

Friends of Mechanics Hall

Celebrate Mechanics Hall

a reception at

Sonoma Restaurant of Princeton

November 15, 2012

Alexander Fiandaca, President of the Friends of Mechanics Hall, welcomed everyone to CELEBRATE MECHANICS HALL.

Ken Seims, Secretary of the Friends of Mechanics Hall and Master of Ceremonies, offered these comments:

I'd like to begin my remarks by discussing the intriguing concept of anthropomorphism. Also known as personification, it is the attribution of human characteristics (or characteristics assumed to belong ONLY to humans) to other animals, non-living things, phenomena, material states, objects or abstract concepts, such as organizations, governments or, in this particular case, a BUILDING. The term was coined in the mid 1700's and derives from the combination of the Greek "ánthropos" meaning "human" and "morphē" meaning "shape" or "form".

Let's now apply this concept to Mechanics Hall, the oldest municipal senior citizen in our Town. As expected, she's showing her age. Let's consider the state of her 'health':

Number 1 - I'm not sure if she has Alzheimer's, but she definitely has 'squirrels' in her belfry!

Number 2 - Her 'eyes' (her windows) are failing and she sorely needs new 'glasses'.

Number 3 - Her 'internal plumbing' leaves a lot to be desired causing her great embarrassment.

Number 4 - Her 'central nervous system' (her electrical wiring) is dysfunctional and threatens her over-all safety.

Number 5 - Her 'legs' (her foundation) are weak and shaky and have trouble supporting her.

And Number 6 - her skin is cracking and peeling from way too much exposure to sun, rain, wind, snow and ice - the ravages of her time spent on the planet and her exposure to our environment.

In summary, the state of her health is so poor that if we took her to the emergency room in this condition, the doctors would be telling us to notify her next of kin because she doesn't have much time left.

But wait, Towns like ours across this great country recognize the special needs of our senior citizens. They build senior centers and develop programs targeted to provide needed services to our aging populace. But for some unknown reason, this formidable lady, born in 1852, who has served our Town well as a schoolhouse for nearly 90 years, as a branch of the Princeton Public Library and hosted meetings and lectures by various organizations well into the 1980's, has been forgotten. Since then and until just recently (save for the efforts of our beloved Town Administrator Dennis Rindone), she has been neglected and ignored.

Last March, when it became clear that her “Do Not Resuscitate” orders were being drafted, a small grass-roots group of concerned Princetonites met and began the process of forming the Friends of Mechanics Hall. Our goal is to turn her situation around through hands-on involvement and activism. As a first step in her health care, we held a clean-up day last April to improve her surroundings and make her more presentable to the community. With the help of Princeton Tree Service, nearby trees that were threatening the building and providing access for the squirrels were removed.

The Friends of Mechanics Hall believe that the overwhelming desire of the citizens of Princeton is to retain Mechanics Hall in some form. Although a significant financial investment will be needed to completely restore Mechanics Hall, we believe that a modest sum can fund a building stabilization project – including an interior cleanup, exterior painting and new windows, etc. This is a reasonable first phase for its preservation and can be accomplished over a period of time, as funds become available. As we proceed, we expect to define future, practical uses for Mechanics Hall. There have been several interesting ideas proposed but more thinking and planning are necessary.

As an organization and an unofficial Town committee, we have received support and encouragement from the Board of Selectman and our Town Administrator. We have appointed Officers and a Board of Directors, registered with the Secretary of State’s office as a non-profit corporation, registered with the Attorney General’s office to allow us to solicit contributions and currently await approval from the IRS of our tax-exempt 501(c)3 status allowing us to provide

tax deductible documentation to our donors. We have also received State-wide recognition as Mechanics Hall has been named by Preservation Massachusetts as one of Massachusetts' "Most Endangered Historic Resources" for 2012, which was publicly announced last Thursday at their annual "Believe in Preservation" event at Tuckerman Hall in Worcester.

And that brings us to this evening, our second major fund-raising event. By the way, our first, the Town Wide Yard Sale, was a resounding success thanks to the generosity of many Princetonites who donated forgotten treasures for us to sell and to a solid corps of dedicated volunteers - the Friends of Mechanics Hall - who manned the tables. Tonight, we've invited you all here to raise your awareness of our great lady's plight and to convince you to open both your hearts and your checkbooks to help us help her! If you are not already a Friend, please join us as we move forward and return this great lady to good health and restore her to her former glory!

And now, it is my distinct privilege to introduce to you a long-time friend of Princeton. He's no stranger when it comes to supporting historic activities in our Town. Invited by the Princeton Historical Commission as our State Representative, he participated in the East Princeton Village Historic District dedication in 2006 (which, of course, includes Mechanics Hall) and in both the Russell Corner Historic District and the Princeton Center/Meetinghouse Hill dedications in 2009. Despite changing jobs, we continue to have his support as the Sheriff of Worcester County. Ladies and gentleman, our good Friend, Lew Evangelides.

Lew Evangelides commented on his long-term relationship to the Princeton community and offered future support to the effort to restore Mechanics Hall.

Ken continued:

Thank you, Lew for being with us tonight and for your support of our efforts.

There is another special Friend of Mechanics Hall who, due to a previous commitment to attend a professional development workshop in DC, could not be with us tonight though she is here in spirit. Our State Representative, Kimberly Ferguson, is a strong supporter of our efforts and will be working with us to secure some State funding for Mechanics Hall.

Alex, our President and I, honored to serve as Secretary, represent half of the Officers and Board of Directors of the Friends of Mechanics Hall. I'd like to introduce the two people that account for the other half. First, I'd like to acknowledge our Treasurer and resident internet expert responsible for our fantastic website. How about a nice round of applause for Phil Mighdoll.

The fourth member of our team is our Vice-President and the person responsible for coordinating this wonderful reception here at Sonoma this evening. Please give a nice round of applause to Faith Pistrang.

The four of us can only do so much and there is a cadre of Working Friends, many of whom are here tonight, who

attend our monthly meetings (by the way, the next one is on Thursday, December 13th at 7 PM in the Town Hall Annex if any of you would like to join us), participated in the April clean-up, set-up and manned the tables for the Town Wide Yard Sale and spent 2 hours folding and stuffing the envelopes for the invitations to this event. Let's take a moment to acknowledge their dedication to this effort with a hearty round of applause.

We will also be seeking support from the business community, both here in Town and from companies that do business with Princeton on a regular basis. This Corporate Sponsor Honor Roll will evolve over time but we have representatives here tonight from its first member, Barre Savings Bank. Please give a warm welcome to Mary Tomasello and Marisol Dittami.

Finally, we must thank our hosts for this wonderful evening for opening their hearts and their doors to our cause. Please join me in thanking Kim and Bill Brady.

Again, folks, thank you all for coming tonight and supporting the Friends of Mechanics Hall. Enjoy the rest of the evening and be sure to tell all your friends about the Friends and ask them to join us to save Mechanics Hall. Good night.