

Bridgton Historical Society Strategic Plan
Accepted by Board of Trustees for Membership Consideration
September 19, 2007

Introduction

This is a two-year operational plan, designed to insure that the Society moves forward as efficiently as possible and maximizes its available and potential resources. The activities envisioned will provide the basis for a detailed, long-term plan that will be instituted by 2010. It is expected that this will lead to a capital campaign that will be in the range of at least \$200,000 - \$500,000, involving substantial investments in facilities and infrastructure at both the museum and Narramissic. The campaign could culminate in a celebration of Bridgton's 250th anniversary, in 2018. Extensive, professionally-guided planning, with maximum input from the community, will be required for such a project to succeed.

1. Vision

The Bridgton Historical Society will become a well-recognized, forward-looking part of the community, serving as a resource for the town, schools, and individuals. It will be recognized throughout the region and beyond for excellence in programming and exhibitions, and exercise responsible stewardship of its collections to the highest possible standards.

In addition to providing a center for research and preserving significant historical materials, the museum will be a center for dynamic, interactive exhibits that engage a broad audience. The Society will preserve the special historic nature of Narramissic, including the grounds and buildings, and maintain the property as a center for active learning and an attraction for both Bridgton residents and visitors to the area.

2. Mission Statement

Rationale: It is widely accepted that historical societies will need to alter the way they do business in light of dramatic social and technological change in the 21st century. To that end, the Society should alter its mission statement to emphasize *why* it exists, rather than *what* it does to fulfill its mission. It is hoped that such a change, while subtle, will alter the way the organization approaches its tasks by making it more responsive to the community and its needs.

Current: Organized as a nonprofit organization, the Society exists for the purpose of collecting and preserving historically significant material that encourages an appreciation and understanding of the events, customs, and traditions of Bridgton and the surrounding area, as it pertains to Bridgton, and making that material available to the public through the operation and maintenance of museums, historical properties, and research facilities.

Proposed: Organized as a nonprofit organization, the Society exists to encourage an appreciation and understanding of the events, customs, and traditions of Bridgton and the surrounding area, as it pertains to Bridgton, by collecting and preserving historically significant material and making that material available to the public through programs and publications, as well as the operation and maintenance of museums, historical properties, and research facilities.

3. Analysis of Current Situation

A. Strengths

- Well established organization with long track record
- Diverse income sources
- Strong Collections

B. Weaknesses

- Lack of Community Awareness
- Insufficient income for maintenance of 2 facilities
- Lack of broad volunteer participation
- Lack of paid staff

C. Opportunities

- Facilities at Narramissic, currently under-utilized
- Specific audiences that could be cultivated: rail buffs, re-enactors, etc.
- Revitalization of Bridgton's Main Street and its cultural community
- Collaboration with other organizations

D. Threats

- Competition with other organizations for audience and resources
- Changing population with fewer roots in town (also an opportunity)

4. Goals

A. Increase community participation

B. Expand use of the facilities, especially Narramissic

C. Create a stable, sustainable organizational structure

D. Improve fund-raising

5. Actions

A. Community Participation

- 1) Improve customer service and public image
Responsibility: Board and volunteers
Time Frame/means: Immediate, through improved communication, training, and consistency
- 2) Produce a series of hands-on free events aimed particularly at families
Responsibility: Program Committee
Time Frame/means: Three events before end of 2008
- 3) Town-wide mailing
Responsibility: Newsletter and Publicity Chairs
Time Frame/means: June, 2008. Find sponsors, advertisers, professional designer.
- 4) Actively promote use of Narramissic grounds
Responsibility:
Time Frame/means: Immediate/by June, 2008. Create signage (need funding/sponsors), publicize through press releases and other vehicles.
- 5) Create Bridgton Historical/Tourist Map
Responsibility: Board to recruit special project team
Time Frame/means: By 2009 or 2010. Survey historic buildings and sites, create map that includes advertising for local businesses.

B. Expand Use of Facilities

- 1) Apply for designation as Official Repository for Town Records
Responsibility: Collections Manager
Time Frame/means: Early 2008.
- 2) Develop Relationship with Blacksmith for Narramissic
Responsibility: Board to recruit special project team
Time Frame/means: By June, 2008. Solicit Proposals and negotiate terms.
- 3) Develop long-term plan for use of Narramissic facilities
Responsibility: Board
Time Frame/means: By Fall, 2008. Convene focus group composed of preservation and museum professionals, along with local interested parties (business and non-profits) to analyze current usage and recommend changes.

- 4) Create new major events
Responsibility: Board, Program Committee
Time Frame/means: By summer 2009, if not earlier. Add one every year or two for several years, depending in part on recommendations in #3 above.

C. Organizational Structure

- 1) Expand and focus Board
Responsibility: Board, Nominating Committee, Members at large
Time Frame/means: Annual Meeting, 2008 through actions by Board, Nominating Committee, and by-laws amendment.
- 2) Establish Program Committee and 2 co-chairs for each event
Responsibility: Board
Time Frame/means: 2008
- 3) Invigorate volunteer program
Responsibility: Board, relevant committees and chairs
Time Frame/means: In time for summer, 2008. Hold Volunteer Appreciation Day, create specific volunteer job descriptions, an interview process for new volunteers, and a more formal training program.
- 4) Recruit Interns from local colleges
Responsibility: Board, Collections Manager
Time Frame/means: For summer, 2008.
- 5) Establish Building and Grounds Committee to oversee maintenance
Responsibility: Board
Time Frame/means: Immediate, by recruiting chair and members, establish maintenance plans for both facilities
- 6) Expand paid staff to include executive director, possibly part-time for first few years
Responsibility: Board
Time Frame/means: 2009, through fundraising and development.

D. Fund-raising

- 1) Re-institute Annual Giving Campaign.
Responsibility: Board
Time Frame/means: Fall, 2008. First year goal: \$5,000, to be increased annually.

- 2) Replace barn roof (\$30,000-40,000)
Responsibility: Board
Time Frame/means: Summer, 2008. Initiate fund-raising drive and seek grants

- 3) Increase other Support
Responsibility: Board, relevant committee chairs
Time Frame/means: Immediate. Seek new means of income through strategies such as soliciting sponsors for events, in-kind donations from businesses, advertising for newsletter, and possibly on-line sales through the web site. (See also B2-4, above.)

- 4) Position the Society to be able to undertake a major capital campaign to upgrade facilities for collections care and display, as well as programs, and fund-raisers. Specifics to be determined through on-going planning, but expected to be in the range of at least \$200,000-\$500,000.
Responsibility: Board
Time Frame/means: 2010, through implementation of this plan.