



Connecticut River Museum

Minutes for the Annual Members Meeting

September 6, 2025

Attendees:

- John Bennet, Chair of the Board and Elizabeth Kaeser, Executive Director

Not Present:

- Tom Wilcox, Treasurer, and Jack Frost, Secretary

Call to Order

Chair John Bennet called the meeting to order at 10:36 a.m. He opened with remarks noting a successful and productive year for the Museum. Highlights included serving nearly 4,000 students through educational programs and the development of several new exhibits. He emphasized that the Museum is increasingly being recognized as a premier destination in the Valley to learn about the Connecticut River, a distinction the organization takes great pride in.

Approval of 2024 Minutes

John Bennet presented the minutes from the 2024 Annual Meeting for approval, noting they are available online for review. A brief summary of the minutes was provided by John, and no questions or comments were raised. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

In the absence of Tom Wilcox, John Bennet delivered the financial report. He stated that the Museum remains in a strong financial position and continues to manage expenses within the current budget. The endowment has had an average return of 6.91%.

Update from the Director

Executive Director Elizabeth Kaeser provided an update on Museum activities over the past year, which marked the Museum's 50th Anniversary. She highlighted several key initiatives and programs:

- **New Programs Launched:**
 - *Block Party* and *Environmental Summit*, both introduced during the anniversary year.
- **Education and Outreach:**
 - Ongoing success of in-Museum and on-the-water education programs.
 - *Birding on Board*, a grant-funded program that teaches students citizen science skills, which has been popular with students and teachers
 - Introduction of *River Watchers*, a new citizen science initiative focused on water monitoring and testing, also supported by grant funding.
- **New Exhibits:**



- Award-Winning *Getting There: Wayfinding on the Water in the Pre-Modern Age*
- *River Ballads*
- *Rising Waters: Flooding along the Connecticut*
- *Watermark: Capturing the Connecticut*, a photography show featuring the work of four artists who live along the Connecticut River

John Bennet also expressed gratitude to donors for their support in renovating the Lay House, noting how fortunate the Museum is to have access to this beautifully updated space.

Recognition

For Trustees

- Recognition was given to Trustees James Paisley and Deb DeHertogh for their service since joining the Board last year.
- John Bennet welcomed incoming Trustee Samantha Wimpe, who will officially join this fall. Samantha is affiliated with ZRG, an executive recruitment firm, and is a long-time member of the Museum residing in East Lyme.

For Volunteers

- Curator Amy Trout honored Margaret Ellen Fein as Volunteer of the Year. Though Margaret was unable to attend the meeting, Amy highlighted her 18 years of exceptional service, including research, editing, and scanning items included in the Museum's collection.
- Amy praised Margaret's dedication and good humor, noting her invaluable help every Thursday. A certificate of appreciation and a small gift will be delivered to Margaret in recognition of her outstanding contributions.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11 a.m. by Chair John Bennet.