



**Fairfield County Historical Societies Convening 7**  
**Norwalk Historical Society**  
**Wednesday May 8, 2023**

**SYNOPSIS**

The Historical Societies had not met since their 6th convening (on Zoom) in February 2021. 15 people from 12 societies convened in person May 9 at the Norwalk Historical Society (Mill Hill). The first four meetings (before COVID) produced working groups focused on issues such as membership, exhibitions, funding, board relations, etc. However, working groups did not translate well to Zoom, which was effective for two informational webinars. The societies are now eager to re-set. Most of the 2-hour May 9 session focused on responses to our meeting prompt: "What do you feel have been the most meaningful changes and/or most important things learned at your organization."

Themes that arose included:

- **Restoration and Renovation** - with members Darien, New Canaan, Rowayton, Stratford, Weston, and Westport working on renovating and expanding their properties or raising money for new buildings.
- **Growth and Greater Community Engagement** - with members Jewish Historical Society, Norwalk, Norwalk Public Library History Room, and Stratford working closely with town government and town organizations to develop programs relevant to local populations.
- **Collections Management** was a strong activity at many societies - streamlining, organizing and indexing the collection, digitizing for virtual exhibits and for the CT Digital Archive.

**Meeting Evaluation:** 7 of 12 evaluations submitted voted the meeting "very relevant" and 5 "relevant," and overall, 7 thought it "excellent" and 5 "very good." Asked to name "one action you will take as a result of this meeting," answers ranged across planning (for exhibits; for fundraising); exploring funding for building opportunities; exploring a CRM; re-examining membership structure; conversations with board/volunteers about better engaging the public; engaging the board more; creating simple encounters that create impact and meaning. In answer to the question "what top one or two thoughts or ideas did you get from this session?," top of mind was an enjoyment of networking, of

sharing different strategies, tackling similar issues across institutions, of hearing about the different programs, approaches, and the inclusiveness of this community and of valuing different perspectives.

**Topics** suggested for future meetings were: **The 250th**: Discussing the 250th Anniversary of US Independence (6 of the 12 mentioned this); **Membership Issues** (4); **Marketing** (4) marketing and attendance, community engagement, and engaging new members; **Inclusion**: (3) focus on a more “inclusive history,” “more diverse history,” and “the difficult issues in our history;” **Funding** (3) “specifics on fundraising, including crowd sourcing techniques,” “simple fundraising,” “new funding areas;” **Connection** (2) “planning open hours to see each other's sites,” “discuss the more ‘global’ connections between the various historical organizations;” and **Program Development** (2).