



Maine State Grange

Reply to:
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2024-25 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 eleventh 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. The Communications Director assembles the printed Bulletin, maintains the website, facilitates communication between and to State Leaders and members, advises on communication matters, and provides information and resources to Subordinate and Pomona Granges.

During the past year, I published twelve monthly Bulletins and wrote at least two columns each month. I am grateful to the directors and officers who regularly submit articles and support the improvement of our internal communication. I also seek resources and information applicable to Granges and Grangers.

The website is now in its fifteenth full year of operation in its current form. The objectives for the redesign in November 2010 were simple. Some of the more critical 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 declined slightly. This Grange year the site has been viewed at least 17,800 times—an average of 1500 times per month. 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 page, as well as the events calendar.

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.

Several significant accomplishments this year include:

<http://mainestategrange.org>

- Development of a resource section on the website specific to the Words for Thirds Dictionary Program. Thanks go to Mary French, Director of the Dictionary Project, for her assistance and support.
- Added additional “Resources for Grangers,” including weekly Fraud Watch Alerts from AARP and a Suicide Prevention Month series from SAMHSA.
- Opened a dialog with the Maine FFA to explore mutual interests and possible collaborations.
- Completed interviews with media representatives and researchers.
- Continued efforts to improve website security and “hacking” of the site, including upgrading our SSL certificate.
- Continued a 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 posting of “special events” being sponsored or hosted by Granges. These events are also added to the MSG Calendar Page.
- Continued to facilitate an outbound 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 is a growing issue requiring additional support and expertise. One example of increased costs is our Sitelock® protection, which increased nearly 25%.

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 provide a comprehensive view, I include the stipend as part of the website and communication department’s costs to the Maine State Grange and its membership. The past five 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%
2024-2025	\$1425	\$200	\$1625	+1.6%
2025-2026	\$1585	\$200	\$1785	+9.8%

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 use a conservative estimate of 21,000 site visits per year, each visit costs us less than one cent. Currently, it costs 78 cents to mail a one-ounce first-class letter—and that’s just for the postage. The MSG Website is a “good deal,” and offers significant value.

Looking ahead to 2025-2026, some objectives include:

- Continuing to keep communication positive, helpful, and engaging.
- Complete a resource page for Little Free Libraries

- Promote the posting of Subordinate Grange Events and news to the site.
- Continue searching for resources, including additional guest columnists and regular topical information that can be reposted with attribution.
- Update the online directory of Granges

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 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.

Over 20% of our site views are from Facebook. (Most visits are coming from search engines such as Google. Only a handful come from National Grange and other sites.) While social media does play a role in Grange Communication, that role should be seen as supportive. The data suggests that even Facebook users are turning to the website for information that is timely, complete, accurate, and easily found.

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 line extending to the right.

Walter Boomsma
Maine State Grange Communications Director

<http://mainestategrange.org>