

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

For interviews, please contact [Kathleen@portsmouthhistory.org](mailto:Kathleen@portsmouthhistory.org)

For image, please see attached photo of Susan Labrie

For more information, please visit

<http://portsmouthhistory.org/portsmouth400/>

## **Labrie Named Director, Portsmouth400**

With the countdown to 2023 now six years away, Portsmouth Historical Society has named Susan Labrie director of Portsmouth400. Labrie was selected from a host of talented candidates by the Portsmouth400 Steering Committee, which was established as a cooperative effort between the City of Portsmouth and the Society. Labrie will work full-time for the Society as the liaison to the Steering Committee that will oversee fundraising and public outreach and coordinate events and programs leading up to and during the anniversary celebration.

Earlier this year, the City of Portsmouth entered a partnership with the Society that allows the organization to lead - and act as the convener for - an inclusive celebration. Ed Mallon, president of the Society, explains, "Portsmouth400 will not simply be a distinct celebration to mark a milestone birthday, but rather a continuous program aimed to inspire civic engagement. We're very fortunate to have a vocal and active community here in Portsmouth. We see this program as an opportunity for our entire community to reflect on our history and on how all of us envision the future of Portsmouth. As we move forward and public input is gathered from our community, we'll begin identifying key themes to spotlight and creating subsequent task forces as another way for people to participate. We want community members of all demographics and experience to join this dialogue, offer ideas, and feel a sense of ownership in this program."

Steering Committee co-chair Denise Wheeler echoes Mallon, "Portsmouth400 is an opportunity for everyone in Portsmouth to engage in a shared project of city unity. For me, it starts with a question: How do you want to celebrate Portsmouth400 as a family, as a neighborhood, as a city?"

Wheeler's co-chair, former city attorney Peter Loughlin, says, "We saw in Susan Labrie a person who is a great listener, a super organizer, and someone with a passion for strengthening our community, which is what Portsmouth400 is all about. She's a bundle of energy and she gets things done."

Kathleen Soldati, executive director of the Society that manages Discover Portsmouth and the John Paul Jones House, welcomed Labrie to her new job last week amid the ongoing bustle of *Vintage Christmas in Portsmouth* events. "Portsmouth400 will take its place in a long history of city anniversaries that date back to the bicentennial in 1823," Soldati says. "A chance to celebrate where we've been AND where we're going. Susan's job is to help the Steering Committee

bring the community together to create an unforgettable and meaningful celebration.”

Labrie will be joining a top notch staff at Portsmouth Historical Society with backgrounds including the Boston MFA, Boston Children’s Museum, Boston Blue Cross + Blue Shield, the Currier Museum, Peabody Essex Museum, Wintertur, Fidelity Investments and the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen.

A tireless volunteer and fundraiser for many seacoast nonprofits including Strawberry Banke Museum, The Music Hall and Seacoast Science Center, Labrie trained as a civil engineer, received a master’s degree in Business Administration, and has worked in town government, as a marketing manager, and as an event coordinator.

“I’m grateful to be working with our Steering Committee to bring our community together to share ideas for celebrating Portsmouth400,” said Labrie. “I look forward to connecting with the many diverse and talented people and organizations about their ideas that can inform a long range plan, which will include a funding/marketing umbrella.”

One of the nation’s oldest seaport cities, Portsmouth has held many lively anniversary celebrations. The Tercentennial in 1923 included a pageant and parade that involved thousands of citizens, many re-enacting characters from the past. The vision of Portsmouth400, so far, is “to proudly show our diverse and dramatic evolution as New Hampshire’s only seaport,” and to remind us that history shapes the future.

On that note, Labrie says she is honored to be entrusted with organizing this historic celebration, because it promises “to inspire our younger generations to continue traditions, while making new ones--and especially to be involved in our shared community. Ultimately, Portsmouth400 asks, ‘How do we pass the torch to the next generation so they will become stewards of Portsmouth and its history?’”

**Portsmouth Historical Society**, founded in 1917, is a nonprofit devoted to championing the history, arts, and culture of the Portsmouth region through acquisitions, preservation, museum exhibitions, programs, and publications. It operates two facilities: Discover Portsmouth and the 1758 John Paul Jones House and Garden. For further information please call [603-436-8433](tel:603-436-8433) or visit [PortsmouthHistory.org](http://PortsmouthHistory.org).