

The Falmouth Historical Society Minutes

Falmouth Heritage Museum—September 10, 2019

The board meeting came to order at 6:45 p.m. Present were David Farnham, Sue Farnham, Betsy Whitcomb, Ron Scorsone, Rich Meserve, Fred Howe, and member Kathy Allen Merrill.

Secretary's Report

The August minutes were reviewed and approved.

Membership. There are 101 active members and 15 lapsed. Beginning with this report, membership numbers have been adjusted to reflect rolling renewals adopted two years ago.

Treasurer's Report

The Society has a balance of \$1,495 in its cash accounts and \$25,015 with the Foundation.

We received an HVAC repair bill from AAA for \$1,612. Our system has required frequent repairs during its short lifetime including multiple replacements of control boards. HVAC system repair has become a major recurring expense. This cannot continue.

We received a new debit card for the treasurer.

Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Budget. There are three options on the table.

1. Business as usual (\$18K).
2. A reduced budget (\$12K). We would close the museum for six months during cold weather. The furnace would run at the minimum temperature to keep the pipes from freezing. The driveway would be plowed only to allow access by the propane truck.
3. A minimized budget (\$9K). We would shut down the museum for six months during the cold weather. The furnace would be turned off and the water drained from the pipes. The driveway would not be plowed.

The challenge we face is simple. Since opening the Falmouth Heritage Museum and moving from Whipple House, expenses have exceeded revenue.

We now operate a public accommodation year round. The Museum is an old farmhouse with high maintenance needs. Utility and maintenance expenses are highest in winter.

We have covered the shortfall by making withdrawals from our savings in the Maine Community Foundation. This is not sustainable.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Board decided to table a decision until the next meeting when the entire Board will be present. A decision must be made before November 1st.

The Board unanimously approved a withdrawal of \$5,000 from the Foundation to meet near-term expenses.

Old Business

Strengthening the Society. Our small cadre of dedicated volunteers is at risk of burnout. This has been a recurring topic for discussion at Board meetings. We need to bring more people and businesses into the fold. We need to energize our fundraising. We need to continue expanding our web presence. We need increased participation by our members. We have no shortage of ideas but our volunteers are busy just keeping the lights on. This includes performing our core mission plus gradually gaining traction on near-term goals.

Increasing our presence in the community. Sue Farnham is willing to man a table at Cumberland Fair. It is a bit late to make this arrangement, but member Kathy Allen Merrill has offered to approach the person in charge of space at the Exhibition Hall.

Weekend Hours. We opened the Museum on Saturday afternoons in July and August but we saw few visitors. We will rethink this for next year.

Maintenance. The telephone answering system is malfunctioning. It is close to 20 years old. David will price out new phones.

Repairs to the structure of the stairs and handicapped access ramp are done; staining is underway. The last step will be the replacement of the railing. Many thanks to Ron Scorsone, Fred Howe, and community volunteers.

Repainting the kitchen window over the sink will be the next project. Any small holes between the house and the foundation must also be filled to ensure that mice are kept out of the building.

Accessions. Artifact donations received this month include three scrapbooks of newspaper clippings from a member of the Wilson family, a Huston family bible and Huston family mirror; an herb mortar and pestle, a hand-held school bell from a fire station, and a sign from the Knight family.

A former Falmouth resident who has moved away is considering donating items; he will have more details later this month.

Cookbook. Betsy has done some more pricing research with the original printer and with Staples. Staples would be bound and soft. The first page could be done with a heavier stock card. 200 copies would cost about \$4,000; 500 copies would be about \$5,000. For the original printer: 200 copies would be \$2,060 softbound; \$2,710 for hard cover.

A third option was proposed: print it ourselves in half size binders. This would allow us to print a smaller number at a time—less risk if it does not sell well. We can put in vignettes on the people, places, and old families of Falmouth.

Anne Gagnon and Sheri Fistal have expressed interest in working on the cookbook's second edition.

Tidewater Farm. Betsy, Sue, and David attended a meeting at Town Hall today. The focus of the project is meeting the needs of Falmouth Land Trust with historic preservation as a priority concern.

Bucknam Tavern. Work on the old building appears to be underway. We'd like to know more.

Another non-profit in Falmouth may be seeking a place to hold meetings. We can talk to them about using the Museum.

Anne Gagnon, one of our steadfast volunteers, is back at the Museum on Tuesday mornings after several months' absence due to surgery. Welcome back, Anne!

New business

Falmouth by the Sea has requested a presentation on a topic related to Falmouth history. David volunteered to speak about how Maine became a part of Massachusetts in the 17th century.

We need to make a decision soon on the talk for Annual Meeting.

Kathy Merrill reported that on October 12th there will be a book signing at the Trolley Museum for the children's book done by the Trolley museum. Have we been approached?

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Farnham
Secretary