



Maine State Grange

Reply to:
Walter Boomsma, Communications Director
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2022-23 Annual Report of the Maine State Grange Communications Director

Brothers and Sisters,

It is my distinct honor to report some activities and accomplishments from this year's efforts. This is the sixth full year I have served in the capacity of Communications Director—a position created in January 2014 that combined and expanded the historical roles of the publicity director and webmaster. My broad-based role includes assembling the printed Bulletin, maintaining the website, facilitating communication between and to State Leaders, advising on communication matters, and providing information and resources to Subordinate and Pomona Granges.

During the past year, I published twelve monthly Bulletins without missing a deadline and wrote at least two columns each month. I am grateful to those directors and officers who regularly submit articles and support improving our internal communication.

The website is now in its thirteenth full year of operation in its current form. The objectives for the redesign in November 2010 were simple. Some of the more important included:

- To encourage prompt posting and maintenance of information and resources,
- To control that posting process with some level of moderation and quality control,
- To allow users to find basic information and resources (such as applications, manuals, etc.) readily and
- To allow users to subscribe to the site and receive email versions of posts.

We continue to achieve those objectives. Site views have decreased by 3.0% over the previous year. There have been 20,840 site views from September 1, 2022, through August 31, 2023—an average of nearly 1,700 monthly. However, these visits do not include subscribers who are receiving the posts without necessarily visiting the site.

Considering the decline in Granges and Grange membership, the site is doing well. Some of that success can be attributed to the site design and content. The site is resource-rich and appeals to both members and non-members. The top pages visited are the information pages, such as the directory of Granges, program books, and information, etc. This year, however, several posts about Community Grange Events and programs received a lot of attention. This tells us how to maintain interest in the site.

Of course, numbers do not tell the entire story. Members and non-members continue to use the site as a vehicle for asking questions. These questions do not always appear on the site (unless they are of a general nature) but are handled by forwarding them to the appropriate party or parties.

During this past year, I have continued to add resource documents and tools to our collection of communication resources available on the site. There is value in our website.

Several significant accomplishments this year include:

- Added additional “Resources for Grangers” consisting of recorded interviews showing how successful Granges are doing so.
- Completed interviews with media representatives and researchers.
- Added an additional SiteLock® security feature to prevent “hacking” of the site. (This accounts for most of the increase over last year.)
- Completed a significant purge of the website’s oldest posts and images. This makes the site much more manageable and saves server space.
- Continued to work with an editorial calendar to ensure regular, consistent posting.
- Continued to make “under the hood” improvements to the site.
- Continued posting of “special events” being sponsored or hosted by Granges. These events are also added to the MSG Calendar Page.
- Continued to facilitate an email service that allows information to be sent directly to officers, directors, and deputies on short notice. This service also makes website subscriptions possible.

My goal is to keep costs associated with the website as low as possible by using “free” software versions and applying creativity to how things get done. Technology costs continue to rise as software companies look to change from purchased software to subscription software. Website security has become a growing issue requiring additional support and expertise.

Invoiced costs for the website almost totally reflect the expenses Abbot Village Press and I incur. I also apply the director’s stipend to expenses. To give a complete picture, I include the stipend as part of the cost of the website and communication department to Maine State Grange and the membership. The past four years are shown in the table below.

Fiscal Year	Invoiced	Stipend	Total	% Change
2019-2020	\$912	\$400	\$1312	
2020-2021	\$987	\$400	\$1387	+5.7%
2020-2022	\$1275	\$200	\$1475	+6.3%
2022-2023	\$1400	\$200	\$1600	+8.5%

I would encourage members to visit other state Grange websites and compare the appearance and content. Our site should be a source of pride! If we just use a conservative 21,000 site visits per year, each visit costs us less than eight cents. Currently, it costs sixty-six cents just to mail a first-class letter. Those site visits cost less than eight cents each.

Thanks again to Heather and Phil Retberg of Halcyon Grange for their willingness to continue to share columns for our monthly “View from the Farm.”

Looking ahead to 2023-2024, some objectives include:

- Continuing to keep communication positive, helpful, and engaging.

- Investigate the feasibility of sponsoring at least one virtual roundtable discussion. This was not achieved last year due to time limitations.
- Research further connections between the MSG website and social media.
- Continue searching for resources, including additional guest columnists and regular topical information that can be reposted with attribution.

Our greatest accomplishment is also our most significant need for the coming year. We must continue increasing participation and information, working to build a positive communication program. The Maine State Grange website is an integral part of our organization and is becoming a “go-to” place for members and friends who wish to learn more about our Order. We impact Maine Communities and beyond while preserving our heritage.

I believe the primary role of any state position or function is to support Subordinate and Pomona Granges and their members. But communication is not a “one-person job.” Individuals, Community/Subordinate, and Pomona Granges can best support our communications efforts by providing positive news and information.

I will continue encouraging open communication throughout our Order and with the public. We must generate interest and excitement among our communities, prospective members, and ourselves.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help you and your Grange.

Thank you for your continued confidence and support.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Walter Boomsma', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Walter Boomsma
Maine State Grange Communications Director

<http://mainestategrange.org>