

THE FINNISH HERITAGE MUSEUM

301 High Street Fairport Harbor, Ohio 44077

Re: 2025 State of the Museum Report to Fairport Harbor Village Council

Attn: The Honorable Mayor Timothy Manross and Members of the Fairport Harbor Village Council

The purpose of representatives of the Finnish Heritage Museum appearing before Fairport Village Council is twofold: 1) to request an extension of our lease and 2) to report on the present state of the museum as a vibrant and integral part of the revival and growth of business and tourism in the Village of Fairport Harbor.

The Finnish Heritage Museum (FHM) as tenant and the Village of Fairport Harbor (VFH) as landlord are approaching the end of the initial 20-year lease of the museum building, located at 301 High Street. As we approach the end of the present lease the FHM requests a renewal of the lease for an additional twenty years. Minor changes in the lease are suggested but largely the lease would continue under existing conditions and circumstances. We suggest an annual report to the VFH council to be part of the renewed lease and the exclusion of the Lighthouse Arts Association in the new lease. The Lighthouse Arts Association in twenty years has not participated in the use or improvement of the building and has ceased to be a viable partner.

The administration and membership of the FHM wish to extend their gratitude to the VFH for allowing the FHM to be the caretakers of this important historic building. We do not take this responsibility lightly. Under the present lease we committed to initially administering 125K of federally funded community improvement funds. This amount was invested in stabilizing a deteriorating building. The FHM then invested an additional 200K over the lease term in private museum funds, to improve the building for its new function as a museum. A building that would operate in a sustainable and cost-effective manner. The inclusion of a Museum Shoppe, beside offering a revenue stream, has created a gathering place for the community. We want the Village Council and the citizens of Fairport Harbor to know that we have fulfilled the terms of the agreement and have been good stewards that care deeply about the physical building and its place in the history and revival of the community. We think it is a source of pride for the people of Fairport Harbor. On a personal basis we hear this every day, from visitors that come from near and far. The sculpture in front of the museum has become a site for "photo opportunities", commemorating important personal events: graduations, weddings, home comings, etc. Recently, the FHM was awarded funds for improvements in signage, displays and web sites. This recognition by the Lake County Visitors Bureau, that the FHM is an important tourist destination that they are willing to invest in, attests to the positive county-wide impact of the FHM. During the twenty years of the lease the building and the FHM have earned an important place in the fabric and in character of the community.

The museum functions as an all-volunteer organization. All revenues go to maintenance and facilities improvement. Henry (Hank) Penttila, volunteer, past president of the museum and registered architect oversees all improvements and maintenance of the building. We can truthfully say this building is in better shape now than it was 100 years ago. Every wall and floor inside and out have received attention of some type and extensive interior reconstruction has taken place. Improvements have been made to address energy efficiency, safety issues and a better visitor experience.

Following, is a list of improvements, separate from the initial improvements financed by the Village block-grant monies. These have been financed over the course of the last twenty years by the FHM and the individual contributions of museum members, they include, but are not limited to:

1. Upgrade of Electrical service, additional outlets, new fixtures.
2. New emergency and directional lighting.
3. Plumbing upgrades, new accessible toilets, new hot water tank, capping of unused water and sewer pipes. (a water main shut-off valve will be replaced as weather allows this spring)
4. HVAC upgrades, new second floor furnace, including new ductwork, condensate lines and pump were replaced and new exterior condenser unit installed on an elevated platform.
5. Semi-annual roof maintenance with waterproof re-coat and new gutters and downspouts directed toward natural drainage.
6. Exterior brick treated against water intrusion with clear sealant. Brick "tuck-pointed", against water intrusion. This is an on-going process.
7. Additional steel bracing was installed in the second floor and a vertical crack that developed in the SE corner of the building was repaired.
8. As a safety upgrade the main stairway to the second floor was completely re-built to incorporate a landing, code compliant stair dimensions, handrails and all structural framing was accomplished with fire-retardant wood.
9. As a part of our plan to completely re-do all the exterior walls of the building to be energy-efficient and structurally stable we have re-built all the exterior walls except those on the North second floor and partially on the South second floor. All walls that were re-done have an R-value of 21, as opposed to the original wall (12' of masonry) R-2.
10. New floor coverings: ceramic tile at the entry, vinyl plank in the coffee shop and corridors and toilets, carpet on the new stairs and second floor meeting rooms and bamboo flooring in the gallery/display areas.
11. A security camera system has been installed, it has been accessed occasionally by the Fairport Harbor police.
12. A community defining sculpture and base with new concrete sidewalks, lighting and planting areas. For insurance purposes this sculpture has been appraised at \$115K.
13. 80% of interior walls have been patched and painted (some multiple times), ceiling tiles have been upgraded and damaged tiles replaced.
14. We are continually upgrading furnishings: chairs, tables, display cases and audio-visual equipment.
15. The building is 100 years old and maintenance and upgrades are a daily concern and line item in our yearly budget.
16. We have paid the following utilities costs: In twenty years the FHM has paid approximately \$24K for gas service, \$4.8K for electrical service, \$2.2K for water and \$3.2K for sewer service. This is a total of \$34.2K for utilities.

The FHM has been a good caretaker of this valuable Village asset. And, with our dedicated stewardship it continues to grow and give value back to the community in many ways.

The citizens of the VFH and members of the council can be confident that our care and attention to the maintenance of this important asset will not waiver and its value will only increase. We look forward to working together as partners in the future. Thank you for your continued support.

In closing, we respectfully request that the FVC accept this report as a formal request to extend the present lease, with agreed upon modifications, for a term of twenty years, renewable at that future date for an additional twenty years. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Humbly submitted, this date, February 13, 2025

David Leifer, President

Henry A. Penttila, Vice President