

The Falmouth Historical Society

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Zoom Meeting—May 5, 2020

The meeting came to order at 6:30 p.m. Present were Betsy Whitcomb, Rich Meserve, Ron Scorsone, Sally Farneth, Carol Kauffman, David Farnham, and Sue Farnham.

Secretary's Report

Minutes. The minutes for the April meeting will be sent out for online review shortly.

Membership. There was no change from last month. The renewal letters have not gone out yet.

Treasurer's Report

Finances. The Society has a balance of \$3,226 in its cash accounts and \$18,548 with the Foundation. Our annual insurance bill of \$1,400 is pending in accounts payable. We expect to receive bills for about \$1,000 arising from the sump problems at the Museum.

Last December we withdrew \$5,000 from our savings with Maine Community Foundation that we expected to last through the remainder of the fiscal year (and hoped to stretch out for a couple more months).

Between the increased utility costs arising from the difficulty we had shutting off our heating at the beginning of winter coupled with the recent sump problems, we are running about \$1,500 over budget. Revenue is lower than expected due to being closed. Our operating accounts will be exhausted by early July.

Treasurer's Recommendation: Withdraw \$5,000 from the Foundation.

We must submit the request now to have it by June. Dues and donations will determine whether we can stretch it for a full year.

Following discussion, a motion was made and seconded to withdraw \$5,000 from the Society's account with the Foundation. The board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Administration. Our digital financial records are in good shape.

- The move to the Advanced edition of QuickBooks Online has reduced manual accounting.
- Nearly all the Society's financial documents are now stored in Google Suite. As soon as a handful of remaining documents are scanned, we can return the paper files to the Museum.
- We have applied the lessons learned from our tax filing—the financial data in QuickBooks is synchronized with the membership and donation data in Wild Apricot. We now have end-to-end accountability for donation income.

We have begun work on a standard operating procedure for Society bookkeeping.

All financial records—ledgers and documents—are accessible online to the Board. Setting up the credentials is a bit complicated and requires a house call by your IT support team.

Board members are reminded to submit their out-of-pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the Society for tracking as donation income and expenses.

Committee Reports

Programs. Everything is on hold for now. David will contact Linda Griffin regarding the class on identifying architectural features of old houses.

Museum Operation & Exhibits. The Museum remains closed indefinitely pending guidance from civil and medical authorities.

Collections.

Catalog. Ron successfully recovered the data from the Museum laptop used to assess whether PastPerfect would meet our needs; he can use this data to initially populate the production database.

Collections. We received a donation of the journal containing records of the Casco Village Improvement Society for 1892-1928. The Society's most notable accomplishment was the construction and, for many years, operation of a community hall on Foreside Road in what is now Underwood Park. The hall was demolished by the town in 1963.

Local History.

We have begun receiving queries from the community again.

Communications.

Newsletter & Social Media. The next newsletter is still being drafted. We very much need to have a volunteer step up to maintaining our presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Merchandise.

Cookbook. The committee is meeting regularly. The focus now is on winnowing down the recipes from the old book and new recipes suggested by the committee members. About 40% of the old recipes were for treats (cakes, pies, cookies, etc.).

Falmouth-themed merchandise. We received information about potential merchandise from BGA. David will send it to the Board.

Museum Buildings & Grounds.

Museum Basement. Ron reported on the recent sump problems. Heavy rain forced mud into the sump well. Mud jammed the pump. Water overflowed the well onto the basement floor. Ron was unable to remove our old pump and called ServiceMaster for assistance. They put in a temporary pump that cleared out the water. After extensive consultations, Ron purchased a new sump pump capable of evacuating mud and it is now in place. The evacuation hose also needs to be replaced. Once that is done and we are confident the new pump will not suffer the fate of its predecessor, we can thoroughly clean the basement.

Woods. The Lions Club asked about harvesting the downed trees as well as potentially felling additional trees. We will be glad to clean out the existing trees. We are open to discussion any further clearing.

Winter 2020-21. The Society was deeply disappointed that financial necessity compelled us to close the Museum for the past winter (2019-20). Closing the Museum for six months (November-April) cut our annual operating expenses in half. We avoided the cost of heating a 19th century building and clearing snow during a Maine winter. We retained access to the Museum throughout the winter. The drive was plowed once after a major snowfall. We were able to access Museum files and artifacts when responding to requests from the community.

We also avoided the challenge of keeping the Museum open as a public accommodation. Despite our best efforts, snow and ice make access treacherous. This is a special concern because many of our volunteers and visitors are older; slipping and falling can result in serious injury. There was one ambulance call the previous winter and many less serious falls.

Many town historical societies in the region are closed or open only “by appointment” during winter. This raises the question: What do we plan to do during the coming winter?

Our financial situation has not improved. Safe access to the Museum is still a concern during winter. After discussion, it was agreed that the Museum will be closed from November through April.

The Society continues to operate online during winter. We need to access artifacts and documents. This past winter was mild. A “normal” winter brings more snow. How can we access the Museum without incurring the costs of plowing?

A benefactor has offered to donate a snowblower that had been used to clear a driveway longer than ours. Should we accept the donation? After a short discussion, the Board agreed that we would gratefully accept the snowblower and put it to good use.

Technology.

Activity on the website is steady but light. Activity on Facebook is lighter than usual due to our lack of posts.

Zoom video-teleconferencing is working well. This was our second online Board meeting and the Cookbook Committee has met twice.

Note keeping during an online meeting has proven to be a challenge. Zoom recommends using voice transcription by the Otter.ai application and the Society obtained a one-year license for Otter.ai Pro. The person organizing the meeting commands Zoom to “record to cloud” when the meeting begins. Otter.ai automatically performs speech to text transcription after the meeting. The transcription isn’t perfect, but it is a useful aid when drafting minutes afterwards.

The Society’s Microsoft 365 account is up and running. We took advantage of Microsoft’s offer primarily to obtain free access to the Office suite of products. The package also provides OneDisk storage like Google Drive. It includes Teams and Sharepoint collaboration tools which could be useful for work—such as research—within the Society. Google and Microsoft product are complementary but have unique strengths. As time permits, David will explore how we can use them to back up one another as well as leverage Microsoft’s collaborative tools.

Thanks to the generosity of these tech industry giants, even a small non-profit like our Society has access to the same capabilities used by large enterprises.

General Topics

There being no new business, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Farnham
Secretary