

Vermont Historical Society

Past Year Impact and Budget Commentary

Fiscal Year 2015 Areas of Service:

- VHS had 2,310 active memberships in FY2015. Currently, VHS boasts over 2,400 memberships from throughout Vermont and across the country.
- Over 15,000 people visited the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier and the Vermont History Center in Barre, including over 5,500 students on field trips.
- Leahy Library staff served over 2,500 people onsite and through remote requests for information.
- Our online research resources were accessed over 90,000 times and our website saw 165,000 unique visitors.
- 1,900 students were served by our classroom lending kits.
- Over 8,000 people learned about Vermont heritage through VHS public programs and outreach events.
- VHS offers services to nearly 200 local historical societies and museums in Vermont through technical services, mentoring and consulting services, local history communications, workshops, educational materials, and an awards program that recognizes the important work being done at the local level by these community heritage organizations. This extension of service impacts untold number of individuals in almost every town in the State of Vermont.
- In the public trust, VHS houses, preserves, conserves, and exhibits in state-of-the-art facilities over 30,000 artifacts, 50,000 books, 20,000 maps and broadsides, 1,500 linear feet of manuscripts, and 30,000 photographs.
- VHS published three important books shedding light on Vermont's heritage and continues to produce Vermont's only scholarly, peer-reviewed journal of historical research.

New Initiatives and Upcoming Programs:

- The Vermont History Museum will be upgraded to better tell Vermont's unique story to our current, and constantly evolving, populace. This will include bringing the *Freedom and Unity* Exhibit up to present. Adding more interactive, family-friendly experiences while including all visitors in actively contributing to Vermont's story. The lobby and store will get a face-lift making them more inviting, and a changing exhibition space will be added.
- The ongoing (Federally funded) Vermont in the 1970s project will come to a conclusion with symposium, educational programs, and special exhibit in the fall.
- The biennial Vermont History EXPO will take place this June at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds. Well over 150 heritage organizations from around Vermont and New England engage over 7,500 visitors during this 2-day event.
- Innovative programs and events targeting new audiences and new partners.

A Unique Collaboration:

- Chartered by the legislature in 1838, and thus the oldest cultural heritage organization in the state, VHS collects, preserves, and exhibits objects and documents related to Vermont's past (22 V.S.A., sections 281-285). The Vermont Historical Society is the only institution in Vermont that collects artifacts and documents that reflect the entire history of the state, every geographical area, and every chronological period, including the present.
- In the event of dissolution of VHS, management of its collection and related property will become the responsibility of the State (22 V.S.A., section 284).
- Employees of VHS are classified by the state classification system as if they were state employees and receive all general pay increases granted state employees (22 V.S.A., section 285).
- The State of Vermont provides access to the Vermont State Employee Retirement System to qualified employees of VHS, as well as group coverage for health, dental, and life insurance. The premium for this coverage is paid entirely by VHS and its employees. Annually VHS makes contributions totaling over \$140,000 to VSERS and \$100,000 for insurance premiums.
- VHS is both tenant and a landlord of the State of Vermont. Fee for space is assessed annually to VHS for the area occupied by the Vermont History Museum in the Pavilion Building (set at \$211,469 for FY17). The State of Vermont pays a modest fee to cover operating expenses for the Vermont Archaeology Heritage Center at the Vermont History Center in Barre (\$11,500 for FY17).
- VHS provides secure, climate-controlled space and curatorial oversight for the state's collection of historic flags.
- VHS provides access to meeting rooms in both the Pavilion space and History Center without charge to state agencies. During FY15, the facilities were used by state agencies 69 times for over 400 hours and 1,653 state employees served. State agencies are on track to double that usage in the current fiscal year.
- The Vermont History Center in Barre is also delegated for use by state agencies as an alternative worksite in the event of natural disaster or other emergency.
- VHS education staff work closely with State House staff to coordinate field trips that include a tour of the State House and Vermont History Museum. VHS is now participating in the new State House Complex marketing campaign with the office of the state curator and VT Arts Council.
- Staff members of the Vermont Historical Society serve without compensation on various boards and commissions as well as working cooperatively with many state agencies.

Items of Note in the VHS budget

- As stated above, VHS employees are classified using the state employee classification system. Therefore base pay and pay increases are not completely at the discretion of VHS. Retirement of long-time employees and a change to how VHS handles health care premiums

and options internally cut personnel costs appreciably with little impact on overall program services.

- Currently VHS contributes 17.5% of total salary in addition to 6.5% contributed by employees to VSERS. Since 2009 this rate has nearly doubled.
- Fee for space in the Pavilion will rise by \$6,734 for FY17. That amount is the increase sought, and recommended in the Governor's budget, over last year's appropriation.
- VHS' long-term structural deficit is finally coming under control. You can see that the projected results for FY16 will cut the deficit in half, while the proposed budget for FY17 will eliminate the deficit completely. Changes to personnel and benefit structure makes up the bulk of the change while greater fundraising and increased earned revenue make up the rest. Within this budget mix we have been able to add resources to program, marketing, and outreach to make our statewide impact even greater going forward.