

The Falmouth Historical Society

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Zoom Meeting—May 4, 2021

The meeting came to order at 6:35 p.m. Present were Betsy Whitcomb, David Farnham, Ron Scorsone, Sally Farneth, and Sue Farnham. Rich Meserve is away.

David Farnham, president, began the meeting with a general observation about the state of the Society. Most of the committee reports now include quantitative data showing our progress towards our goals and objectives. Town historical societies focus on the humanities which are intrinsically qualitative, but these quantitative measures of performance will help us convey our value to the community in objective terms.

Secretary's Report

Minutes. Minutes for the January and April Board meetings as well as the annual meeting had been distributed for review and corrections made. The Board accepted the minutes as written.

Membership. Our active membership is 83. Our membership has dipped slightly for a sad reason. When some renewal letters were returned as undeliverable, we learned that several long-standing members had passed away.

Treasurer's Report

Finances. A draft budget for the next fiscal year (Jul-Jun) will be submitted at the June meeting. Board members/committee chairs are asked to provide input on any anticipated expenses.

We have sufficient funds to delay our next withdrawal from savings until July. This may slightly improve our standing as a public charity in our IRS filing.

We have an administrative problem with our bank accounts. During the change of officers in 2017, we submitted paperwork to the bank changing the list of people authorized to administer our accounts. The changes were not completed.

The treasurer is named on only one of the accounts and the bank was unable to find the original paperwork. We need to submit an updated list.

David Farnham, as president and interim treasurer, proposed that the list of Society officials with full administrative access to our accounts with financial institutions include:

- President (David Farnham)
- Vice President (Rich Meserve)
- Treasurer (David Farnham)
- Board Member (Ron Scorsone)

This is consistent with our succession plan. The proposal before the Board was moved and seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the proposal.

The Society has a balance of \$3,223 in its operating accounts and \$18,292 with the Foundation. Our accounts payable is \$173.

As we near the end of our fiscal year, our operating expenses exceed income by \$2,293 which is not where we need to be but is an improvement over last year and much better than previous years. Our expenses are tracking closely to budget—only \$26 over for the year. Our projected fiscal year-end balance is \$628 above target which means our operating accounts have sufficient funds to carry us through August.

Committee Reports

Programs. Sally reported that Falmouth schools will resume their bus tours for elementary school students. Teachers have expressed interest in having a simplified historical map showing Falmouth in the 19th century that students could follow during the tour. David said he could generate the map.

Museum Operation & Exhibits. There was a lengthy discussion about re-opening the museum. The museum has been closed for seventeen months and needs to be cleaned. Water—which had been shut off and the plumbing drained to reduce winter expenses—should be turned back on as soon as practical. Hot water is desirable so the hot water heater should also be placed back into operation.

That led to the question of whether we should restart the heating and air conditioning. The cost of running the museum's finicky HVAC was a big factor in the decision to close the museum during winter. David expressed concern about the potential for unexpected costs when we restart the HVAC system. The alternative would be to leave the air conditioning off and rely upon window fans to keep the museum comfortable this summer. Good, continuous airflow is recommended for mitigating Covid risk in public spaces. This would be even more important in the museum, a 19th century farmhouse with small rooms. Moreover, the museum will be open only one day/week for only four months. The Board agreed to go with fans. If the forecast calls for intolerably hot weather, we won't open the museum that day.

Betsy has identified needed supplies and other materials. The Board asked her to obtain what is required.

The interior of the museum is now in disarray because the office (former kitchen) area was emptied for repainting. There had been discussion about moving the stove but none of the alternative locations worked out (e.g., the stove would partially block a corridor). Once the office area is cleaned, we can return the material temporarily moved to the exhibit/research area.

There was a discussion about how we would minimize the number of volunteers working in the museum at any time with special care taken to avoiding contact with volunteers whose families have elevated risk.

Ron will deal with water. Betsy will coordinate the cleaning, restoration, and opening of the museum. David will clean the barn and move the artifacts from Tidewater upstairs.

Collections.

Acquisitions. David spoke briefly about the recent donation of an early edition of Maine's first newspaper.

An updated and "computer-friendly" Gift Agreement form was sent to the Board for review. The wording is mostly unchanged; minor tweaks eliminated some ambiguities. The Board agreed to adopt the revised form that accompanies donations.

Catalog. Ron reported he is migrating acquisitions for 2006. This is a huge job because there were a lot of donations and many included multiple items. For example, one acquisition consisted of 39 volumes of a genealogical journal. He hopes to finish 2006 by next month's Board meeting. A volunteer who had been a librarian indexed our library using Dewey Decimal but those aren't recorded in the acquisition indices; we'll have to make a separate pass to incorporate the library index in the online catalog. Ron is assembling a light box so we can begin photographing artifacts.

Local History. We responded to four queries from the community during the past month plus two other queries meant for the Falmouth Historical Society on Cape Cod.

The website expansion continues. The focus now is on building the set of references because the "how to" guides are dependent upon them. As planned, local family references were split out into a separate category. More local history and family references were added. All the issues of the Falmouth History newsletter we've found so far have been added.

Minutes for board and annual meetings back to 2000 along with those for the Society's early years (1966-1970) were added to the "Archived Documents" folder on the website. For a visitor checking us out online, this highlights our depth and continuity as part of our town's social fabric. We can also learn from our past.

Communications. A "Retrospective" article about the 1795 issue of the Falmouth Gazette was posted on the website accompanied by a related posting on Facebook.

The next issue of the newsletter will be going out this month. We plan to have a table outside the polls during the June municipal elections.

Merchandise.

Cookbook. Editing the master list of recipes is done. Recipes for the first section (Appetizers) of Volume I (Savory) were migrated to the galley. This is a slow process. The master list is a free-form document. The galley is tightly formatted for publication using advanced features of Microsoft Word.

Museum Buildings & Grounds. This topic was mostly covered during the broader discussion of Museum operations. Ron reported that he cleaned the sump pump.

Technology. The report was tweaked so that we can more easily see how additional content affects website activity. One page shows who is visiting our website, where they are coming from, and how they access the Internet. Roughly one-quarter are local and another quarter come from abroad. Only a quarter use mobile devices. Our “regular visitor” include search engines and data mining applications. A second page shows what people are doing on our website including the top ten pages viewed.

Fundraising. Nothing significant to report.

General Topics

We currently have two vacancies on the Board of Directors. Carol Kaufmann, a former president and long-term member of the Society, has graciously consented to rejoin the Board. David nominated her to the Board. The nomination was seconded and the Board unanimously voted in favor. Welcome back, Carol!

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Suzanne Farnham Secretary