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Portsmouth Historical Society Seeks Director for Portsmouth400 Anniversary Program *Steering Committee Co-Chairs Announced*

Portsmouth, New Hampshire... Earlier this year, the City of Portsmouth entered a partnership with Portsmouth Historical Society (PHS) that allows the organization to lead and manage the City's 400th anniversary celebration. While the City does not turn 400 years old until 2023, this partnership and grant money from the City has allowed PHS to jumpstart the development of an ongoing program, known as Portsmouth400, for citizens to engage in.

The approved agreement calls for the Historical Society to “create Portsmouth400, an inclusive celebration of 400 years on the New Hampshire Seacoast, 1623-2023, of both the diverse and living history of Portsmouth from before the first European settlers arrived to the present; our goal is to layer in programs each year up to and beyond 2023.”

To help carry out this task, PHS has published a job opening for the Director of Portsmouth400 on its website. This full-time position will be tasked to help manage fundraising, public outreach, executing events and programs, and work alongside the Portsmouth400 Steering Committee, organized by PHS that will assist with the oversight, planning, organization and implementation of the Portsmouth400 vision. The co-chairs of the Steering Committee are Portsmouth attorney Peter Loughlin, Portsmouth native, municipal (and former City) attorney, and Vice Chairman of Pease Development Authority, and Denise Wheeler, a local educator, freelance writer and grassroots organizer who is a founding member of Share Our Strength Seacoast, Fill the Hall, and other community events.

According to Ed Mallon, PHS President, 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 to reflect on our history, instill further civic education in our community to get people thinking about how they 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.”

Wheeler shares that vision. "Portsmouth400 is about looking forward as we look back. It's an opportunity for everyone in Portsmouth to engage in a shared project of city unity, celebrating what brought us here while striving toward the best version of ourselves that we can be, as individual citizens, organizations, families, and a community," she said. "For me as a co-chair, it starts with a question: How do you want to celebrate Portsmouth400 as a family, as a neighborhood, as a city? How will you join in as a small business, a large business, a cultural institution, a school, a sports team, an ethnic group, a religious group, an artist, a rock band? How will each of you celebrate the 400th anniversary?"

Loughlin agrees, "Whether we were born here, or moved here a month ago, we all recognize that the Portsmouth area is a very special place. The Portsmouth400 celebration will be an opportunity to reprise the events that shaped our history and to think about how we would like to see our area continue to evolve."

Rounding out the Steering Committee are City Manager John Bohenko, City Mayor Jack Blalock, City Councilor Chris Dwyer, Susan Labrie, and UNH historian Janet Polasky.

PHS will be accepting applications for the Portsmouth400 Director position through Monday September 18, 2017, and will be announcing a series of public input sessions for the community to participate in shortly after. Meanwhile, an input portal is also available on the PHS website for community members to offer initial input on what they think should be included in this program moving forward.

About Portsmouth400

Portsmouth400 is an inclusive celebration of the diverse and dramatic evolution of New Hampshire's only seaport, a celebration that will layer in programs and events leading up to 2023 and beyond. For more information about Portsmouth400, please see <http://portsmouthhistory.org/portsmouth400/> Please send applications to resumes@portsmouthhistory.org