



**Portsmouth Athenaeum  
207<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**

# THE PORTSMOUTH ATHENÆUM

207<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 11, 2026

3 p.m.

In the Shaw Research Library and Via Zoom platform

## Agenda

- Welcome by the President
  - Approval of Minutes of the 2025 Annual Meeting
  - Necrology 2025
  - Proposed bylaw changes
  
- Finances
  - Report of the Treasurer
  - Report from the Finance Committee
  - Approval of 2027 Assessment
  
- Reports on the Year
  - Report of the Keeper
  - Report of the President
  
- Report of the Nominating Committee
- Election of Officers and Directors
- Recognition of outgoing Director
- Other Business
- Adjournment

*Please note that Subscribers, spouses, and partners are welcome at the Annual Meeting, but only Proprietors may vote. The minutes, financial report, nominating report, and other annual reports for 2024 will be available at <https://portsmouthathenaeum.org/about-us/> by January 10.*

Thomas Hardiman is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Athenaeum Annual Meeting

Time: Jan 11, 2026 03:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81660955628?pwd=qeDycWedZw2jmplnbowa8xA0oazNDx7.1>

Meeting ID: 816 6095 5628

Passcode: 207

---

One tap mobile

+16469313860,,81660955628#,,,,\*207# US

+19292056099,,81660955628#,,,,\*207# US (New York)

Join instructions

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/81660955628/invitations?signature=Lal4Z1NrX0SWxKeylSTNXJs3JQQXeYGD6nLTIRq9E>



## Report of the Governance Committee

### Recommendation for Bylaw Changes

6-25-2025

**Committee Members:** Andrew Bagley, Sally Gayer, Alan Gold (chair), Tom Hardiman, Jeff Keefe, Peter Lamb, Kate Murray, James Shanley

NOTE: Due to schedule challenges and timeline limitations the work of the Committee was performed via Zoom and email distributions.

Over the past two months the Governance Committee has discussed and reviewed three modifications to the current Bylaws document. They are:

- I. A change to Article III, Section 3.1(b) addressing the frequency of review and determination of changes to Proprietor annual assessments
- II. A change to Article V, Section 8.4 modifying the terms of the President and Vice President, enabling an optional third year if so approved, and reducing the Past President role to one year, from two.
- III. A change to Article VIII, Section 8.1, establishing a standing Development Committee.

Upon presentation at the May Board Meeting, the Executive Committee subsequently reviewed and provided edits to the proposed bylaws changes. They are reflected in the following, highlighted in red. The committee has reviewed and approved the Executive Committee changes.

Note that the current Bylaws language appears first, and modifications/additions are highlighted in yellow, with Executive Committee edits in red, and a brief explanation below the recommended new language.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Governance Committee members,

Alan E. Gold  
Governance Committee Chair

## Recommended Bylaws Amendments

### PROPOSED

6-25-2025

### Executive Committee Changes Marked in Red

- I. With regard to defining an annual review of Proprietor assessments and Board determination of increases as deemed necessary.

#### Section 3.1. Proprietors. *[revisions and proposed descriptions highlighted]*

**Current:**

*(b) Assessment. There shall be an annual assessment on every Proprietor share at a rate to be determined by vote of the Proprietors, any change to take effect upon passage. The annual assessment shall be due and payable on January 1 of each year. If the assessment is not paid by April 1, the Board of Directors, on report of the Treasurer, may preempt the shares, and the rights and privileges of a Proprietor of the Organization shall then cease.*

**Proposed:**

*(b) Assessment. There shall be an annual assessment on all Proprietor shares at a rate to be determined yearly by the Board for the following fiscal year following the next Annual Meeting, taking into account official cost of living increases, budgetary needs and other fiscal considerations. All proposed adjustments will be approved by vote of the Proprietors, any change to take effect upon passage. The annual assessment shall be due and payable on January 1 of each year. If the assessment is not paid by April 1, the Board of Directors, on report of the Treasurer, may preempt the shares, and the rights and privileges of a Proprietor of the Organization shall then cease.*

**Comment:**

This will provide a mechanism to review the financial requirements for the assessment each year and endure a vote at the Annual Meeting by Proprietors. As the Annual Meeting is held in January, the new assessment would go into effect the following year.

## II. With regard to the terms of Officers of the Board, specifically the President and Vice-President:

### Section 5.4 Officers. [revisions and proposed descriptions highlighted]

#### Current:

Section 5.4. Officers. The Officers of the Organization shall consist of a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. The President and Vice-President shall be elected for a term of three (3) years. The Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected for a one-year term. The retiring President shall serve a term of one (1) year on the board of Directors as Immediate Past President.

*No person who has served a full term as President shall be eligible to be re-elected as President until the expiration of three (3) years from the end of that person's term as Immediate Past President. In the event of the death, resignation, or removal of the Treasurer or Secretary, the Board of Directors shall fill such vacancy by a majority vote for the remainder of the term in question.*

#### Proposed:

Section 5.4. Officers. The Officers of the Organization shall consist of a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. The President and Vice-President shall be elected for a term of three (3) years. The Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected for a one-year term. The retiring President shall serve a term of three (3) years on the board of Directors as Immediate Past President.

*No person who has served a full term as President shall be eligible to be re-elected as President until the expiration of three (3) years from the end of that person's term as Immediate Past President. In the event of the death, resignation, or removal of the Treasurer or Secretary, the Board of Directors shall fill such vacancy by a majority vote for the remainder of the term in question.*

#### Comment:

The bylaws had previously included the proposed terms, but were modified to support the wishes of a previous Board President who did not wish to serve a full 3 year term. While we have discussed various options, including an optional third year, returning the term length to the previous condition appears to be the simplest approach. If a President chooses not to continue forward the Board may handle that as they would any other resignation, albeit with greater advance visibility to the President's intention to step down.

### III. With regard to the establishment of a standing Development Committee:

#### **ARTICLE VIII**

#### **COMMITTEES [revisions and proposed descriptions highlighted]**

Section 8.1. The Board of Directors may designate committees as they deem necessary for the efficient conduct of the business of the Organization, which committees may consist either of members of the Board of Directors or such other persons as are designated in the resolution authorizing the creation of that committee. Such committees may be discontinued when no longer necessary. The Organization has six (6) standing committees. The number serving on each committee shall be at the discretion of the President with the concurrence of the Board. The President shall have the power, with the concurrence of the Board, to fill any vacancies which may occur during the year and prior to the next annual meeting.

Section 8.2 .A charter shall be established for each standing committee and approved by the Board of Directors. The charter shall describe the purpose, membership, areas of responsibility, and reporting.

**NOTE: Sections 8.3 through 8.7 describe the Governance, Membership, Finance, Programs and Collections and Facilities Committees.**

#### **Proposed Development Committee summary, modeled after existing descriptions:**

Section 8.8 Development Committee. The purpose of the committee is to establish and oversee sustainable funding strategies to support the organization's mission and empower the full board to participate confidently in the fundraising process. The committee shall consist of 5-7 members, including at least two Board of Trustees members, the Executive Director or their designee (ex officio), and members with expertise in development and fundraising, particularly those with connections to historical/library philanthropic communities. The Committee will follow its charter, which will be developed by the Committee members and approved by the Board.

# THE PORTSMOUTH ATHENAEUM

Minutes of the 2025 Annual Meeting  
Held at the Research Library and Virtually via Zoom  
Sunday, January 12, 2025 at 3:00 pm

1. **Call to Order:** President Jeff Keefe called the 206<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Proprietors of the Portsmouth Athenaeum to order at 3:00 pm. The minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting were accepted and will stand as read.
2. **Necrology:** Jeff Keefe read the names of the Proprietors, former Proprietors and spouses who died in 2024. A moment of silence was held to honor those we lost during the year.
3. **Finances:**
  - A. **Report of the Treasurer:**
    - I. Cash Flow: After reviewing the Athenaeum's financial policies and procedures, Treasurer Craig Steidle presented the financial summary for 2024, noting a net positive cash flow for the year. Income was \$45,200 over budget; expenses for the year were \$2,900 under budget. Annual contributions from membership totaled \$74,770.
    - II. Finance Committee: As chair of the Finance Committee, Craig recognized other committee members, Steve Demarais and Lauren Buxton, and described their duties and activities.
    - III. Investment Portfolio: Craig reported that we began the year with investments totaling \$1,993,800 and finished the year with a portfolio of \$2,200,470, a gain of \$214,000 or about 10.7%. This included a planned portfolio distribution of \$36,000 to support the operating budget.
    - IV. Board Reserves: Craig reported a robust organizational cash reserve of \$622,000, which supports cash flow and capital projects, and provides operating income from interest earned. Last year, we invested \$400,000 of our cash reserves in short-term US Treasury bills to take advantage of higher interest rates. We continued to roll those notes over; they are currently paying about 4.8%. Additional cash reserves of \$253,000 are held in a money market account at Piscataqua Bank.
    - V. Bottom Line Summary: At 2024 year's end, the Athenaeum holds investment assets of \$2,861,000. The value of our buildings is \$1,087,000, which is probably undervalued. Total asset value this year increased from \$3.6 to \$3.9 million. In summary, the Athenaeum completed the year in a strong financial position, with a responsible budget in place for 2025. Craig ascribed our financial success to the staff, committees, and members who all contribute to keeping the organization on budget while achieving the goals of our mission. He noted staff and programming additions, as well as staff raises, that will require increased funding to sustain in 2025 and beyond. Our last Annual Assessment increase was in 2013, which presents an obvious opportunity to boost our income by bringing the assessment more in line with the national inflation rate. Craig recommended an Annual Assessment increase of \$75, from the current \$250 to \$325.

VI. Vote to Approve the 2026 Annual Assessment: Jeff requested the membership's approval of the proposed 2026 Annual Assessment, which will increase to \$325. A motion to approve the proposed 2026 rate was made and seconded; motion passed with one opposed. Proprietor Edward Thompson suggested that we change the bylaws to codify a review by the board every three years to consider an assessment increase. Jeff stated that the board would take up this suggestion for discussion.

4. **Report of the Executive Director:** Executive Director Tom Hardiman reflected on 2024 as a remarkably successful year, and anticipated that 2025 would be even better. The membership, he stated, is the reason for his optimism. Our membership is at an all-time high of 400 Proprietors, 98 Subscribers, and 82 Friends, and some dozen Subscriber applications are in process. Part of this robust membership may be the record number, and extraordinary quality, of the programs we offered in 2024—up 50% from a decade ago. Concerts, a new poetry series, exhibits and lectures—including a new current events lecture series—were all immensely popular.

Tom also noted the enormous contributions of our dedicated staff and volunteers. In 2024, the Athenaeum completed its three-year phased staff salary increase of over 33% to bring staff pay up to a regionally competitive rate. Tom recognized that 2024 was Robin Silva's 30<sup>th</sup> year as Athenaeum librarian.

Major building improvements have also been undertaken and completed by the Building Committee, including restoration of the 1805 Building windows; leveling of the front step on Market St.; and cleanout of the Foye Building basement.

Tom also acknowledged the loss by death of members he knew and considered friends for years, particularly Wes DeVries. Tom urged everyone to seek out and nurture the collegial relationships unique to Athenaeum membership.

5. **Report of the President:** President Jeff Keefe noted that the foundation for the success of 2024 was established by the Strategic Planning Committee created in 2018 under the leadership of Past President Steve Roberts. In 2020, the board adopted the Committee's recommended Strategic Framework, and in 2021, under Brad Lown's leadership, the Athenaeum bylaws were modified to allow implementation of the Strategic Framework. A key bylaws change created the position of Executive Director, which was assumed by longtime Athenaeum Keeper Tom Hardiman. This change invested in Tom the authority to take charge of executive responsibilities that had fallen to him as the organization grew over the years.

The board was then able to turn its attention to strategic planning. In 2022 President Sally Gayer began this work by establishing a Governance Committee. Over three years, the Committee worked to establish governance policies to guide the board and Executive Director. In 2023, Sally initiated the process of transitioning the Strategic Framework to a Strategic Plan by overseeing updates to the Athenaeum mission, vision and values statements.

At the end of 2024, the Governance Committee submitted to the Executive Committee for adoption a comprehensive Authority Matrix, an essential tool for the board's work. This document summarizes and tracks the Athenaeum board's major governing decisions; ensures that the board is meeting its legal and fiduciary responsibilities; and clarifies who is authorized to advise, recommend, decide, implement and be informed of critical governing decisions. Also in 2024, the board continued to carry the strategic planning process forward by developing a five-year strategic plan, which identified specific goals within nine key categories of organizational activity: member services; financial stability; collections; research library; staff; communications; volunteerism; space utilization; and the board of directors. This plan will be used to steer the organization forward based on data gathered since 2018. In addition to providing direction for the board, it has already been used to define goals and objectives for the Executive Director and staff for the coming year. Annual plans will be developed from the five-year plan, and annual goals will be defined and communicated to staff and volunteers to guide their work.

To better quantify the needs of our members and the organization's capacity to meet those needs, the board also conducted a follow-up member survey in 2024, as well as researcher and volunteer surveys.

The board's goals for 2025 are:

- I. Evaluate the 2024 surveys to determine stakeholders' needs and how well the Athenaeum is meeting them.
- II. Conduct a Staff Summit with the staff and Executive Committee to share the Strategic Plan and incorporate staff feedback into goal-setting and improvement of Athenaeum services.
- III. Implement an annual Past Presidents' Dinner to allow the current President to benefit from these individuals' decades of institutional knowledge.
- IV. Establish a Space Planning Committee to evaluate how we can best use our physical resources to serve our constituents.
- V. Establish a Development Committee within the next two years. The membership will vote on a bylaws change in the coming year to make the Development Committee a standing committee.
- VI. Review the board officers' term lengths to ensure that they are commensurate with implementing the Strategic Plan.

Jeff also provided an update on the work of the city's Historic Archive Committee. Many of the organizations that are stewards of the city's history face storage and operational space shortages, including the Athenaeum, Strawberry Banke, the Portsmouth Historical Society, and the City of Portsmouth (library and city hall collections). Jeff summarized the formation and activity of the Blue Ribbon Committee established by the city to evaluate the feasibility of a shared public/private archive and the needs of its constituents. Last year, the committee began the process of creating a nonprofit 501(c)3 that will operate the archive. Work to bring the archive to fruition will continue in 2025. The Athenaeum's long-range planning will include participation in the shared archive. Decisions about what Athenaeum collections and operations will move to the shared archive will be made as the archive takes shape.

Jeff concluded that, while the Athenaeum’s core mission has remained unchanged over the institution’s 206-year life, nearly everything else has changed: the people, the physical space, strategies for success, our collections, and the rules under which we operate. We can expect continued change at an increasing pace. The board is committed to strategically positioning the Athenaeum to operate from a position of strength in the face of change to ensure that the Athenaeum can thoughtfully adapt and prosper as the world we operate in continues to evolve.

6. **Report of the Nominating Committee:** Committee Chair Peter Lamb presented the following slate of 2025 Officers and Directors for election:

Secretary (one-year term)	Peggy Hodges
Treasurer (one-year term)	Craig Steidle Director
(2 <sup>nd</sup> three-year term)	Susan “Sooky” Lassen
Director (1 <sup>st</sup> three-year term)	Bill Truslow

A motion was made and seconded to approve the slate. Nominations were approved unanimously.

Jeff thanked Peter Lamb for his years of service as Chair of the Nominating Committee.

7. **Recognition of Outgoing Director:** Jeff recognized Elizabeth Farish for her service on the board, in which she filled a one-year vacancy. She was unable to undertake a subsequent three-year board term. Her expertise and no-nonsense decision-making will be missed.
8. **Other Business:** The floor was opened for comments. No other business was brought forward.
9. **Adjournment:** There being no further business, President Jeff Keefe adjourned the meeting at 3:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Peggy Hodges  
Secretary

## In Memoriam 2025

Col. Lionel Ingram	share 4
Vernis Jackson	share 189
David Goodman	former share 242
Russell Grazier	former share 335
Ellen Marie Labrie	Spouse former share 163
Alice Mary McCurdy	Spouse share 331
Howard Oedel	former share 95
Philip Wright	Spouse share 310
Mark Ankarberg	Subscriber

## Portsmouth Athenaeum 2025 Preliminary Financial Summary

REVENUE:	2025 Preliminary	2024 Actual
Proprietor/Subscriber Assessments	\$ 120,612	\$ 118,688
Annual Appeal	\$ 102,425	\$ 74,774
Miscellaneous Contributions	\$ 63,973	\$ 72,910
Investment Income	\$ 162,402	\$ 154,897
Other Operating Income	\$ 114,010	\$ 108,377
Gain (Loss) on Sale of Investments	\$ 83,008	\$ 36,343
Receipts for Special Purposes	\$ 67,074	\$ 53,271
	<hr/>	<hr/>
(including gifts and grants)	\$ 713,504	\$ 619,260
EXPENDITURES:		
Staff & Related Costs	\$ 308,213	\$ 272,225
Collections	\$ 26,264	\$ 19,039
Utilities	\$ 64,411	\$ 61,886
Building, Maintenance & Renovations	\$ 57,875	\$ 45,287
Insurance, Office, Printing	\$ 62,119	\$ 57,223
Depreciation	\$ 58,128	\$ 56,962
Special Purpose Expenditures	\$ 56,553	\$ 42,151
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$ 633,563	\$ 554,773
NET SURPLUS	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
	\$ 79,941	\$ 64,487
ENDOWMENTS & RESERVE ADDITIONS:		
Reserve Additions	\$ 9,150	\$ 9,395
<b>Balance Sheet</b>		
ASSETS:		
Cash, including Savings Reserves	\$ 640,169	\$ 651,204
Invested Funds	\$ 2,483,873	\$ 2,208,474
Accounts Receivable	\$ -	\$ 542
Security Deposit for State St Storage	\$ 3,187	\$ 3,187
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 9,513	\$ 9,893
Fixed Assets	\$ 1,067,681	\$ 1,098,064
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$ 4,204,423	\$ 3,971,364
LIABILITIES:		
Prepaid Proprietor/Subscriber Assessments	\$ 102,925	\$ 76,050
Deferred Income	\$ 1,500	\$ 7,165
Security Deposit	\$ 4,979	\$ 4,889
Accounts Payable	\$ -	\$ 1,746
Fiscal Agent Portsmouth City Archives	\$ 5,748	\$ 306
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$ 115,152	\$ 90,156
NET ASSETS	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
	\$ 4,089,271	\$ 3,881,208

**2026 Slate for Portsmouth Athenaeum Board of Directors** (VOTE for those in **BOLD**)

President (to 2027)	3-year term	Jeff Keefe
Vice-President (to 2027)	3-year term	Jan Dinan
Immediate Past-Pres. (to 2027)	3-year term	Sally Gayer
<b>Secretary (to 2027)</b>	<b>1-year term</b>	<b>Peggy Hodges</b>
<b>Treasurer (to 2027)</b>	<b>1-year term</b>	<b>Craig Steidle</b>
Director (to 2027)	2 <sup>nd</sup> term	Curt Springer
Director (to 2027)	2 <sup>nd</sup> term	Anne Weidman
Director (to 2027)	1st term	Michael Labrie
Director (to 2028)	2nd term	Ann Beattie
Director (to 2028)	2nd term	Susan “Sooky” Lassen
Director (to 2028)	1st term	Bill Truslow
<b>Director (to 2029)</b>	<b>2nd term</b>	<b>Christine Friese</b>
<b>Director (to 2029)</b>	<b>2nd term</b>	<b>Alan Gold</b>
<b>Director (to 2029)</b>	<b>2nd term</b>	<b>Donald Margeson</b>

---

Slate to vote at 2026 Annual Meeting is in **BOLD**

Prepared by the Nominating Committee (October, 2025)

Andrew Bagley, Chair

Peter Lamb

Anne Weidman

Elizabeth Farish

Sayer Gayer

## Report of the Admissions Committee 2025

In 2025, the Admissions Committee met eight times and approved 28 of 29 applications to become Athenaeum Subscribers. Each application was reviewed by all committee members and each applicant was interviewed, usually in-person, by one committee member. The Athenaeum just missed a third consecutive year of approving thirty or more applications.

### New Proprietors:

**Amelia Jean Mitchell Davis** is a retail store proprietor in Kittery. She is a lifelong seacoast resident deeply involved in the arts and culture. She lives in Kittery Foreside and is endorsed by Jon Wykoff, Peter Lamb, and Bill Truslow.

**Ian Ingram** is He is requesting a share transfer of #4 from the estate of his father, Col. Lionel Ingram. His background is in ocean sciences, wildlife conservation, and animal behavior. He is endorsed by Donald Margeson, Douglas Aykroyd, and David Sanderson

### New Subscribers:

**John Bielagus** lives across the street from the Moffatt-Ladd House. He is an attorney. He is interested in reading and research. He is endorsed by Stephen Barndollar, Phil Von Hemert, and Sooky Lassen.

**Mel Blake** lives in the condos just behind Popovers. He is a former banker who started a new career as a talent agent. He is a history buff, especially in the early days of New England and is endorsed by Susan Nordlinger, Curt Springer, and Charlie Wu.

**Hunter Carey** not quite 25 years old. He lives at the junction of Richards Avenue and Middle Street. He graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy and then from Brown University. He is a private equity advisor. He is interested history and Prescott Park, and the Athenaeum., and is endorsed by Michael Labrie, Ted Alex, and Anne Wiedman.

**David Curtin** was born in Ireland and went to Uni in Ireland and London. He lives on New Castle Island. He is a petroleum geologist for Exxon. He has been a board member of two maritime museums. He is endorsed by Katie Maggio, Andrew Bagley, and Ken Goldman.

**Richard DiNapoli** is a Psychologist who is new to town and is interested in reading about its unique qualities and history. He lives in Portsmouth, and is endorsed by Katie Maggio, Dudley Dudley, and Andrew Bagley.

**Dr. Charles “Chip” Dye** is the owner of InSyCh Training, LLC. He is interested in boat building, historical research, and tutoring mathematics. He lives in Portsmouth with his wife Jennifer, and is endorsed by Sooky Lassen, Sally Gayer, and David Falck.

**Meganne Fabrega** is an agent and editor and freelance writer in Portsmouth. She has strong interests in libraries and historic preservation. She is endorsed by Maryellen Burke, John Mayer, and Christine Friese.

**Tracey Gamache** lives just north of Rye Harbor. She has a BA and MA from UNH and is a private tutor. She has been very involved with the Bedford, NH library and does a lot of volunteer work in Rye, including the Rye library. and is endorsed by Sooky Lassen, Kathy Logan, and Kathleen Boduch.

**Jason Goodrich** is a Real Estate agent. He is interested in history, Portsmouth, and ancestry. He lives in Lyman, and is endorsed by Peter Weeks, Alan Gold, and John Maher.

**Michael Graf** is an architect and builder, and son of Proprietor Frank Graf. He is interested in architecture, arts, music, and the great outdoors. He lives in Portsmouth with his spouse Kristina Logan, and is endorsed by Sooky Lassen, Marjorie Smith, and Eleonore Sanderson.

**Ken Hale** is The member services manager at Gather and is interested in gardening, architecture, and history. He lives in Portsmouth with his spouse, “Jay” Balomenos, and is endorsed by Sooky Lassen, John Rice, and Ellie Sanderson.

**Cynthia Hoonhout** is a Greenland Conservation Commission member. She is interested in preservation of natural and historical resources, the history of the region, and native culture. She lives in Greenland with her husband Jonathan, and is endorsed by Sandra Wiese, Mark Hubbert, and Mary Beth Herbert.

**Heather Krans** is an attorney specializing in family law. She is interested in maps, map making, painting, knitting, hiking, dogs, carpentry, and music. She lives in Exeter with her spouse Keith Weston, MD, and is endorsed by Tom Burleigh, Kate Murray, and Gary Hicks.

**Stuart M. Leavenson** is a retail executive with interests in local history and community. He lives in New Castle with his spouse, Donna, and is endorsed by Jay Gibson, Alan Robinson, and Davis Splaine.

**Kimberly Lorencic** retired from the University of NH. She is interested in travel, gardening, crafts, walks/hikes, photography, cooking, reading and entertaining. She lives in Portsmouth with her husband Harry, and is endorsed by Sooky Lassen, Judy Nerbonne, and Ken Goldman.

**Donata “D” Luz** is the Development Director for the Gundalow Company and is interested in non-profit work, out-doors, the environment, the Piscataqua Region, and maritime history. She lives in Rye Beach with her spouse, Mark, and is endorsed by Jan Dinan, John Lamson, and Jeff Bolster.

**Alexis Reishus** is an agent a Product Marketing Manager at Infosec and is also Co-Owner and Marketing Director at Triad Winery.. She is interested in wine-making, musical theater, reading, writing, and running. She is endorsed by Katie Maggie, Andrew Bagley, and Brylye Collins

**Thomas M. Rossi** is a pharmaceutical researcher. He is interested in auto racing, biking, ham radio, and reading. He lives in Portsmouth with his wife Kathleen, and is endorsed by Phil Von Hemert, Andy Jaffe, and Steve Barndollar.

**Kelly Sanders** lives in Barrington and is requesting a share transfer of #342 from her mother. Here background is in teaching, including being a school Principal. She is currently working for a local company that provides retirement planning services. Her parents were members of the Athenaeum and she now has time to “carry on the family tradition..”, She is endorsed by Susan Lassen, David Ewing, and Charles Bickford.

**Guy Spiers** is a retired semiconductor engineer. He is interested in piano, playing, performing, teaching, and tuning. He lives in Portsmouth with his wife Elizabeth, and is endorsed by Sooky Lassen, Jeff Bolster, and Andrew Moore.

**Michael Steinberg** is retired as owner of Relyco in Dover. He is interested in preserving and remembering our past (PHS class of ‘72). He lives in Rye with his wife Laurie, and is endorsed by Maryellen Burke, Curt Springer, and Gerry Duffy.

Ed Caylor, Chair

## Art and Artifacts Collection Committee Annual Report 2025

Most of the work of Art and Artifacts was centered on the care of the collection, which, of course, is a never-ending project and involves cleaning and minor repairs. We continued to monitor the temperature and humidity in the buildings to aid in the environmental care of the collections.

There was some excitement when the portrait of George Jaffrey IV fell off the wall of the Reading Room. Fortunately the painting came straight down and rested on the bookcase below. Since that wall is curved, there was concern that it might happen again. John Mayer devised a hanging system for both that portrait and the one of Mrs. George Jaffrey on the opposite wall. The paintings should now be secure for a long time to come.

We loaned the Smuttynose ax to the Maine Historical Society for their exhibit, "Notorious: Maine Crime in the Public Eye, 1690-1940." It will return in January 2026.

We received several gifts to the collection in 2025:

- An early 18<sup>th</sup>-century portrait of a man believed to be connected to the family of Rev. Arthur Browne. Thanks to a grant from the Thaxter Foundation, it will be cleaned next year. Gift of Stephen Boutcher.
- A large charger with painted decoration by Celia Thaxter in 1882. Gift of Dorothy Johnson in memory of her mother, Louise June Fletcher.
- The plaster bust of Rev. Charles Burroughs. This bust had long been on loan from St. John's Church, but the church has now made it a gift.
- A cartoon by Cuzin Richard. Gift of Richard Smith

The members of the committee are Elizabeth Aykroyd, Douglas Aykroyd, Alan Bennett, Pat Breslin, Judy Groppa, Cathy Hodson, Rebecca Mitchell, Tara Vose Raiselis, Carolyn Roy, Sandra Rux, Elaine Tefft, Hilda Versluys, and Tom Hardiman, Keeper.

Elizabeth Aykroyd  
Chair

# Report of the Library Committee 2025

The Library Committee supports the work of Athenaeum staff and committees in fulfillment of the Portsmouth Athenaeum’s mission to “welcome all who seek knowledge to experience culture and share in the history of the Piscataqua region so that together we may find meaning in the past to illuminate the present and the future”.

Over the course of the year, the Athenaeum staff and volunteers supported work on three major projects as follows:

### **Deaccessioning Off-site Items:**

With the goal of creating a more cohesive collection and decreasing the volume of off-site storage, approximately 1,000 books were deaccessioned that were either out-of-date or outside the scope of the collection’s priorities. Librarian Robin Silva did an excellent job of leading a collaborative process by sharing her recommendations and decision-making process with the Library Committee throughout the project.

### **Book Sale:**

In October the Athenaeum hosted a book sale to find new homes for the deaccessioned items. The sale, the first in 10 years, was successful in creating community goodwill and generating approximately \$1,750 in revenue. A special thank you to the Athenaeum staff for moving the books to the off-site storage facility and for all their publicity and preparations. Thank you to all our volunteers: Penny Bartko, Richard Candee, Ed Caylor, Lynne Crocker, Kerry Cronin, Ellen Fineberg, Cliff Hodgdon, Linda Johnson, Kimberly Lorencic, Barbara Van Buskirk and Gerry Ward. Lastly, thanks to all members who supported this effort with either book donations or by shopping the sale.

### **Newspaper Project:**

In an additional effort to decrease the Athenaeum’s off-site holdings, staff and volunteers have been actively inventorying the newspaper collection in search of duplicates or missing/damaged issues with the goal of partnering with another institution to have some of the newspaper runs digitized. We are grateful to the following volunteers who have assisted with this project: Deb Child, Lynne Crocker, Donna Figler, Paula Lewinski, Mark Hubbert, June Spezzano and Sherry Wood.

A special thanks to our very dedicated Athenaeum staff and 2025 library and archival volunteers: Phil Carling, Nancy Hammond, and Joan Hammond.

### *Research Library*

Archivist Katy Sternberger reported the below reference statistics for 2025:

#### **Reference Sheets (in-person & phone) - January to December 2025**

Nonmembers	2534	85.3%
Members	438	14.7%
<b>Total interactions</b>	<b>2972</b>	

Gallery visitors	1138	43.0%	
Building visitors	994	37.6%	
In-person reference	515	19.5%	
<b>Total in-person interactions</b>	<b>2647</b>		
Phone reference	63	21.6%	
Other phone interactions	228	78.4%	
<b>Total phone interactions</b>	<b>291</b>		
<b>Asana (online) - January to December 2024</b>			
Research + Feedback + Acquisitions	184	45.5%	
Images	220	54.5%	
<b>Total online interactions</b>	<b>404</b>		
<hr/>			
<b>All interactions (in-person + phone + online) - January to December 2025</b>			
In-person	2647	79.2%	
Phone	291	8.7%	
Online	404	12.1%	
<b>Total all interactions</b>	<b>3342</b>		
<hr/>			
<b>Reference-related interactions - January to December 2025</b>			
In-person reference	515	52.4%	
Phone reference	63	6.4%	
Online reference	404	41.1%	
<b>Total reference</b>	<b>982</b>	29.4%	of all interactions

### *Circulating Library*

Librarian Robin Silva reported the below statistics for 2025:

- 232 books added to the collection (131 purchased and 101 donated), which represents an increase of 32.6% items from 2024.
- 689 books circulated, a decrease of -5.7% as compared with last year's totals.
- 64,337 catalog searches, a decrease of approximately -5.54%.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kerry Cronin, Chair  
Library Committee

## Report of the Performance Committee 2025

The Performance Committee of the Athenaeum arranges musical concerts, poetry readings, and other performances of the highest quality for its members, and for the wider Seacoast public. This year the committee fulfilled its mission with a program of great richness that set new artistic standards.

We take this year-end opportunity to offer our profound thanks to all those friends of the Athenaeum whose contributions supported an outstanding season of music and other cultural offerings.

### ArtsAthenaeum Concerts

These concerts are designed primarily for members and friends of the Athenaeum. They include a variety of musical genres in order to bring variety to the program.

Our first concert on April 6 was given by **Jeff Warner**, an outstanding educator and performer of folk music well known to the Seacoast community. He gave an enlightening presentation of music with a New England flavor on a variety of instruments to an enthusiastic, overflowing audience in the Research Library. It was a wonderful start to our concert year.

A highlight of our spring season was a concert by members of the **Handel + Haydn Society** presented at St. John's Church on April 26. This was the second time they have performed for us in recent years, and a testimony to our strengthening partnership. Five of their leading instrumentalists and a soprano performed a superb selection of works by Bach, Vivaldi, Handel and others. Over 150 members and friends of the Athenaeum, together with many Seacoast classical music lovers, heard them play, a record attendance. The large turnout for these concerts provides firm testimony of the value our programs bring to cultural enrichment in New Hampshire and beyond.

Every spring we schedule a Memorial Concert for proprietors of the Athenaeum who died during the preceding year. Indeed, our committee was founded over 30 years ago precisely to present such a tribute. Given the relatively large number of decedents, eight in all, we held the event at St. John's Church on May 29. We were delighted to welcome back as our soloist **Geoffrey Wieting**, an organist of great distinction who gave an appropriately elegiac performance of pieces by Bach, Mendelssohn and others. These complemented the tributes read by his father, our committee member William Wieting.

As has become customary, we concluded the ArtsAthenaeum program with a Holiday Concert at South Church on 11 December. The concert represents a gift from the Athenaeum to the Portsmouth community and is warmly appreciated by all. This year we invited a woodwind ensemble to play for us, the **Boston Bay Quartet** led by Camden Ward. They presented a novel program of music that began with traditional carols and concluded with other popular holiday selections. The audience of 80 people included all ages, several young families among them, thus fulfilling our objective of reaching out to a wider range of music lovers. Ferocious cold

weather and gale-force winds resulted in a lower attendance than in previous years but the generosity of those attending was undiminished so that donations on the night covered most of the cost of the event.

### **ArtsAthenaeum Poetry Reading**

Last year we inaugurated a program of poetry readings to expand our array of cultural offerings. This year on May 18 Oliver de la Paz presented selected readings of his poems to an engaged audience in the Reading Room. De la Paz is the James N. and Sarah L. O'Reilly Barrett Professor in Creative Writing at the College of the Holy Cross and Poet Laureate of Worcester, Massachusetts. Well-known across New England and nationally, he is widely published. His poetry is noted for its immediate emotional appeal. His readings were a welcome contribution to what we plan will become a regular item in the Athenaeum's calendar. The event was followed by a reception and book sale/signing.

### **Portsmouth Athenaeum Chamber Music Series (PACM)**

Our regular chamber music series was generously supported by 52 patrons, numerous subscribers and many individual audience members this year. This support enabled us to put on a full program of concerts from August through November. The concerts were as follows:

- 24 August, Sunday, **Neave Piano Trio**, Kittery Dance Hall
- 28 September, Sunday, **Balourdet String Quartet**, South Church
- 12 October, Sunday, **Terra String Quartet**, South Church
- 9 November, Sunday, **Piano and Cello Duo** (Jessica Osborne, YiQun Xu), St. John's

The musicians greatly enjoy presenting these concerts to our appreciative audience who, in turn, delight in listening to the music. Consequently, the ensembles ask to return year after year and our supporters add their support to these requests. We need to bring new talent forward each year, however, to ensure that these concerts remain fresh. This year we introduced the Terra String Quartet to the Seacoast. They performed superbly and so will no doubt feature in a future program.

Our enthusiastic, loyal and engaged audiences averaged 70-90 per concert. After a decline following the Covid19 epidemic, we have reached a new plateau of audience numbers. We hope to grow this number in future seasons. Meanwhile, we continued our tradition of offering a reception at the Athenaeum after the concerts to thank our patrons and to give them an opportunity to meet the musicians.

### **Finances**

As in past years the PACM concert series was highly successful financially. Total income received was \$19,061, against expenses of \$15,822, so ending with a positive balance of \$3,239. The Athenaeum provides a budget of \$5,000 each year for the ArtsAthenaeum series. Generous donations for this series, however, amounted to \$6,886, thus covering 77% of the outlay of \$8,889 for these events. Taking both sets of income and expenses together, and after

offsetting in full the ArtsAthenaeum subvention, at the end of the year we transferred a surplus of \$1,235 to the Athenaeum.

### **The Work of the Committee**

The Performance Committee has met every month from February through December to organize these concerts and other events. The 13 members of the committee were Tatiana Czaplicki, Past President Sally Gayer, Kristin Goodwillie, Sharon Griffin, Bruce MacIntyre, Andrew Moore, John Moore, Janice Murphy, Susan Noerdlinger, Dan Pettengill, William Wieting, and Sooky Lassen and Keeper Tom Hardiman both *ex officio*. The committee is dedicated to ensuring that we present programs of the highest quality to our audiences of Athenaeum members, friends, and lovers of music and literature across the Seacoast. I thank the members of the committee for their dedication, enthusiasm and hard work throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted.

Andrew Moore  
Chair

## Report of the Publications Committee 2025

The Athenaeum newsletter, edited by committee Chairman Sherry Wood, continued to inform and entertain our membership and Friends of the Athenaeum. A total of 16 authors penned 38 articles and contributed 25 images. Designer Tom Lynch put it all together in an appealing package.

Thanks go to: Dick Adams, Ceal Anderson, Irene Bush, Ed Caylor, Mike Dunbar, Judy Groppa, Executive Director Tom Hardiman, President Jeff Keefe; Special Projects Librarian Susan Kindstedt, Tom Lynch, Janice Murphy, Librarian Robin Silva, Photographic Collections Manager James Smith, former Assistant Librarian/Cataloger June Spezzano, Archivist Katy Sternberger, Office Manager Stephanie Hobbs Tabit, and Research Librarian Jessica Zaricki.

There were also 12 monthly At the Athenaeum columns in the Portsmouth Herald ([seacoastonline.com](http://seacoastonline.com)), ranging in subject from a century of change on Sagamore Creek; the Athenaeum's rocky history and resurgence; a timeline of Portsmouth's parking problems; a lost (and found) ballerina; a reverend, a slave and the Black Heritage Trail of NH; the Athenaeum's lecture series and cultural events; a photo legend; and two exhibits — the first featuring Portsmouth lunch history and diners, the second focusing on Revolutionary War patriot and poet Jonathan Mitchel Sewall. The authors include Dick Adams, Mike Dunbar, Tom Hardiman, James Smith and Sherry Wood, with research assists from James Smith, Cliff Hodgdon, Robin Silva, Judy Groppa and Nancy Hammond.

Newsletter deadlines are March 1, June 1, and Oct. 1. Contributions and queries may be directed to Sherry Wood at [sixswords@aol.com](mailto:sixswords@aol.com).

Respectfully submitted,

Publications Committee Chairman Sherry Wood

## Report of the Social Committee 2025

The Social Committee is currently comprised of 11 members, and is responsible for hosting the Annual Meeting, two New Member Teas, the Annual Summer Picnic, and the Annual Holiday Party. The committee provides food and beverages for all events, designs the holiday invitation, and decorates the Athenaeum for the party. In addition, committee members interact with the Seacoast Science Center events coordinator to organize the picnic, and work with the outside caterer, White Apron, for The Holiday Party.

There were 8 official meetings of the Social Committee in 2025, in addition to supplemental event-related activities.

**New Member Teas:** the goal of these Teas is to welcome new members to the Athenaeum, introduce them to committee chairs, and encourage them to participate in Athenaeum activities. In an attempt to boost attendance, the Social Committee held the Teas on Sunday afternoons this year, and that proved to be successful.

**Annual Picnic:** was held at the Seacoast Science Center on August 26th. It was a beautiful evening, and was attended by 159 members. Once again, Athenaeum member Melissa Walls, the owner of Maeve's Mobile Cocktail Hour and a certified bartender, generously donated her services.

**Annual Holiday Party:** despite the cold, the sold out event at the Athenaeum on December 5th, was filled with members in tuxedos and festive holiday attire. With the help of Athenaeum staff, the Social Committee was able to beautifully decorate the space and make it merry without interfering with operating hours. White Apron catered the delicious passed hors d'oeuvres and, as always, did a great job navigating the crowds. Social Committee members augmented the White Apron food with tables filled with shrimp cocktail, smoked salmon, cheese and charcuterie boards, and various desserts. Douglas Aykroyd and his dedicated band of wine stewards kept spirits flowing throughout the evening.

On a sad note, the Social Committee lost one of its longtime members, Mark Ankerberg, who passed away in October. We will miss him and the extraordinary culinary contributions he provided for Social Committee events. RIP Mark.

Committee members: Kathleen Logan, Mary Beth Herbert, Cindy Knapp, Douglas Aykroyd, Elizabeth Aykroyd, Jan Dinan, Cliff Hodgson, Curt Springer, Sandra Smith-Wiese, Ceal Anderson.

## Special Collections Report 2025

As a research library, the key purpose of the Athenaeum is to collect, protect, and make available to the public original materials documenting the history of Portsmouth and its environs. We also encourage institutional deposits and accept gifts of family papers, photographs, ephemera and other materials.

When we can afford to, we also purchase such materials to bring them back home, although our modest budget does not allow for much of that. For lack of funds this year we missed a really wonderful 18<sup>th</sup> century document signed by all the local members of the New Hampshire Committee of Correspondence.

We did, however, buy the papers of the Woodbury, deRochemont and Kimball families (1810-1953) especially proprietor Charles Levi Woodbury, the Nutter family and their descendant deRochemont family of Newington. We also bought a letter by artist and future guidebook author Sarah Haven Foster regarding the local Sunday School Anniversary, 1838.

As usual gifts by individuals, often Proprietors, make up the bulk of our manuscript accessions. Kinley Gregg continues to find interesting letters and not only gifts them, but transcribes them for us. Jake Elwell continues to add images and ephemera of Portsmouth, Erica Dodge gave a ledger of Daniel Fernald (1800-1855), Peter Lamb an 1804 writ of attachment, and Deborah Patch Wilson an 1808 medical ledger of Robert Treadwell.

Barbara Rimkunas donated Leavitt Family Papers (1825 -1894), Teresa Picard gave us James A. Clarkson genealogical papers (1885-19820 and Tamara Tate gave Edward C. Ewan papers (1894-1914).

We are totally indebted to our fine Athenaeum staff: archivist Katy Sternberger and Special Projects Librarian Susan Kindstedt. They help find, organize, catalog, the collections for the Athenaeum excellent online catalog.

Ally McDonough (intern) processed the Chase and Bigelow family papers. Heidi Ricker (volunteer) created partial box and folder listing for the Seacoast NH LGBT History Project collection. Mary Saunders (intern) processed the Halliburton family papers and Eli Vannata (volunteer) reviewed and indexed transcriptions for the Louise & Jack McGee and Elizabeth "Betty" (Badger) Pennington oral history interviews/

While the Special Collections Committee does not oversee general library book collecting, we do collect rare books, pamphlets, and ephemera. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our excellent Librarian Robin Silva for her extraordinary management of the digital catalog on our Athenaeum website.

Photographic Collections Manager James Smith has become, by dint of his many years of service and keen visual memory, the key person for those seeking information about local properties. For many, he is the face of the Athenaeum's public access. Besides his weekly blast and continued efforts to manage out architectural drawings and put all our photograph

collections online for digital access, James also manages great volunteers scanning our photographs.

These include Mark Hubbert and Paula Lewinski on J.D. Lincoln negatives; Peter Randall on Douglas Armsden negatives; Andy Jaffee on the Portsmouth High School photos; and Linda Benton on the Star Island Corporation photos. James Shanley continues his dedicated work on rehousing the Armsden negatives. Donna Figler transcribed and researched the names of about 50 Victorian women identified in a photo collage, believed to be by Albert Gregory. Donna's genealogical research will be used to create biographical records of these 19th century Portsmouth women.

Among the largest photographic gifts this year were 193 Henry Peyser glass plate negatives from the Peyser family loaned for scanning, 62 slides, a dozen photos and a matchbook cover donated by James Smith, dozens of Portsmouth school class photos and negatives purchased from Thom Hindle, and a collection of photos and ephemera of local musical entertainments given by “Cuzin Richard” Smith. Perhaps the most interesting gift was the 11 snapshots of the renovation of 499 Marcy Street taken in 1992 by project carpenter Tom Hardiman.

Finally, I thank Tom Hardiman, Kinley Gregg, Dennis Robinson, and Dane Morrison for all their good suggestions and advice.

Richard M. Candee  
Chair, Special Collections Committee