and programming

Opportunities/Ideas:
1. Strengthen the Bloomfield Trust Team: History House folks spend a day at the library and the academy, getting familiar with their counterparts at those sites and with their collections.
2. School logo contest
3. Old Canada Road partnership to further develop the Benedict Arnold Trail
4. Establish an Advisory Board that meets infrequently (every 6 months?) and includes members from different fields and of different ages. This allows you to assemble a team of experts whom you can call when you have a question and gives you a chance to get feedback (consulting) for free. Invite a marketing expert, a builder, an artist, an archivist, a police officer, a CPA, a Human Resources manager, a musician, etc.
5. Train “ambassador” volunteers to record oral histories around town for HH collections
6. Coordinate local history and genealogy research requests with library staff.
7. Create a single-sheet researcher guide for the area with a list of repositories, what kinds of materials they hold and how to arrange a research visit with each of them. This could include (of course) the three institutions in the Bloomfield Trust, but also list places like the courthouse where property deeds are kept.
8. Provide programming/services for the charter school that uses the library as their school library.
9. Brand and promote Elm Street as “History Street” including the Margaret Chase Smith Library, History House, and the Library. Create incentives for visiting all three sites, such as stickers for children, a progressive event, a scavenger hunt, etc.
10. Partner with local newspaper, TV or radio station to feature a “this day in history” segment where different artifacts are featured from HH collections.

Storage and Display

Goals: Preserve and properly store artifacts and archives, make space in the house for changing displays, allow room to grow collections

Opportunities/Ideas:
1. Historic markers for buildings and important sites around town
2. Coordinate storage with Bloomfield Academy

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3. Develop system for rotating exhibits to keep content fresh and artifacts safe from light damage
4. Help Bloomfield Academy host a public sale for unwanted library furniture discards
5. Separate space dedicated to display of extensive war memorabilia collections and new acquisitions that would be deposited by donors if there were room
6. Consider accepting digital-only collections for materials post-1980. If you’re short on space, you could just keep born-digital and scanned photographs donated by the public along with information (metadata) about each photo. In the simplest form, this could be captured in a spreadsheet.
7. Follow the 3-2-1 rule for digital preservation: keep 3 copies of your files (for example: store on an external hard drive, on a desktop computer, and in the cloud) - in 2 types of file format (like .jpg and .tif) - and in 1 off-site storage location (like at a board member’s home). That protects against loss.

Fundraising

Goals: Provide stability and sustainability for History House, expand resources, programming and staffing as needed

Opportunities/Ideas:
1. HS Reunion Breakfast
2. Create History House merchandise: t-shirts, postcards, calendars, bookmarks.
3. Publish small booklets featuring funny photos/stories found in the archives the past year as a giveaway for donations, or to sell outright.
4. Ask owners of homes with historic designation to be stops along a home tour where the proceeds benefit History House. History House team can supply historic photos and other context for the tour. Owners can discuss renovations projects they’ve undertaken to improve their homes while retaining historic character.
5. Develop a planned giving program for donors who wish to bequeath funds in their wills
6. Coordinate combined funding campaign for library, History House and Bloomfield Academy so that people can vote for it as one package during the Town Hall meeting.
7. Develop day camp program for local children
8. Serve as a venue for concerts and other performances. You could take a ticket fee or sell refreshments and merch (like comfy, branded, seat cushions and folding canvas chairs)
9. Host an open house with food from historic cookbooks in the collections
10. Create direct appeals to the public and to large donors
General Recommendations

History House has many of the pieces it needs in place to address its goals. What follows are a few suggestions for maximizing these strengths that strongly stood out to us as opportunities during our visit.

Unifying the Bloomfield Trust

Coordination

One area we noticed could yield excellent returns is clarifying and maximizing HH’s partnerships with the library and Bloomfield Academy Building. Currently, there are some unmet opportunities to service research requests more efficiently and to work with archival consultants and resource providers in a unified manner across collections. For example, both History House and the library offer genealogy services. It is worth discovering how and where these services overlap, and how they are different. How can each benefit the other? The library has a beautiful genealogy room and a number of collections that would benefit a person interested in their own and their town’s history. We recommend that History House and the Library meet to share their work in this area. Perhaps some of the genealogy work could take place together at both sites, or by sharing resources. Being aware of each other’s services means that the library and HH can do things like offer a coordinated reference service schedule for researchers and knowledgeably refer visitors to collections around town.

The Library’s renovation has created beautiful meeting rooms that are underused. It would be to the Library’s benefit to have increased programming in those new spaces. We believe that History House can help to fill that need by hosting monthly or bi-monthly programs throughout the year such as guest speakers, hands-on research programs, and explorations of the collections. These programs can be jointly marketed by the Library and History House on their websites and the Library’s monthly program brochure. In this way, History House continues to be present in the minds of town residents throughout the year and builds new audiences, the Library has programs on more days of the month which supports their mission and fundraising efforts, a partnership deepens, and town constituents receive more opportunities to learn about their town throughout the year.

Fundraising

Additionally, funding requests and organizational priorities could be better in sync. The three Bloomfield entities can ideally be supported by the same group of organized stakeholders who understand the unique function of each institution and how they provide essential support for
Attracting Audiences through Programming

Many of the ideas generated during the site visit were suggestions to broaden programming to attract new audiences. Building a visitor base will also build a funding base and has the potential to attract new board members.

Currently HH is struggling to attract younger audiences. We recommend developing and piloting small opportunities for programming that would specifically target youth and/or young families. This might include hosting a children’s musician on a Sunday; a wine and cheese mix and mingle in the garden for young parents or single parents that includes child care; a free movie in the garden; a couple or a few arts-and-crafts camp days during July or August. HH has so many wonderful photographs that could be turned into SWAG such as t-shirts, mugs, calendars and postcards. These could be sold at HH, at the library, at the Grist Mill store or at a table at the State Fair.

Kim and Mariah, the History House staff, are an excellent resource of ideas for attracting a younger audience. We recommend a sit-down with the two of them and select board members to share and flesh out programming ideas specifically designed to attract younger audiences. Additionally, Kristina from the Main Street organization is a good resource and a willing partner in this area.

Finally, we suggest that board members and staff consider what other organizations they have relationships with that might already serve these untapped audiences. Are there youth services programs that exist in Skowhegan? Are there family programs or child care centers that might serve as partners? Partnering with organizations that are currently meeting community needs of audiences that you are as yet not reaching would help you to create meaningful programming. Asking these service providers what they see as the needs of their audience and then reflecting on how History House could partner with them to meet these needs would be an excellent way to ensure that program pilots you develop would be addressing the real desires of the community and are well attended.
Resources for Best Practices, Funding, Services and Products


2. Virtual walking tour (free) apps:
   a. Historypin: https://historypin.org
   b. StoryMapJS: https://storymap.knightlab.com/
   c. Clio: https://www.theclio.com/web

3. State and National Historic Preservation Funding Resources
   a. Maine Humanities Council grants: https://mainehumanities.org/available-grants/
   b. IMLS Inspire grant: https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/inspire-grants-small-museums
   c. IMLS Community Catalyst Initiative https://www.imls.gov/our-work/partnerships/community-catalyst-initiative
   e. Main State Historic Preservation Commission Tax Credits https://www.maine.gov/mhpc/programs/tax-incentives

4. Resource for creating oral history transcriptions: https://trint.com
5. Excellent, low-cost platform for hosting oral history content: https://www.aviaryplatform.com

Activity Guides for HH Stakeholders
The lists of ideas to address your concerns above are quite extensive. It is unrealistic to think that HH will be able to enact all of these good ideas. The following activities are designed to assist you in prioritizing your initiatives and outlining the steps needed to accomplish them. These activities are optional, of course! The activities are modeled on the processes we would use to facilitate your next steps. We wish we could be there to work with you on this exciting process.

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Activity 1: Prioritizing Initiatives

The purpose of this activity is to collectively prioritize a set of initiatives to begin to implement with your team. Participants will use post-its to organize ideas 2x, first into categories of top, middle and low priority, and then as easy or difficult to implement.

We recommend pulling together a planning team that includes board members, Kim, and Mariah.

Materials needed:
Post-its, pens
If you want to, you can organize your categories on large sheets of paper such as chart paper.

Step One: Review the list of ideas generated in the report. As a team, divide the ideas and write them on the post-its. Be sure that each post-it only has one idea on it.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HS Reunion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfasts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Story time with HH
antique storybooks
+ make and take at
the Library

Step Two: Create an area to organize post-its into three categories by how excited you are to do them (IMPORTANT: do not worry about how difficult they are at this point. This part is about generating interest). You can organize them on different sheets of paper, or on the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 = most excited</th>
<th>2 = somewhat excited</th>
<th>3 = not very excited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Step Three:** Choosing the post-its from the "most excited" category, discuss which ones you think would take a lot of resources, and which would be simple to implement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple to implement</th>
<th>Might take more resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step Four:** Using your lists, choose a 1 - 4 initiatives you would like to implement.  
**CAUTION:** We encourage you not to discard an idea you are excited about because you think you might not have the resources at hand. Just as in our meeting, you will be surprised at your resourcefulness once you begin to break down the steps for each task.

**Activity 2: Identifying Next Steps**

Once you have identified your preferred initiatives, and sorted them into "simple to implement," and "might take more resources," it is time to choose a few to implement. The following template is designed to help you identify the next steps for implementing any of your preferred initiatives.

**Materials needed:**
List of your preferred initiatives  
Paper, pens

**Step One: Next Steps Sketch**
As a team, review your short list of initiatives, and choose one to sketch out its next steps. Using the template below, discuss answers to the following questions.

INITIATIVE: ________________________________

**THE WHAT:** What would the final product look like? For example, if it's an event, how would the event flow from start to finish for a participant? How could it be done first as a sample/pilot?

**THE WHO:** Who would spearhead this idea? Who would work on it with the leader? Who might partner on this idea?
THE WHEN: When would we want to test this idea?

RESOURCE OUTPUT:
What resources would we need in terms of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>$$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE HOW: What are all of the steps that need to take place for this to happen?

Step Two: Markers of Success
Think about the markers that would show you your pilot is successful

Step Three: Task Deadlines
Once you have filled out the template for your first idea, set some task deadlines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Task:</th>
<th>Task due date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Project Plans

Plan 1: High School Reunion Breakfast

AREA OF INTEREST ADDRESSED:
Audience Development

THE WHAT:
History House hosts high school reunion breakfasts in a tent outside of the house. Will start with classes of '62 and '63.

The Event Breakdown:
- Buffet breakfast

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• Tables and chairs outside on the lawn
• Tent
• HH staff pulls together photos, yearbooks, memorabilia from the archives, sets up on a table
• Alumni bring photos and memorabilia to scan and share with HH
• As Alumni arrive, each alumnus is given an envelope in which to place their memorabilia and writes their name on the envelope
• HH representative (Patricia or Ron) gives a short welcome and overview of History House
• During mingling hour, breakfast and speeches, HH staff scans/photographs the material
• After breakfast when they pick up their memorabilia, alumni fill out sheets with short explanations of their memorabilia for metadata, and sign forms with deed of gift
• Staff available to give tours of HH if alumni are interested in staying on afterwards

THE WHO: Ron, Patricia, Kim, Mariah, + a few volunteers, with high school alumni events organizers

THE WHEN: Choose a day and time the group usually meets, but in July.

RESOURCE BREAKDOWN:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>$$</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event planning date(s)</td>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>• Scanner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival research</td>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Tent</td>
<td>• Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing the event</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Tables, chairs</td>
<td>• Microphone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set-up</td>
<td>Mariah</td>
<td>Dishes, cutlery</td>
<td>• HH Brochures and/or donation forms for alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean-up</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td>• SWAG? Magnet, postcard?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE HOW:
Before the event:
1. Ron, Patricia, select board members, + HH staff discuss budget that alumni association has for this weekly event
2. HH considers whether or not do this at cost or if they should charge
3. Consider resources: How to acquire food, tent, tables and chairs
4. Discuss the flow of the event
5. Ron connects with alumni association to pitch idea and choose a date
6. HH blocks off date in events calendar
7. Kim and Mariah search for memorabilia in archives
8. Generate forms and deeds of gift (see Resources for examples)
9. HH chooses someone to welcome folks and give brief overview on the day (Ron? Patricia?)
10. HH delegates who monitors the event (food, etc.,) and who scans memorabilia and is in charge of forms

On the day:
1. HH group arrives to set up for event, donation box prominently displayed
2. Ron hosts the event
3. Kim, Mariah, and volunteers monitor event and scan memorabilia during the event
4. Someone from HH photographs the event for website and newsletter
5. Alumni fill out forms and are given a HH brochure (and a postcard? Magnet? SWAG?)
6. HH staff gives tours of the house as needed after the event
7. HH group cleans up after the event

Post Event:
Team meets to review the event, and evaluate its success, adjustments to make etc.

What markers would show that this event was successful?
- New people introduced to History House
- Not much of the HH budget spent / earnings exceeded costs
- Excitement generated, people enjoyed the event
- Desire to host other alumni breakfasts at HH
- Acquisition of new collection materials and mailing list contacts

Step Three: Task Deadlines
Once you have filled out the template for your first idea, set some task deadlines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Task:</th>
<th>Task due date:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patti</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Plan 2: School Logo Contest

AREAS OF INTEREST ADDRESSED:
Audience Development and Partnerships

THE WHAT:
Students in a graphic design class from the local high school create logo options through a design contest. The winning logo will be used on History House materials and SWAG. The winner receives a certificate and $100 at an awards ceremony at HH.

The Breakdown:
- Students in the graphic design class participate in a logo design contest for History House
- This could be as part of the regular class, as an after-school club, or as a general contest
- Participants visit History House and get a tour to gather ideas
- Students present their ideas to the board
- The board votes on ideas
- The winner is invited to a ceremony at HH and receives an award
- The logo is used on HH materials and to create SWAG (t-shirts, calendars, mugs, postcards)

THE WHO: Bill reaches out to the graphic design teacher at the school. Board members vote on the logo designs. Kim hosts and tours the students in their visit to HH. Bill, Patricia, Kim, Mariah and board volunteers host the winning student at a ceremony at HH.

THE WHEN: Before the end of the school year (June), or in the beginning of the school year (September).

RESOURCE OUTPUT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>$$</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reaching out to teacher and students</td>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Award for student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosting students at HH one afternoon</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Refreshments for students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student presentations to the board</td>
<td>Mariah</td>
<td>when they visit HH and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>during ceremony</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Logo Committee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Whole Board</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(for logo presentation and</td>
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THE HOW:
1. Board creates a logo design committee with a few members that includes Bill and Kim
2. Logo committee brainstorm their criteria for a HH logo
3. Logo committee creates contest rules and flyer
4. Bill reaches out to the graphic design teacher at the high school and works with the teacher to identify students to participate, a timeline for when this could happen, and how it could best function for the students
5. Bill and/or logo committee member present the idea to the students, explain the criteria and timeline for the contest, as well as the award
6. Teacher, Bill, Patricia, Kim and Patti coordinate a group student visit to HH that includes refreshments, and a tour. Students bring sketchbooks or other ways to record ideas. The visit includes an overview of HH, a tour, and a Q and A.
7. Students work on their logos for a selected, reasonable, period of time.
8. Students come back to HH and present their ideas to the board.
9. The board deliberates over a select period of time and chooses the winner.
10. The winner is notified and invited back to HH for an awards ceremony.
11. HH promotes the ceremony using the new logo.

Step Two: Markers of Success
- Usable, appealing logo created
- Students generate meaningful connection to History House
- Excitement generated at school and in the community
- New audiences visit HH

Step Three: Task Deadlines
Once you have filled out the template for your first idea, set some task deadlines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Bill</td>
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<td>Kim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mariah</td>
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