

The Falmouth Historical Society

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Zoom Meeting—October 3, 2023

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

President's Remarks

David observed that the Society's busy season is winding down. We close the Museum when chilly weather arrives—usually after the first Tuesday in October. The forecast calls for a mild autumn and—weather permitting—we may not close until after Hallowe'en. That would give us four more Tuesdays open to the public.

Our only scheduled events are tables at the polls and Very Merry Falmouth.

We'll kick off the new year with our annual meeting. Hopefully it will be a hybrid meeting this time. Looking ahead to spring, we need to revise the bus tours. No big changes—just corrections to minor errors and fine tuning to reflect questions we have received from the community.

Today we had two visitors with discerning eyes. One is a member of the board for a historical society in a small town in Oxford County. She had stopped by our table at the fair and visited the Museum to learn more about what we were doing.

The other visitor was no stranger. She was a former member of our board and is deeply steeped in Falmouth. She is putting her historic property on the market and, depending upon the buyer, may choose to donate some of her extensive collection to us. She was checking us out to make sure we were still up to snuff.

Both saw that we were meeting the expectations of a town historical society. I believe they were impressed by all that we are doing. I think we're doing a pretty good job given our limited resources. It is reassuring when others—particularly those with knowledge and experience—share that opinion. Again, it is all do to the hard work of our volunteers (and especially all of you)!

Secretary's Report

Minutes. The September minutes were approved online.

Membership. Our active membership is 106. Despite our losses to old age, our membership continues to increase.

Treasurer's Report

Finances. Excluding \$7,500 reserved for the scholarship, the Society has a balance of \$2,975 in its operating accounts and \$23,591 invested with Maine Community Foundation. Our accounts/tax payable is \$378. Our projected end-of-year balance is a deficit of \$1,532. Our actual expenses are \$101 under budget. Our net current assets (excluding long-term assets) have declined by \$810 this fiscal year.

Our state license as a charitable organization has been renewed.

Even though everyone who bought merchandise from us at the Cumberland Fair paid with cash, we were ready to receive payments by credit card. Ours may have been the only payment system in the Exhibition Hall that was working.

We've been able to accept online payments for dues and donations since 2014. We added online payments for merchandise a year ago. Our ability to accept credit card payments in-person has been a bumpy ride. We began with the Square payment system in 2018 but encountered problems.

Our membership and web hosting system switched to a different payment processor the following year. We adopted Affinipay which required a card reader (swipe) and a laptop computer. In practice, it also required a smartphone for Internet connectivity when we were away from the Museum. This didn't work well in places where we had poor cellular connectivity (which is most of Falmouth), or access to electric power when the event lasted longer than the battery on the laptop.

Affinipay came out with a new payment system last year that uses a wireless reader (tap, insert, swipe) and an app on the smartphone. We switched and worked out the bugs during last year's Cumberland Fair. We now have a step-by-step guide for volunteers. We also have use of a personal smartphone for processing payments while away from the Museum. The phone is on T-Mobile's

network which has better coverage than Verizon and AT&T in spots where we set up a table. As a fallback, we can enter credit card information by hand using a web browser.

Committee Reports

Programs.

This year's Cumberland Fair went smoothly. We set up our table in the Exhibition Hall on Saturday. Our table was manned from 8:00-5:00 on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. We broke down our gear and left Saturday evening.

The fair was well attended with a steady flow through the Exhibition Hall in the afternoons. Each day we had more engagements (extended conversations) with passers-by than we see during a town event, but the percentage of people from Falmouth was low. We handed out a lot of membership brochures and the display filled with back issues of newsletters was nearly empty by the end. Sales were lighter than expected.

This was a "show the flag" event during which we remind people that there are town historical societies and what we do. This fair is a heavy lift for us, but the consensus is that it is worth the effort.

There was a discussion about material for future events including small items and the coloring book for children, and trivia questions for adults.

Museum Operation & Exhibits. We are continuing to see a steady flow of visitors to the Museum (when the weather is pleasant). We had 4 visitors on September 9th, 5 on the 19th, and 4 visitors on October 3rd. We were closed on the 26th due to the fair.

As usual, we will keep the Museum open until the arrival of chilly weather. Forecasts suggest that may be later than usual this year.

Collections. Betsy, Sally, and Sue have made excellent progress in reorganizing the subject files this summer. Researchers are amazed by the wealth of information in our files, but it is often difficult to find. By consolidating multiple files, they are making information easier to find. They are also placing documents in archival-quality sheet protectors.

Ellen Honan Anderson dropped off some of her late mother's papers; Mary Honan had been a stalwart of the Society for many years. Jeff Nielsen dropped off records for Pride Farm (which includes the Elisha Purington House).

Local History. We responded to an astonishing 15 queries during the past month. Our backlog dropped to 6. We responded to about a half dozen received at the fair (and that didn't count two we fielded for other towns).

We added two volumes to the Falmouth and family history reference pages on the website.

David mentioned that he hadn't figured out how to host two maps (Falmouth cemeteries and the 1957 Falmouth town plat). Our web hosting service isn't designed to handle interactive maps. Betsy suggested having Maine Memory Network host the plat. David said he would reach out to MHS.

Communications. We sent an email blast just before the fair to 81 members. It was opened by 66.

We are skipping directly to the autumn newsletter and have settled on the contents. The front page will be all about summer at the Museum. It should go out within the next fortnight.

Sue suggested that next summer we should share reports on activity at the Museum with the membership via email and social media as the summer progresses.

Merchandise. Should we donate a pair of cookbooks to Falmouth Memorial Library (assuming they want them)? The board agreed that we should make the offer.

Our sales inventory includes some low-selling merchandise: FHS-themed items (for whom the only buyers have been board members) and the 1871 map. Should we remove these items from sales inventory and simply give them away? From an accounting perspective, this would result in a small decrease in our net assets. The board agreed unanimously to remove these items from inventory.

Museum Buildings & Grounds. Ron reported that our pump has prevented the sump from overflowing despite all the rain. The new dehumidifier has also been keeping the air in the basement dry.

Portland Water will begin shutting off seasonal water on October 25th. We should plan to turn off our water and close the Museum around November 1st.

David noted that the bricks by the Museum steps have gotten slippery and need treatment. Sue recommended using the same cleaner that MOCA recommends for gravestones; she has some.

Development. Nothing significant to report.

New Business

There being no new business, the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Suzanne Farnham, Secretary