



Immediate Release

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Boone, Iowa—Boone County Historical Society (BCHS) Members: Janet Tait, Becca Miller, Ed Mondt and Mara MacKay went to discuss the Society's attempts to schedule meetings with the local Mamie group. This is the third request to the Boone County Board of Supervisors for a release of previously awarded funds from 2017-18 that are frozen from a dispute around the Eisenhower birthplace home.

Chad Behn said that he was most concerned that the two parties hadn't gotten together to try to resolve the issues. Tait, BCHS Board President said, "we had tried to meet with the group three different times and were always met with excuses."

Miller, one of the newest board members, said that they were willing to meet with the group in a collaborative effort. The Mamie group would only meet if the Society would sell the property. Miller said "we would love to have them work with us."

The group is a small fraction of the larger BCHS membership and constitutes slightly over five percent. The Boone County supervisors have chosen to take sides with the minority on this issue and remain unwavering in their decision. A landslide victory on January 25, 2018 confirmed support for the BCHS vision of the future plans and new initiatives at the Eisenhower birthplace home.

MacKay asked the Boone County Supervisors if any one of them had been to a historic home, one that was well curated and hosts historical tours, and they all replied either "no" or nodded they had not been.

A new public revelation surfaced at the meeting when the BCHS board members asked why are the Mamie supporters unwilling to get behind the Society? Steve Duffy said "They (the Mamie group) don't want to work with her," and pointed his finger at MacKay, Executive Director of the Society and ex-officio member of the board. Miller asked Duffy "Why?" and no response was given.

Behn pushed the Society to explain how the home has gone downhill during the last 12 years. MacKay said that those who made the major decisions to ignore repairs and updates are the same people who let the historic home reach this point since the two previous directors and their board members tabled many of the problems, and failed to have a long-term strategic plan to make the facility self-supporting.

"Without the promised funding from the city and county, BCHS might fall into bankruptcy and that could force us to lose all of our museums," MacKay said. The county supervisors denied any responsibility for that outcome. When MacKay asked if they ever engaged in the business of involving themselves in the internal struggles of other non-profit entities they were unable to see any favoritism on their part toward the Mamie group. Bill Zinnell, the newest Boone County Supervisor, pressed the Society to "just let them have it and do what they want with it and you may well have it back in a year or two."

The Society does not see that as a viable solution since there are multiple and potential liabilities to persons and property that cannot be ignored. MacKay said that personal injury "lawsuits can bring damages that could easily go beyond what affordable insurance can cover and we could risk losing the home altogether."

Miller pressed the board of supervisors on the topic of accountability for lost revenue for the city and county of Boone. "You could be losing revenue and destroy your history," Miller said. Steve Duffy replied... "Oh don't put that on us!"

The Society remains vigilant in preserving, educating and engaging the community around historical places.

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