

The Falmouth Historical Society

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Zoom Meeting—April 5, 2022

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

President's Remarks

David listed upcoming springtime activities:

- We must get the Museum and Barn ready for re-opening.
- The town is resuming the Memorial Day Parade. Do we want to participate? (Answer: Yes! Betsy will work out the details.)
- Municipal elections and primaries will be held on June 14th. Should we have a table? (Answer: Yes! It will be outside. We'll look into getting a new banner.)

There's not as much to be done as last year but we will need everybody's help to get everything moving this spring.

Secretary's Report

Minutes. The March minutes will be distributed for review soon.

Membership. Our active membership is 90. The renewal letters should go out shortly.

Treasurer's Report

David was dismayed to find another error in last month's financial reports. The report was rushed because the meeting was on the first of the month and there wasn't enough time to thoroughly review reports which were based on data not available until that morning. Errors have cropped up in recent Statements of Financial Position and the Liquidity Statement. Both are Microsoft Word documents combining manual and automatic calculations. The formula feature in Word has been misbehaving. The solution is to move the calculations to an Excel spreadsheet as we did for the budget, tax worksheet, and new merchandise.

Finances. The Society has a balance of \$12,675 in its operating accounts and \$15,851 with Maine Community Foundation. Our accounts payable is \$186.

Committee Reports

Programs. Rich reported that Falmouth Schools has everything they need regarding the Marion Perkins Memorial Scholarship. They'll notify us of the recipient once the decision is made so we can write the check. The awards night is June 2nd.

Museum Operation & Exhibits. It's time to prepare to Museum for re-opening. The main floor is in good shape. All that needs to be done is unpacking and a light cleaning. The barn needs the usual sweeping out. The basement will require a heavy cleaning.

There was a short discussion about the schedule. We may need some additional time to clean the basement. We will be closed on Election Day (June 14th) and Tuesdays following a holiday. Since we do not plan to turn on the heating system, we will close before the middle of October.

It was decided the Museum will be open on most Tuesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., from June 7th through October 4th. It will be closed June 14th, July 5th, and September 6th. That leaves fifteen days when we are open to the public. We will also open by appointment.

Collections. Nothing significant to report.

Local History. We responded to five queries this month. There were more family history requests than usual including one from a family planning a "genealogical tourism" trip. They are descended from a prominent family of Ancient Falmouth. We will provide them with a list of sites that, thanks to Willis, we know were associated with their ancestors.

We also responded to a realtor asking about the history of a home up for sale. We answered her question but, in the process, uncovered the history of a 100-acre lot on Blackstrap that fills in another piece of the puzzle. The 1955 town plat was a big help in untangling the deeds over three centuries.

David reviewed the key points from an exchange of emails about property history research. He observed that we have seen steady growth in queries. He suspects

the increase in home sales has been a factor. Responses to these requests are more complicated and time consuming than those for questions about family history. Fortunately, we're good at this. We have a proven research methodology (our "three-legged stool"). We know where to find the information and, in the case of deeds, how to make sense of them. We have unique resources at the museum including the Falmouth house binders, the Greater Portland Landmarks survey, the 1955 town plat, and records about the Falmouth families who owned the property. The growing volume of digitized records has given us a huge boost. There are some stretches of Falmouth, Foreside, and Blackstrap where we have looked at almost every home along lengthy stretches of the roads.

Today our property history research is reactive; it is driven by queries from the community. We start from scratch and gather data from a long list of resources. This is a process well-suited for streamlining.

We recently obtained an extract from the town assessor's database. We can use this to create a database to serve as the foundation for property history research. By transcribing information from other sources, we will have a central repository which will give new volunteers a starting point for future research. It will also make researchers aware of earlier research. There have been recent cases in which we unknowingly retraced the steps of others. We should begin with the 81 homes dated to before 1821.

Communications. We had expected to have the winter mailing out by now.

Merchandise. *Cookbook.* Sue proposed removing allergy warnings from each individual recipe and covering dietary restrictions in the general sections; most are obvious from the list of ingredients. This would make it easier to avoid crowding recipes. There was agreement that this made sense.

Museum Buildings & Grounds. Ron reported on the continuing problems with the sump pump at the Museum. The GFCI breaker for the sump pump failed. It now trips with the slightest load. We ran a temporary line from the first floor to the pump. Then the pump failed—it simply stopped working. It is under warranty and the vendor said they will replace it.

Without a working pump, the sump well overflowed. We called in ServiceMaster to pump out the overflow. They left a temporary pump. Like our old pump, it is ½ horsepower. It cannot keep up with the influx of water following a soaking rain.

We ordered a 1 horsepower pump. We need to replace the GFCI breaker. We need to install a wireless sensor to send out an alert when the sump is about to overflow. We also need to establish a year-round schedule for checking and cleaning the pump.

Those actions deal with the immediate problem of keeping the basement dry. The root problem appears to be the terrain on which the Museum sits. Either we have an underground stream flowing through the rocky fill surrounding the Museum, or the water table has risen to above the floor of the basement, or both. We may have a fracture in the wall of the sump basin. We have identified two companies with experience dealing with this sort of problem. We'll invite them to recommend long-term remediations. This is likely to be expensive but well-suited for a grant request.

Technology. The computers at the Museum have awakened from their winter slumber and brought up to date.

The report on public access to the Society website reflects some unusual activity. We cut off the report at March 22nd because there was a large spike in accesses during two hours on the afternoon of March 23rd which distorted the report. The same thing happened last year. It doesn't appear to have been malicious.

We were also surprised to see Coffeerville, Kansas, listed in the top ten locations for access to the Society website. It turns out an elderly couple living in a small house in rural Kansas was suddenly deluged with complaints and even visits from police because a system supplying geographic locations for Internet access was reporting the geographic center of the continental United States when it couldn't ascertain the correct spot. The hapless couple's home was practically atop the center of the country.

Development. Larry Perkins donated \$2,500 towards the fund for the 2023 award of the Marion Perkins Memorial Scholarship. Falmouth Lions Club renewed their gold-level sponsorship. Hoot Landscaping became our newest silver-level sponsor.

New Business

There being no new business, the meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Suzanne Farnham, Secretary