

Johnson Historical Society  
Special Strategic Planning Meeting  
26 May 2021 at 9 AM  
Holcomb House & ZOOM

Present: Dick Simays, Duncan Hastings, Linda Jones. Alice Whiting, Dean West, Mary Jean Smith & Lois Frey.  
Regrets: Tom Carney & Kelly Vandorn. Guests via ZOOM: Kyle Nuse & Diane Lehouillier.

President Dick Simays called the meeting to order following technical difficulties with ZOOM at 9:10 AM.

Once everyone had the right papers in hand, it was decided the task is to finalize and approve the Strategic Plan developed earlier. The discussion to review, clarify, and correct the document yielded the following:

- 1) No changes needed on the mission statement, the vision statement, areas of strength, areas that need attention, areas of opportunity, and areas that might pose threats.
- 2) Changes needed in Areas of Strategic Focus were addressed goal by goal with the results recorded and inserted as appropriate below.

### **I. Historical Society Membership Development**

#### **GOAL I: Increase the number of Historical Society members by 10 % a year.**

- A. Develop a membership recruitment plan, including establishment of a membership committee with specific targets by year
  1. Determine what will best benefit the Historical Society to help focus recruitment
  2. Clarify membership benefits
  3. Recruit more volunteers who are not current members
- B. Develop a marketing strategy
  1. Using social media and newsletter reach out and inspire people to see the value and importance of Johnson's history
  2. Create a timeline and encourage people to fill in gaps
  3. Create an acquisition page on web and Facebook, "Do you recognize this item?"

### **II. Board of Trustee Development**

#### **GOAL 1: Build a more active and engaged Board to increase involvement by all trustees (2021)**

- A. Develop active committees on the Board to share the workload
  - Determine which committees are needed to optimize all talent on the board and to meet needs of Historical Society
  - Decide which committees are standing and which are ad-hoc
  - Require each Trustee to serve on one committee
  - Draft realistic committee descriptions and appoint committee chairs
  - Recruit non-Board volunteers to serve on committees
- B. Review current meeting structure
  1. Discuss frequency of meetings once committee structure is in place, explore every other month meetings for both Board and committees
  2. Create standing agenda item of committee reports
- C. Revisit by-laws and amend as necessary

**GOAL 2: Recruit active Board members so that by 2026 the Board reflects the demographic composition of the town of Johnson.**

- A. Attract younger board trustees to the organization**
  - 1. Determine optimal number of members and create a recruitment plan
  - 2. Develop a recruitment packet with information about JHS, responsibilities of Board trustees, and value of Board service
  - 3. Use the active committee structure to engage new trustees
  - 4. Target recruitment to reach a younger audience – Northern VT University, local small business
  
- B. Develop an Orientation Process**
  - 1. Mentor new Board trustees to take advantage of their interest and enthusiasm
  - 2. Hold regularly scheduled board orientation for new trustees and other volunteers to familiarize them with finance, programs and board process

**III. Program Development**

**GOAL 1: Define the Johnson Historical Society through its programming so that we increase visibility in community**

- A. Determine core programming**
  - 1. Expand programming committee of the Board
  - 2. Conduct cost benefit analysis of each program and decide what stays and what goes.
  
- B. Represent the history of Johnson by being more active outdoors in public spaces and on social media**
  - 1. Program booth at Field Days
  - 2. Booth on Town Green
  - 3. Time Capsule
  - 4. Use the social media to showcase past and present programs and historical information, such as content on the history of town buildings
  
- C. Optimize Historical Society collections**
  - 1. Activate a Collections Committee to be responsible for organizing and preserving collections to maximize its effectiveness and long-range preservation

**GOAL 2: Develop new programming to increase membership and address community interests**

- A. Create a schedule to connect with more people in town**
  - 1. Coordinate with community entities to expand and inform Johnson residents' knowledge of our history (i.e. schools, library, and community organizations and Town Cemeteries.)
  - 2. Engage people in learning the history of the house they live in
  - 3. Conduct oral histories with longtime residents and involve their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.
  
  - 4. Review survey data and update periodically to keep abreast of what residents are looking for in programs.
  - 5. Develop some form of "walking tour" of Village.
  - 6. Become more proactive on Town Cemetery issues, including possibility of mapping and documenting burials. Possible linkage to Find a Grave.com.

**Goal 3: Prepare and publish a “Volume 3” of Johnson Town History 1960 to 2020.**

- A. Evaluate options for reprinting and publishing the prior two Town Histories.

**IV. Revenue Development**

**GOAL 1: Increase individual and corporate donations by 5% a year**

1. Create and implement a development plan that incorporates ways to diversify income sources.
2. Create a “pitch” which quickly and clearly explains the “ask”
3. Make personal visits to prospective donors – including businesses

**GOAL 2: Clearly differentiate the roles of the Johnson Historical Society and the nonprofit Johnson Historical Society, Inc (501c3), and work together to establish an endowment fund**

1. Develop an endowment plan which further identifies priority needs of the Johnson Historical Society to be shared with the Johnson Historical Society, Inc.

**IV. Organization and Facility Development**

**GOAL 1: Create a management plan for the day-to-day operation of the Holcomb House**

**GOAL 2: Explore options for expanding into the upstairs of Holcomb House**

- A. Create an exploratory committee
  - a. Determine and define need for expansion.
  - b. What would the expansion entail? Improvements, permits, regulations etc.
  - c. What costs would be incurred?
  - d. What is loss of revenue to town?

**GOAL 3: Explore the possibilities of having a Coordinator as Historical Society “staff”**

- A. Develop an ad-hoc committee to explore feasibility of goal
  - a. Is it possible to find a long-time volunteer?
  - b. Is it possible to hire someone as an employee?
  - c. What is the job description? What do we want this person to do?

It was noted that it would be helpful if the goals listed on the matrix match with the revised committees in the latest bylaws.

Following about 45 minutes of discussion and changes, **it was moved, seconded, and approved to adopt as amended on 5.26.2021 the Johnson Historical Society Strategic Plan.** Duncan will send the document to Jane Van Buren of Noonmark Services for her final plan and conclusion of the grant process. It was suggested that Jane also add numbers to the spreadsheet to match the goals. The spreadsheet will be useful as a planning document.

Note: Two comments from Kyle Nuse during the above discussion included 1) support for a walking tour of the village and 2) shared the information that Elias Gillen is an excellent videographer and the Board may want to ask him about his potential services. Both were appreciated.

### Other business

Video Tour of Holcomb House: Mary Jean likes Kyle's idea of considering Elias Gillen for videography work. She has contacted a Hyde Park videographer, Over and Above Photography who has estimated the cost of creating a visual tour of the Holcomb House at \$300-\$400. After she meets with him, she would like to contact Elias to check his interest in this JHS project. All present agreed that was a good idea.

Request from Kyle Nuse and Diane Lehouillier:

Dick invited Kyle Nuse and Dianne Lehouillier to address their concern.

First, Kyle offered congratulations to the Trustees for the successful completion of the Strategic Plan.

Secondly, Kyle stated she wanted to have a respectful discussion about the section of the 5.17.2021 Selectboard Meeting where Kyle asked the Board who has responsibility for maintaining the American flag, which hangs at the Holcomb House. The Trustees listened to a recording of the dialogue from that meeting. Kyle wondered how the Front Porch Forum discussion after that meeting turned into something she felt was painful, hurtful, and damaging. As seen on the video clip, those present felt Kyle's query at the Selectboard meeting was appropriate with all in agreement.

Dick asked Kyle what she is looking to have happen. She stated she wants a public Front Porch Forum statement. Dick pointed out that the Historical Society Board was not involved. The Front Porch Forum comments were made by individual citizens, who happen to be Historical Society members, not the Board of Trustees. He spoke for the Trustees when he said an official statement is not warranted.

An unofficial discussion continued, which was respectful and lasted about 40 minutes.

Next meeting: The June 9, 2021 monthly meeting will be at 9 AM at the Holcomb House and via ZOOM if necessary.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned.

Meeting minutes recorded by Lois Frey, Secretary