

# The Falmouth Historical Society

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Zoom Meeting—January 9, 2024

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

## **President's Remarks**

David noted that preparations for the upcoming annual meeting lost steam over the holidays. It was an inconvenient time for two board members to be taken out of action by Covid, but both are now on the mend.

The business meeting is shaping up nicely. Research for the two history presentations was done last summer but there are some gaps to be filled. Work on pre-meeting communications stalled. We need to get the word out so announcements will take priority over finishing presentations.

## **Secretary's Report**

Minutes. The December minutes were approved online.

Membership. Our active membership is 108. The numbers are stable with a steady flow of renewals coming in. Two long-term members passed away recently.

Rich asked where we stood comparatively in terms of membership. David said that he follows other historical societies in our area to see what we can learn from them. We are the only one to publish membership numbers. It is difficult to estimate membership based on revenue (for those not filing the postcard return) because many receive corporate donations which are lumped together with dues. His guess is that our membership was on par with other "Very, Very Small" societies when Carol was president, but now our numbers are about half that and slowly climbing back.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Finances. Excluding \$7,500 reserved for the scholarship, the Society has a balance of \$4,539 in its operating accounts and \$23,252 invested with Maine Community Foundation. Our accounts/tax payable is \$629. Our projected end-of-year balance is \$1,731. Our actual expenses are \$1,208 under budget. Our net current assets (excluding long-term assets) declined by \$648 this fiscal year as we skate along the line between red and black. Our projected year-end loss is \$558. We made our annual payment to the state for sales tax.

## **Committee Reports**

### Programs.

The Annual Meeting will consist of a short business meeting with a round robin of officer and committee reports followed by presentations about Mast Road (Betsy and Sue) and the Iverson sword (David).

Museum Operation & Exhibits. The Museum and Barn are closed until May.

Collections. The O'Brien family has offered to donate a folk-art horse created by Annie L (Purington) O'Brien, a life-long resident of Falmouth. She made three horses—one for each child. This horse belonged to her son, also a life-long resident of Falmouth. The horse meets the criteria for artifacts. The board voted unanimously to accept the donation.

Local History. During 2023, we worked on 51 requests (not counting those meant for the "other" Falmouth.

We received a request from a member for support in his pursuit of a treasure trove he believes is buried in West Falmouth. During the discussions, concerns were expressed that professional historians would judge this venture to be speculative and not supported by the historical record, a treasure hunt in that part of Falmouth could have unacceptable consequences, and the legal issues are complicated. The board decided unanimously not to be part of this effort.

Communications. Publication of the newsletter, a mailing (including the donor and membership renewal letters), an email blast, and a Facebook post are in the works.

At the December meeting, Ron mentioned a Facebook group posting old photos in Maine, some of which were of Falmouth. Using the Society Facebook account, we joined groups likely to post items of interest to our membership and have begun “sharing” posts about Falmouth history, usually adding our two cents worth about the significance of the post.

Merchandise. Sales brought in \$956 during 2023. There will be a limited run to replenish the inventory following a large sale of volume I cookbooks.

Museum Buildings & Grounds. Ron reported that when he was leaving the Museum after the recent storm, Dr. Andrews (who donated the building) stopped and offered to plow our drive. He suggested that we give him a call after the next storm. David reminded the Board that the Andrews family makes a generous donation every year.

Technology. Our new privacy policy is posted on the website.

Development. Nothing significant to report.

## **New Business**

Betsy commented that she had viewed some of the presentations at the AASLH Virtual Summit on Small Museums which David had attended. She was impressed by what those small museums were doing. Some of the projects were applicable to us.

David agreed. He saw those innovations by small museums as showing what was possible. There was a bit of a disconnect in the conference. The presentations were focused on Small museums (with annual income of \$200K-1M and professional staffs). In our area, that would include Freeport and Yarmouth Historical. Many of the attendees were Very Small museums (revenue of \$50-200K and a full-time director) or Very, Very Small museums like us (revenue less than \$50K and all-volunteer). With more volunteers and money, we could take on a project like those showcased during the conference.

David added that many of those museums were pivoting to embrace issues and people in their community that had been ignored for many years. Until recently, there wasn't much racial or ethnic diversity in Falmouth, a major focus in many of the presentations.

Sue brought up a video of a lecture given by Prof. Emerson Baker of Salem State University. On our Facebook account, we shared a post by Maine Genealogical linking to Prof. Baker's presentation on "[Forgotten Frontier: Maine & New Hampshire in the 17th Century](#)" at an event hosted by the Partnership of Historic Bostons. Prof. Baker lives in York and his knowledge of 17th century life in northern New England seems boundless. Most of what we know about the Native People of Ancient Falmouth comes from Prof. Baker's research. In this video, Prof. Baker talks about the Europeans who settled near the Piscataqua River. Most of what he has to say also applies to those who settled at Ancient Falmouth. His talks are enlightening and entertaining.

There being no additional new business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Suzanne Farnham, Secretary