

CSCE Chairman's Letter 2017

Greetings, Members. Let me start by thanking you for your continued support of Claymont. Membership is important to CSCE. It provides a check and a balance for the Board, a function that is necessary in my experience. I would like to encourage all of you to come to the Annual General Meeting on November 5, 2017, 10:00 AM in the Mansion. Your input and participation is important to the future of Claymont. And if you know someone, perhaps someone who has attended one of the Courses in Sherbourne, or Claymont, please encourage them to become a Member, so that they can have a stake in that future, too.

In my nonprofit training I was given to understand that the Chair of a nonprofit communicate with its Membership directly, at least once a year. Usually, the communication resembles something along the lines of an Annual Report and contains lots of numbers and statistics.

I intend to not be so granular. The financial reports will be distributed to the Membership prior to the AGM, and we can discuss any issue and answer any questions at that time.

My intention is to reach out to the membership in the more informal side of the style of that annual tradition.

Simply said, it's been a really good year at Claymont.

In the interest of transparency I wish to remind you, the Membership, that my seat on the Board is up for re-election this year. I'm going to do my best to make sure that I don't use this opportunity to paint myself in a good light. It is important to understand that Claymont having a good year is the result of not only the efforts of the Board, but more importantly the efforts of our Staff, Residents, and Volunteers.

In the Seminar Business

Bookings are up, the number of attendees per workshop is up, and the number of cancellations is down. I'm not sure that Claymont can claim any particular credit for this; it may be more due to the changes in the political climate. And the planet's climate.

We are making more use of paid employees who are not Residents in the kitchen this year. This means, of course, that expenses go up. And even when these expenses are passed through to clients, Claymont's pricing structure continues to offer lower prices compared to our competitors.

The Barn

Major upgrades have been completed on the Barn.

A new code-conforming hood has been installed in the kitchens of both the Barn and the Mansion. We continue to pass all our required inspections.

A new hard-wired fire alarm installation has been installed on both floors of the barn.

This year the siding and insulation replacement was completed on the Barn, in addition to new fire-escape compliant windows in each room.

In fact, I think, all windows have been replaced upstairs over the past three years. Also, the rain-caused damage in the walls has been repaired.

Finally, the majority of the interior of the barn has been repainted.

Soon, CSCE will pave the first 35 feet of the Barn Road and the Kitchen Road in order to come into compliance with WV Highway codes.

At that time there will also be a new access road constructed to the front of the Barn. A keyhole driveway will be built from Huyette Rd to the Foyer in the middle of the Barn, where the canopy is currently. This will provide a friendlier access for both our clients and the community and make access easier for the differently abled.

I anticipate that we will continue to use the balance of the funds received from the ABPP Easement Program to underwrite capital and maintenance improvements, as well as use funds generated by the Seminar Business.

A new classroom has been created in the Barn and is available for workshop space throughout the week. This gives us the opportunity to run two workshops in the Barn, and a third in the Mansion on any given weekend.

The Mansion

Major renovations to the Mansion have been completed. As I'm sure that you can imagine, the Mansion, if for nothing other than coping with deferred maintenance, requires continued investment. New septic, a new column, veranda repairs (floor, railing, and steps), downspout repairs, have all been accomplished with the help of WV State Historical Preservation Organization and members of the community that contributed \$7,000 to the matching grant fund.

Recently a matching grant opportunity to repair the north entrance was obtained. The total cost of the repairs to the portico will total \$24,000, of which Claymont's share will be \$12,000. I am hoping that the community will step up and share in this important effort.

And, many, many thanks to our grant writer, Kit McGinnis.

The Mansion, of course, will continue to provide many opportunities for investment. The Mansion, given its historicity, is a perennial favorite with some of our best clients; so much so that they have contributed themselves, bringing ceiling fans to the veranda, for example.

The Land

The decision to put most of the land under easement with the American Battlefield Protection Program in 2012 limited the development prospects for the part of the land that was set aside (264 of 343 acres). Claymont retains the right to use the set-aside land for agricultural purposes.

After several years of the idea bouncing around, the CSCE Board of Directors has recently adopted the principle of Permaculture as a guiding intention for land use. In the near future a Permaculture Analysis will be done for the entire property.

Our hope is to begin to implement the ideas as funds become available. I, and many on the Board, have come to believe that Permaculture is the likeliest way to achieve Mr. Bennet's vision of a self-sustaining society.

Please contact Lawton Rogers (rlawtonrogers@gmail.com) of the Land Stewardship Committee if you're interested in contributing to this effort. Time and energy are welcome.

Curriculum

It was Pierre Elliot's intention, as well as Mr. B's intention, that Claymont serve as a Fourth Way School and Community. And I think we are all familiar with the idea that Fourth Way Schools arise and fall with the needs of the Times. I believe we are at the beginning of a return to the energy of rising interest when it comes to Fourth Way ideas.

These ideas may need to be recast in order to resonate with contemporary people. Much as I might prefer to be a hardline dogmatist and literalist, neither of these positions serves the needs of the people we are attracting. And so, we adapt, as Fourth Way Schools are supposed to do, to the needs of the time and the needs of the people.

The Library

Claymont will be establishing a free lending library of Fourth Way books and Materials. We will be using the foyer, the Commons Room in the Barn, and the remaining space from elementary school storage that has been recovered, in addition to the Mansion shelves.

The aim is to eventually have the bookshelves in both the Barn and the Mansion filled with Fourth Way Books, as well as books that members have found useful in their own Spiritual Evolution.

CSCE is in need of any donations that Members might have tucked away. Please donate to the Library. Books are what we are looking for. If someone wants to donate procurement funds, those monies will be set aside in a separate account for that purpose.

Collegiality

We have increased the number of Work Weekends and events, including new monthly Movements classes. Leadership in these events and classes is provided by different people, depending upon availability and, in the case of the Weekends, the determination of the Theme, combined with the offerings available from the members of the Community presenting material.

Please contact the Event Planning Committee at claymontgathering@hotmail.com if you are interested in presenting a Work Weekend.

Website

The Society Website is currently under revision. New material is being added that will reflect CSCE as it is today. Please direct any comment you may have about the changes in content to me personally, curtis.ewing@earthlink.net.

Conclusions

Well, I think that's about all the news. Claymont is in a good place. I am aware of many struggles, sacrifices, and gifts given over the years that have allowed Claymont to survive in the past. Survival was the critical thing, and I am grateful to those that have gone before me who ensured that survival. I believe we are on the threshold of a life at Claymont more fully realized.

I honor you all for helping to make that possible.

Additionally, Claymont continues to depend on its dedicated Staff, its inspired Volunteers, the generosity of its Membership, and the collective decision making of the entire Board, to lead us to become more closely the kind of people that our forebears imagined we could become.

The Near Future

I dislike taking the risk of including a topic that many may find discomfoting, here, at the end of this letter, when so much positive is happening at Claymont.

And, as Chair, it is a traditional part of the obligations that go with the position.

Many people attended Courses at Claymont over the years, and the truth is that we know very little about where they might be now.

Some of them might even think kindly about their time at Sherbourne or Claymont, and wish to contribute to Claymont's continued existence.

Please encourage anyone you know who might wish to help to contact Amy Silver, executivedirector@claymont.org.

We will comply with donors' wishes as much as it possible and legal.

OK. Final Conclusion.

I know this letter is a little long, but it seemed to me there was much to say. I thought the Membership needed to know. Simply said, it's been a pretty good year at Claymont, and things are going well. Together, I think, it's going to continue to go well into the future.

Sincerely yours,

Curtis Ewing
Chair and President, CSCE