

October 7, 2014

Town of Carrboro
Town Clerk's Department
301 West Main Street
Carrboro, N.C. 27510

This is sent as a letter of interest for the volunteer position of Town Historian in accordance with the Call for Applications. Please reference the attached resume for an outline of my education and employment background

The Call for Applications states a goal for the position to engage citizens of Carrboro to compile a truthful history of a Town with multiple histories. Obviously, Carrboro has a very rich and multifaceted history that has not been systematically documented. Therefore, a primary undertaking for a Town Historian would include an oral history to further the Town's overall historic preservation objective.

As may be known, oral history is a method of gathering and preserving historical information in spoken form. It consists of recorded interviews obtained under controlled conditions by a trained researcher or interviewer for the purpose of documenting events and opinions not usually available in the written historical record.

Carrboro's oral history project would be a structured activity to retrieve, create and preserve a community history with multiple personalities involving maximum resident participation. The oral history would document:

- Historical background of the Town
- Development and change over time
- Significant (well-known and lesser-known) people, events, problems, solutions, personal concerns and accomplishments.

Citizens would be extensively engaged in the oral history in planning, implementation and presentation stages. The oral history will be a useful participatory community experience with educational, recreational and social value. There appears to be a wealth of untapped information in the form of long term residents who have lived in and been involved with and observed the changes and development of the Town. Their memories, perceptions, and understanding of Town development will be captured and documented.

Initial thoughts on the usage of time of the Town Historian and / or projects to complete include:

1. participation with Town officials in initial planning for development of short-term and long-term historical documentation processes to include an oral history component;

2. assist in project implementation including the following activities:

- a. A *research* phase to lay the groundwork for the oral history including development of procedures, questionnaire guidelines, the identification of potential interviewees, general research and training of interviewers;
- b. On-going *interaction* with a full range of community resources to assist in project design and implementation. (At a minimum this would include contact with, and input from, community, political, social, minority, religious groups etc. and regional historical/other resources.)
- c. An *interview* phase involving on-going interviewer training and conduct and processing of interviews;
- d. A *presentation* phase to integrate oral history interviews with other visual historical materials in a Town Hall or other appropriate location.

In response to the request to explain how the integrity of factual information would be maintained and for a description of experience with historical writing and/or preservation, I would respectfully refer you to the attached resume.

I would emphasize that the combination of legal and historical training and experience has sharpened my ability to do historical research and to effectively evaluate first hand information with a critical review process. Refined interview techniques would elicit and evaluate interview content. Experience in directing three very different oral history projects—all of which were focused on preserving the undocumented histories (of a medical institution, a significant urban redevelopment effort, and the fading history of a minority North Carolina Town) has enhanced my ability to engage and productively work with diverse populations and values and to apply a critical review process to historical data.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. I would be pleased to respond to additional inquiries and/or provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Nancy O. Mason