

# **Falmouth Historical Society Annual Meeting**

Falmouth Town Hall—October 17, 2018

*The slides are posted separately.*

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

David Farnham, president, announced that there would be a brief business meeting as required by our bylaws followed by a Falmouth 300 event—a panel discussion featuring local people researching local history.

## **Secretary's Report**

Suzanne Farnham, secretary, noted that the minutes for the 2017 annual meeting were approved by the board so we would dispense with the reading of the minutes.

Minutes for the annual meeting and monthly board meetings are posted online at the Society website. Printed copies were available on the table.

Members of the Society and community were urged to attend any board meetings; the calendar is posted on the Society website.

Other Society records are posted online and may be inspected at the Falmouth Heritage Museum.

The Society currently has 102 members. Renewal packets will be mailed out shortly to those pending renewal as well as to households whose membership has lapsed.

## **Nominations and Election**

David noted that all current officers and directors have time remaining in their terms.

The board of directors nominated Sheri Fistal as a director.

There were no additional nominations from the floor and the president called for a vote. The members present voted unanimously to elect Sheri Fistal to the board.

## **Treasurer's Report**

David, as interim treasurer, reminded members that the Society needs a new treasurer. If that is too much of a leap, a volunteer bookkeeper would be welcome. It takes 3-4 hours per month and the volunteer would ideally have experience with Quicken or QuickBooks.

Displaying a slide showing the Society's financial position, he noted that the only liabilities were \$100 in accounts payable. The net loss was understated due to improvements in how we track our inventory and valuation of merchandise.

The FY2016-17 and FY2017-18 finances are overdue for auditing. Volunteers for the audit committee are needed. It should take less than two hours to review both years.

Displaying FY2017-18 income and expense, the Society took in \$4,981 and spent \$14,274. Expenses were \$2,400 under budget. This included \$1,200 for the replacement sign (installation was deferred until FY18-19), \$600 for catalog software (also deferred), and lower cost for the water heater thanks to the generosity of AAA.

Displaying the proposed FY2018-19 budget, David noted that it was conservative with only two major expenses—replacement sign and catalog software.

The budget began with a zero-based estimate developed from prior year expenses. There were slight increases to utilities and maintenance. The proposed budget is slightly less than last year's. Details about how the budget was formulated are posted on the Society website and a printed copy was available on the table.

David called for a vote on the proposed budget. The members present voted unanimously to accept the budget.

## **President's Report**

David expressed his pleasure at how much the Society has rebounded from an episode of volunteer turnover common to town historical societies. He wouldn't have believed it possible two years ago.

He observed that there is nothing like a major anniversary to give a historical society a shot in the arm. The Falmouth 300 Tercentennial was a "heavy lift" for

the Society but—thanks to the energy and leadership of Erin Cadigan—we did more than we thought we could.

The Falmouth Heritage Museum is the heart of the Society. Just keeping it open two days a week takes a lot of work by our volunteers.

The experiment with weekend hours in July went well. People in our community who work find it difficult to visit the Museum during the week. Discussions with other town historical societies suggest that Sunday afternoon works well in summer. We may do that next summer in lieu of a weekday.

The Society has been making modest headway on improvements to the Museum. In addition to necessary maintenance to protect our collections and keep the Museum accessible, it is also getting spruced up a bit.

The result has been a steady increase in the number of visitors—both in person and online. Amateur genealogists are encouraged to volunteer. Many of our visitors are inquiring about family history of people with ties to Falmouth as well as the history of homes in Falmouth.

David emphasized that volunteers are the engine that powers the Society. Most of the work done by volunteers is divided between keeping the Museum open, taking care of the building, and responding to inquiries from the community. He asked key volunteers to stand and be recognized:

- Ann Gagnon
- Betsy Whitcomb
- Erin Cadigan
- Rich Meserve
- Ron Scorsone
- Sue Farnham

He thanked the volunteers on behalf of the Society and the community for all that they do.

David talked about how the Society's first job is to preserve our town's heritage and how we continue to receive donations of unique documents and artifacts relevant to the story of Falmouth. There is a backlog of accessions which is a good thing for a historical society.

The community has also been generous with donations of material and office equipment. A recent donation of a computer made it possible to have a dedicated desktop for cataloging documents and artifacts.

David thanked the members—the Society’s most valuable asset—to whom we turn when we need help.

Looking ahead to the coming year, David said there are two Falmouth Heritage Museums. One sits on Woods Road. The other is our growing presence on the Internet.

The Society has been taking baby steps in making better use of our online presence. We are keeping the Society website up to date and are responding to more inquiries via email. We hope to begin making more effective use of social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) to do a better job of connecting with the community.

Three years ago, the board decided that the Society must create a digital catalog of its holdings—artifacts, documents and books. This is more important today. We resumed the cataloging effort earlier in the year and fell flat on our face. We had picked a product by a local company that turned out not to be a good fit for us. We’re switching to the same product used by every other historical society we contacted. As we catalog items, we will reassess their relevance. We come across the occasional item that has virtually no tie to Falmouth. We will consider de-accessioning these to make more room for new donations.

Improvements to the Museum are continuing. The old, badly weathered sign will be brought indoors and replaced by a new sign out front that will be more legible from Woods Road. We would also like to rearrange the space in the Museum with one area for research and another for rotating thematic exhibits.

David concluded the president’s remarks with a plea for volunteers. Whatever your talent, the Society needs you.

There being no new business, the business portion of the annual meeting was adjourned at 7:30.

## **Panel Discussion: Researching & Writing Falmouth History**

- Erin Bishop-Cadigan  
Moderator
- Wayne Cobb  
Local historian working on the history of Falmouth's Quakers
- Marge Devine  
Former FHS president and Falmouth resident researching the French & Indian Wars
- Larry Dyhrberg  
Former teacher and Falmouth resident studying Falmouth's Danish community

Responding to questions posed by Erin, each member described how they had become deeply engaged in researching local history. Each approached their topic differently. Wayne and Marge brought examples of their research. Some of Larry's work will be performed in the Falmouth schools later this year.

The meeting was adjourned 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Suzanne Howe Farnham  
Secretary