

The Falmouth Historical Society

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Zoom Meeting—May 2, 2023

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

President's Remarks

David reported that as we enter the busy season, he has been looking at our projected workload. From his perspective, 2022 was a good year for the Society. We met the expectations of our community. We accomplished all that we could given the number of our volunteers. 2023 is shaping up to be about the same level of effort. Quantitatively, it looks as if we are governed by the “Rule of Four.” Last year we did four activities in almost every category. That will be the case again this year. The cookbook is now in production which reduces the workload a bit. Like so many other small nonprofits, we are still constrained by the number of volunteers. We need more to do more.

Secretary's Report

Minutes. The April minutes were approved online.

Membership. Our active membership is 104. We added Shaw's as a sponsor.

Treasurer's Report

Finances. Excluding \$7,500 reserved for the scholarship, the Society has a balance of \$1,662 in its operating accounts and \$23,042 invested with Maine Community Foundation. Our projected income is \$1,870, projected expenses are \$1,230, and accounts/tax payable is \$316. This leaves an estimated end-of-year balance of \$1,986. Our actual expenses are \$775 over budget due to inflation. Our net current assets (excluding long-term assets) have declined by \$2,541 this fiscal year. This was flagged as a warning indicator in the financial summary.

Putting this in context, our financial condition four years ago could have been described as “controlled flight into terrain.” Today the situation is much better

thanks to reduced expenses and increased income. Now our finances are “in level flight,” albeit teetering between the black or the red.

The board relies upon key metrics to give early warning of trouble. One of those metrics became a “flashing red light” this month. “Unrestricted net current assets” is negative. It tells us our available cash is 25% less than it was at the beginning of the fiscal year. In other words, we’re spending beyond our means.

Where did the money go? Inflation has increased non-discretionary operating expenses such as utilities, insurance, and maintenance. We also have \$1,643 tied up in new merchandise.

It isn’t time to hit the panic button (yet). We anticipate that income will offset the shortfall. We are receiving reimbursement from the manufacturer of the sump pump for direct costs incurred by last spring’s failure. We should sell merchandise this summer. We have outstanding pledges for \$1,000. We are eligible for a \$1,270 distribution from the foundation. These will replenish our operating accounts.

This was early warning of a potential problem in our financial condition. Unrestricted net current assets should reverse course and begin heading towards positive territory next month. As we assemble the budget for the upcoming fiscal year, we will adjust for inflation.

Committee Reports

Programs. The calendar is beginning to fill up. The first event is the book talk at the library. Betsy asked whether we were going to set up a table at the event? David said he would check with FML.

Visits by the Falmouth Elementary second graders have been scheduled. Sally and Betsy are meeting with the teachers to firm up plans. Rich mentioned that he could provide some middle-school students to help.

Rich announced that Falmouth Schools has selected a recipient for the 2023 award of the Marion Perkins Memorial Scholarship. The name of the recipient will be announced next month.

We may be a bit short on able-bodied members to march in the town's Memorial Day parade. Rich will see if we could get a golf cart to carry those for whom a mile-long hike would not be prudent.

Carol asked whether we had heard about a SOLVE meeting. These gatherings of leaders from area historical societies usually take place in spring and fall; we hosted the meeting last autumn. (Post-meeting follow-up: the spring SOLVE meeting was hosted by Hiram Historical in February. We didn't receive an invitation.)

Museum Operation & Exhibits. Spring cleaning will take place at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 20th. This is also Falmouth Community Clean-up Day.

The Museum and Barn will be open to the public on Saturday, June 3rd from 8:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. while the Lions Club Sale is held just down the road at the Salt Shed. Betsy suggested that we put some exhibits out on the front lawn.

Scheduled public hours at the Museum and Barn resume on Tuesday, June 6th, at 9:00 a.m. Carol suggested that we make an announcement at an upcoming town council meeting.

Collections. Marge Merrill Devine, local historian and former FHS president, donated her files to the Society. There are at least a dozen large tubs of documents and books. She had previously donated a set of oversized storyboards filled with material about Falmouth; this donation doubled the quantity.

There was a lengthy discussion about accessioning so much material. In keeping with Marge's wishes, the historical material will become a separate collection. The FHS administrative files from her time as a Society officer and board member will be merged into the Society records along with similar files donated by other former presidents. The books will be added to the library at the Museum.

The board decided that volunteers will conduct an inventory of each box. Forms will be provided which will serve as an interim inventory until we are ready to add our document files to the digital catalog.

Sandy Perloff had donated two more historical books.

Ron described the challenges he encountered while photoshopping the pictures of artifacts. David will share his tricks for removing background in photographs.

Local History. We responded to five queries during the past month. We are still working on a backlog of six queries.

A subject has been selected for a “retrospective” article to be posted on the Society website this Memorial Day: Pvt Joseph A Hodsdon of the 17th Maine who was killed in action at Gettysburg.

Communications. The spring newsletter was published and mailed. It was also posted on the website. The content was revised to conform with the recommendations from the class on nonprofit newsletters.

Betsy mentioned that the cost of first-class stamps will increase in July.

The home page on the Society’s website was restructured with two goals in mind:

- Put anything important on the home page. Google analytics tells us that if visitors don’t find what they want on the home page, they generally stop looking. A review of websites for larger historical societies shows they have also built up the content on the home page.
- Convey a sense of vibrancy. We are a small nonprofit doing a lot. This wasn’t apparent on the old website. Now we have upcoming events at the top followed by recent activity.

Someday we will update the theme using the “Falmouth” color scheme.

Merchandise. The second run of sixteen pairs of the new cookbooks is pending.

Museum Buildings & Grounds. The new dehumidifier for the basement is now in operation. A loaned mower has been provided while we decide whether to repair or junk the old mower.

Technology. Nothing significant to report.

Development. Nothing significant to report.

New Business

There being no new business, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Suzanne Farnham, Secretary