

Why isn't Old Home Day on the 4th anymore?

The bottom line answer is politics. There are political factions in town that have demanded a presence at Old Home Day. They went so far as to raise the issue with the Board of Selectmen. Our beloved Mosquito newspaper wrote a "demanding" article in 2006 insisting that Old Home Day be celebrated on the 4th.

The BOS opined saying "that if Old Home Day was held on the 4th then it could be considered a patriotic event and that political parties should be allowed to participate".

If that were to happen then the IRS Law which governs the operations of non-profit organizations like Old Home Day would be violated. The ultimate outcome would be that the Old Home Day Association would effectively cease to exist due to the fact that our Old Home Day exists on donations...tax deductible donations.

The IRS allows OHD to operate as a non-profit so long as we adhere to the IRS non-profit rules regarding any involvement of political parties or issues. These make it clear that ANY political involvement and we would lose our non-profit status, without which we would see donations dwindle and at the same time our expenses would INCREASE by another \$3,000 for insurance for the day.

The insurance issue is just another reason to stay away from politics...or unfortunately....another reason we are FORCED to stay away from the 4th. As a non-profit, all of the committee members are protected from liability by the Federal Volunteer Protection act of 1997. If we lost our non-profit designation we would lose coverage under this act. Either that would mean that few would want to be involved or it would mean a four figure insurance premium.

Times have changed and the laws and reality that OHD must operate under have changed as well. Sadly politics seems to have done much more damage than good. For now we've been able to keep politics from killing Old Home Day.

Historical Perspective

Background

The first time Old Home Day was ever held was on July 31st, 1912. Then again on August 12th, 1913, then August 20th, in 1914 and 1915, and then on September 1st, 1919, September 3rd, 1934 and so on. From it's very beginning the purpose was not to celebrate July 4th. Old Home Day has always exactly what it's name announces. It was never created to be an "Old Independence Day" celebration. (A specific celebration on Independence day might be desirable in addition to Old Home Day. This would of course be up to to the Celebrations committee).

The Old Home Day Committee works hard all year long to make sure Old Home Day is a harmonious event. This objective entails the avoiding elements that divide our community, it's citizens and guests into separate camps. Sadly, politics does that. Well-meaning persons of political parties strongly supporting their candidates, all too often alienate others who just as strongly support candidates of another party. For us, Old Home Day is at least one day out of 365 that preserves and deserves non-contentious innocence. Old Home Day has always been an occasion, which brings the community together in the true spirit of 'common unity'. Divisive and bitter political campaigns such as we all too often must endure and all too often can't seem to leave behind, are enough politics to last us through the periods in between.

We welcome each other and greet old friends who have made a special point of returning to Carlisle to enjoy the day and each other. It is the wrong time and the wrong place for anything political.

Enjoy this day, vote on another.

Facts

At Old Home Day in 1972 a team of horses broke their leads and bolted through the Art show then being held on the Green. Following this incident, the Old Home Day committee recognized the extreme personal liabilities that could accrue to the individual volunteers on the OHD committee from such incidents. In 1975 the Old Home Day Association was incorporated as a non-profit organization for keeping alive the tradition known as Old Home Day. It was then subject to the IRS rules regarding 501(c) organizations (Adapted from IRS Publication 1828 - February 2004) Section 501(c).

Organizations cannot support or oppose political candidates. Section 501(c) organization is not permitted to allow groups or individuals to use its facilities and equipment to campaign for candidates. No partisan political campaign activities, however minimal, are allowed. It cannot be anything that can be construed as an attempt to sway the public one way or the other.

Under the Internal Revenue Code, all section 501(c) organizations are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate or elective public office. Activities with evidence of bias: (a) favoring one candidate over another; (b) opposing a candidate in some manner; or (c) have the effect of favoring a candidate or group of candidates, will constitute prohibited participation. [Even activities that encourage people to vote for or against a particular candidate on the basis of nonpartisan criteria violate the political campaign prohibition of section 501(c)].

The prohibition is absolute; there is no de minimis exception to that rule. Nonprofits are heavily regulated, and rightly so, from engaging in partisan political activities. Thus when in 2004 the OHD Assoc. was informed by the Board of Selectmen that holding OHD on July 4th would be open to interpretation that it was an Independence Day celebration and as such the town would have to endorse the inclusion of all political parties within the venue of any group that was given a permit to operate on town property on that day. This would mean the loss of the Old Home Day non-profit status and with that the loss of the Old Home Day Association and its celebration of Old Home Day itself.

In 2006 and again in 2007 the OHD committee asked all residents to let us know their preference for a date for Old Home Day. The overwhelming response was to NOT have it on the 4th but the weekend prior to the 4th.

The Carlisle Old Home Day Association Inc. is a registered non-profit organization operated in accordance with MGL 180 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Title 26 USC of the IRS under USC 501(c)(3). As a non-profit organization, we are chartered for the express purpose of supporting and contributing to charitable and educational needs of our community. Old Home Day becomes a major fund raising opportunity for us to live up to these charitable obligations.

We work hard all year long to make sure Old Home Day is a harmonious event. For us Old Home Day is to be at least one day of 365 that preserves non-contentious innocence. Old Home Day has always been an occasion that brings the community together in the truest spirit of "common unity". We welcome old friends who have made a special point of returning to Carlisle to enjoy the day and share fond memories with each other.

With that objective in mind, and abiding by the regulations of the IRS that expressly prohibit involvement of tax-exempt organizations in partisan political activities, Old Home Day does not include activities, however minimal that can be construed in any way as an attempt to sway the public one way or the other, or that encourage people to vote for or against a particular candidate or a particular party.