###### The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.

###### Annual Meeting

**September 26, 2021**

###### AGENDA

**1:00 pm - 1:30 pm Annual Business Meeting for Members**

**President’s Report**

**Approval of Minutes - 2020 Annual Meeting**

**Treasurer’s Reports**

**Committee Reports**

 ***Communications and Outreach***

 ***Business Development***

 ***Building and Grounds***

 ***Special Projects – Heritage Center***

 ***Audit Committee***

**Beekeeper’s Report - Allen Valli, Marci LaVoie,**

 **Tom Kaminski**

**Nominating Committee Report**

 **Election of Officers & Directors**

**1:30 pm Adjournment, Annual Business Meeting**

**1:30 pm – 2:30 pm Guest Speaker, Jon Roe, Local Historian**

 ***“Count Hans Munchow: Millionaire – or Not?”***

*Jon Roe will present the results of his*

 *research into one of the most mysterious characters who once owned Valley Falls Farm.*

President’s Report

For the period July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

This past year was our 20th year of ownership of Valley Falls Farm. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, our opportunities to welcome the public to the farm were limited. However, we thank you, our supporters, for your continuing support even during this difficult time.

Early in the spring we decided to cancel the summer tours with the uncertainty of the Covid variant, but we thought it would be safe to go ahead with Artists Day in August, 2021, since it is an outdoor event. Unfortunately, Hurricane Ida changed those plans also.

In spite of the circumstances, we continued our focus on maintaining the historical integrity of Valley Falls Farm, and keeping the most scenic corner in Vernon in ship-shape condition. Sadly, we had to remove the old oak tree in the middle of the field. Two-thirds of the tree was dead and presented a potential danger. We were able to save a slice of the tree which we’ll display in the Heritage Center.

We thank our Board of Directors for their ongoing dedication to Valley Falls Farm. We also thank the members who have put their precious time into the Farm, especially the Vernon Garden Club and Betty Wardrop for maintenance of the herb and flower gardens, and Ron Levesque for weedwhacking, tree work, and willingness to help whenever needed.

Financially, we are debt-free and in excellent shape. The two rental units in the farmhouse provide a stable source of income, and we have great support from you, our members. The bequest we received last year has significantly increased the value of our Endowment Fund. The fund has ensured the long term financial health of the Friends.

Moving forward, we look forward to the opening of the Heritage Center in the spring as an addition to the special attractions in the Valley Falls area.

Finally, I wish you and your families a safe year ahead as we all continue to deal with the pandemic. We look forward to the time when we can safely welcome you back to Valley Falls Farm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Joe King, President*

Secretary’s Report

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of September 27, 2020**

President Joe King opened the meeting on the lawn of the Red Barn at 1:06 PM. He welcomed attendees and reminded everyone that our public events during this 20th year of FVF ownership had been completely curtailed by COVID-19 restrictions, except for this Annual Meeting. He listed many of the improvements made at the Farm during our years of ownership and thanked members for their generous support and many hours of volunteer service to the organization. He wished everyone a safe and virus-free 2020, and projected that hopefully, in the year ahead we will see the opening of the “Heritage Center.”

The minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting were read and accepted in a motion made by Ann Letendre, seconded by Bob Letendre. Treasurer, Bob Letendre, summarized the major financial highlights of FVF for FY 2019-20, which can also be found on page 9 of the Annual Report. He said a bequest from member Jean Bostrum’s estate has greatly augmented our present and future stability, as will our Designated Fund at Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, now at $14,501. Current assets and liabilities are delineated in the financial pages of the Annual Report. He thanked members for their support as the organization continues to be debt-free. Bob also thanked the audit committee for their work in auditing his monthly reports for FY July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020.

Committee Reports followed. Ann reported that we have 172 members and contributors. Buildings and grounds are being maintained and upgraded to prepare for the conversion of the stable into the “Heritage Center.” Displays are being put together, and vintage items culled from the various buildings have been arranged in exhibits to tell the story of this “Gentleman’s Farm” that emerged through the various periods and owners on the scenic hill that is now Valley Falls Farm.

Bob Letendre made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:40 PM. Maryann seconded his motion, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jean Merz, Secretary*

Committee Reports

For the period July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

**Community Outreach**

Co-Chairmen Karin James and Ginny Gingras

Our newsletter is published twice during the year. About 300 people receive the mailed copy. All previous issues are available on our website under “Archives”. Our Facebook page is updated as new items of interest arise. An e-newsletter is published about four times a year. The Annual Report for FY 2019-2020 was mailed to members in the fall. Due to Covid, we did not hold our Summer Tours. A limited Annual Meeting was held outdoors September 27, 2020. We continue our membership in the Vernon Volunteers Collaborative, a group of 12 local volunteer organizations that meet quarterly to exchange information and share resources.

### Business Development

Co-chairmen Ann Letendre and Joe King

Membership: As of June 30, 2021, we have a total of 165 members and contributors, down 6 from the previous fiscal year. This number is comprised of 141 members (individuals or families), 16 contributors (individuals or families), 7 contributions from Hoppin’ Hodges Road Race runners, and one memorial contribution. Our generous supporters are listed on pages 6 and 7 in this Report.

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Fundraising: This year we received a total of $12,925 in dues and contributions, and $1,670 in contributions to the endowment fund, for a total of $14,595, an increase from the previous fiscal year of $5,343. The increase was mainly due to a generous $5,000 memorial contribution made in memory of Irene Gay, a former Board member. A bench was placed in Valley Falls Park in her memory. The annual “Hoppin’ Hodges” Easter 5K road race, held in memory of Jim Hodges, was held virtually again this year due to the pandemic. We are grateful to Janit Romayko Hodges, who organized the virtual race.

Grant Applications: A small grant application was submitted to the State Historic Preservation

Office (SHPO) for utilities support during the pandemic. An award of $1,000 was received.

**Report of the Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee members reviewed the detailed financial reports for the fiscal year of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. The reports were compiled and distributed to the Committee by the Treasurer. Committee members have found them to be in accordance with all bank records and income and expense reports, and have confirmed that finding with written signature.

Respectfully submitted,

*Maryann Levesque and Tom Kaminski*

**Buildings and Grounds Committee**

Co-Chairpersons, Bob Letendre and Maryann Levesque

Building maintenance:

* A new underground electric line was installed by Rock-Vern Electric Co. to power the stable
* New wiring and lighting systems were installed in the stable
* Debris and old items were cleaned out from the piggery, ice house, and manure shed as part of Heritage Center preparations
* The smoke and CO alarm system in farm house was upgraded by Rock-Vern Electric Co.
* The water treatment system in farm house was upgraded.
* Boilers in the farm house were serviced for winter duty.

Grounds maintenance:

* Lawns and fields were mowed by Adam’s Lawn Service
* A large oak tree was removed from the field due to diseased limbs by Distinctive Tree Service
* Cold frame gardens were cared for by Vernon Garden Club and Betty Wardrop
* Bee hives were maintained and serviced by Allen Valli, Tom Kaminski, and Marci LaVoie. Four hives were lost over the winter months.
* Field and swale trimming was performed by Ron Levesque

**Special Projects**

Co-Chairmen Ann Letendre and Maryann Levesque

*Heritage Center*

Work continued on development of the Heritage Center, for which we have a $150,000 grant from the State of Connecticut. As of June 30, 2021 we have expended $123,520 of the grant funds. The major work on the facility this year was lighting installation and an underground electrical line. Design of display panels was initiated. Research and the sorting, cleaning and collection of display items has continued.

*Valley Falls Park Fields*

The Friends initiated a project to update the management plan for maintaining the fields in Valley Falls Park. The Friends had prepared the original plan in 1995. Former Conservation Commission chairmen, Tom Ouellette and Sheryl McMullen, assisted with the project. Jane Seymour, DEEP Wildlife Biologist, provided guidance with invasive plant removal, and with establishing mowing schedules at appropriate times of the year.

**Nominating Committee**

Karin James, Chairman; Nancy Strong, Ann Letendre

The Committee nominates the following officers and directors for a two-year term beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2023:

Officers: Karin James (president); Maryann Levesque (vice-president); Nancy Steffens (secretary); Bob Letendre (Treasurer).

Directors: Ann Letendre, Joe King, Ginny Gingras, Jean Merz

**Donors to the Friends of Valley Falls – July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021**

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|  | **BENEFACTORS** |  |
| Joseph Gay | Betsy Glenn |  |
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|  | **PATRONS** |  |
| Richard & Karin James | Scott & Deborah Livingston | Jon & Jan Roe |
| Jack Summers |  |  |
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|  | **SUPPORTERS** |  |
| Fred & Cheryl Arzt | Michael Brennan | Carol Burke |
| Robert & Donna Caplin | Linda Cromwell | Gary D. Cyr |
| Milton & Judith Doremus | Suzanne Dunlap | The Gottiers |
| Tom & Kim Griswold | David & Susan Herrmann | Ray & Wendy Hollworth |
| Karen James-Stebbins | George & Marge Kelly | David Kemp |
| Devinder Khalsa & Junko Endo | Robert & Ann Letendre | Maryann & Ron Levesque |
| Ellen Marmer, MD | Julie Martens | Tom & Susan Mason |
| The McMullens | David McQuade | Andrew & Joanne Myer |
| Nancy Orlowski | Paula Passaretti | Gordon & Amy Paterson |
| Ken & Jane Peacock | Bill & Naomi Pomper | Stephen Repetto |
| Andy & Diane Rhoades | Michael & Marcelle Ringbloom | Nancy Strong |
| Nancy B. Swanton | Kathleen Sweeney | Wendy Wanchak |
| Michael & Phyllis Winkler |  |  |
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|  | **FRIENDS** |  |
| Kyle Abraham | Tom & Julie Aitkin | Denise Anamani |
| Michael & Judy Annati | George Arthur | William V. Ashe, Jr. |
| Ellen Ballos | Phyllis Baltaks | Malcolm & Susan Barlow |
| Susan & Arthur Beirn | Don Bellingham | Chip & Madeline Bellows |
| Margaret Bendzinski | Roger & Rachael Blais | Ann L Bonney |
| Bill & Susan Breslau | Jane Burr | Ronald Burr |
| Hubert & Consuelo Bush, Jr | M. Byram | Brett Capshaw &Mark Statchen |
| Bob & Linda Carlson | Jeff & Mary Carlson | Carol Chappel |
| Joe & Audrey Courtney | Michael & Mary Cross | Stan & Judie Culy |
| William & Joan Curtis | Cathy Dacey | Thomas Didio |
| Bruce Dinnie | Mr & Mrs Patrick Dubel | Donald Edwards |
| Tony Esposito | Gail Faherty | Tim Gallup |
| Marilyn G. Ganley | Garden Barn Nursery | Norman & Donna Gessay |
| Virginia Gingras | Viviane Guerette | Jim & Susan Gusy |
| Richard & Carole Guttman | David & Carol Hatch | Robert & Betty Hathaway |
| Dennis Himes | David Hiskes | Ruth Hoffman |
| George Hogan | Jean Hopkins | John Horan |
|  | **FRIENDS** |  |
| Shirley Howe | Robert & Lorraine Hurd | Lisa & Jim Irish |
| Claire Janowski | Dorothy Kaminski | Thomas Kaminski & Marcelle Lavoie |
| George & Christine Keenan | Gladys Kielb | Sally Knisel & Sarah Myers |
| Elizabeth Kopper | John & Sara Koziol | Robert & Suzanne Langone |
| Robert & Paula Lathrop | Daniel J. LeBlanc | Lisa Letendre |
| Donald Lewie | Kathleen Lynch | Carolyn Manson |
| Barbara W. McCarthy | Garry & Deb McConville | James & Karen McWalter |
| Joyce Melia | Jean Merz | Lisa Moody |
| Sylvia Morgan | Brian Motola | Mary Moynihan-Downes |
| Barbara P. M. Muldoon | David Murphy | Charles Musick |
| Ann Noel | William & Mildred Oliphant | Gene & Bobbie Orne |
| Tom & Lisa Ouellette | Kathleen Perlitz | Diane Peskurich |
| Ken Platt | Glen E. Potter | Robert Poulios |
| Karl & Karen Prewo | Ettore & Laura Raccagni | Irene Raiche |
| Matt Reiser | Lori Riley | Joanne A. Rose |
| Blanche Ross | Marjorie Sanborn | Elaine Shattuck |
| Paul Shimer | Edward & Carole Slattery | Joel & Gail Sokolov |
| Lorraine Staley | Joe & Ann Staniunus | Marilyn Steele |
| Nancy Steffens & Bob Felber | Dennis & Sally Sullivan | Tom & Lynn Sweet |
| Sharon & Frank Tarala | Ann Tremont | Michael & Madeline Turk |
| Allen A. Valli, Jr | Margaret Verdon | Charlene Walsh |
| Carolyn Waltman | Bill & Betty Wardrop | Rich & Mary Lou White |
| Deborah Wilson | Bette Wolff | Lynne M. Yampanis |
| Ed Yergeau | Anonymous |  |
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|  | **Benefactors $500 - $1000****Patrons $250 - $ 499****Supporters $100 - $ 249****Friends $ 5 - $ 99** |  |

Our Strategic Plan

In 2011 the Friends hired organizational consultants “Musevue 360” to provide direction and guidance for our future. Here’s a summary of their key recommendations, actions we’ve taken to date, and the work we have ahead.

* **Create a strong visual brand that the community readily identifies. Review the FVF’s logo, graphics, etc. and investigate options for improvement.**

We rolled out a new logo in 2014 using the iconic stable as an identifiable visual brand. A large banner with the new logo was made for display at local events.

* **Communicate better with target audiences and inspire support. Investigate options for improving the FVF’s web site and internet presence.**

We continued to improve the website, and to publish e-news, and maintain a Facebook page. Much more needs to be done with improving internet presence, however, as well as setting up the ability to join and pay for memberships online.

* **Deepen connections with the local community and build the pool of volunteers and potential board members. Establish a committee structure around key areas of activity and set a list of tasks to be completed in the next year.**

We set up a committee structure in 2014 with appointed chairmen from the Board. The role and responsibility of each Committee was defined. Defining specific tasks and projects, and populating the committees with volunteers still need to be done.

* **Build local support among key stakeholders for FVF’s mission. Establish open, regular communication. Keep an ear to the ground for “hot button” issues in the local community.**

 As members of the Vernon Volunteers Collaborative, we continue to meet

quarterly with twelve other local volunteer organizations to share information and resources.

* **Establish a community advisory committee composed of representatives of key partners organizations**.

No action has been taken to establish the advisory committee.

* **Deepen the volunteer pool and build awareness of the value of FVF to the local community. Focus public communication on volunteer recruitment.**

We expect that the Heritage Center will add significant awareness of the Friends in the community. A pro-active focus on volunteer recruitment has not been done to date. Discussion of “branding” of the organization that recognizes the scenic value of the farm site and attracts artists, photographers and musicians has been initiated.