

American Canal Society
Strategic Planning
Proposed Actions
January 2019

After reading the draft Strategic Plan, all the respondents seemed to indicate that the ACS has a role in the canal and historical community and should strive to take the steps to make the Society prosper. As a result, it is suggested that the following actions be addressed.

Action #1 and #2- The Society Budget and the Future Format of the American Canals Bulletin- Although two actions, they are intertwined as American Canals is the single largest expense of the Society. The 2018 yearly statement shows that the costs of editing, printing and mailing the bulletin exceed the yearly income by about \$1200. American Canals is published four times per year, with the average cost per printing of \$1400. Aside from the editor's stipend of \$200, the rest of the costs are in the printing and mailing.

There has been the suggestion that we move to an all digital format, which would save us about \$1300 per issue, or \$5200 a year. However, there is a value to printing the newsletter, and many websites will list the reason for and against. <https://badgergroup.com/why-print-newsletters/>

In short, the reasons to stay with the print version of American Canals are; ease of reading, long form articles, long term use, and archiving. The reasons to go to digital are; cost, clickable links, and color.

Although it appears that costs alone would force this decision upon the ACS, we should investigate the following before taking any action;

- 1) Steve Dean has suggested that the costs of printing might be reduced if we were to shop around for other printers. He noted that one of his publications did this and was able to offer color and higher quality. I have found with guidebook printing that these services and costs can vary greatly between printers.
- 2) Consider reducing the number of pages. We could move the Canalender to the Facebook and the website. It has been suggested that the ACS sales page be discontinued. Also, the special canal boat rides section can be moved to the website.

It will be impossible to make a decision on the budget until the above questions have been answered and settled.

Action #3- Meetings- It is clear from the email responses that a majority of the board feel that we need to hold regular meetings, be those monthly, bimonthly or quarterly. This is easily done by using a service such as Free Conference Call , which offers a way to hold these meetings at no

expense, (unless the caller is on a limited phone plan). As I am not a fan of holding meetings for the sake of holding meetings, we could do it on demand as needed. Email is also a suitable method to exchange thoughts and begin any process. The By-laws may need to be changed to allow email or phone votes.

Action #4- Committees -The Strategic Plan lists a number of committees. There appeared to be a feeling that some of these committees have been useful, although they have been inactive for some time. These will need to be sorted and chairs named.

Action #5- Future Planning – In light of recent events, many felt that the business of the Society should be made more accessible to all the board members. The easiest way to start this process is by the use of shared folders on a service such as Dropbox. The Canal Society of NYS has been using Dropbox to store and share meeting minutes and other matters of governance with success for a couple years, and this has allowed board members the opportunity to upload other historic business and committee related documents as they find them. The service is secure and serves as a backup for everyone. (a note here. Tom Grasso and I were sharing photos back and forth with Dropbox and I watched real time as his computer was seized by a ransomware. On his end, all the files that we shared were encrypted, while those on my end were safe. I researched this and found that the protections offered by these shared services are highly protected.)

Action #6 – Sales – Roger has stated that the Society is likely wasting it's time trying to sell the remaining goods in stock. He recommends that the items be donated to like minded organizations and libraries, and that the sales page be discontinued from the American Canals. We do have the opportunity to sell some items in the new Port Byron Park gift shop, and I have asked that the stock be moved to my home for sorting. Roger has also recommended that we try using the Amazon affiliate sales option where we link items to Amazon and if someone uses the link to my a purchase, we would get a small percentage. Roger is working on setting this up.

Mike