FRIENDS OF MONMOUTH BATTLEFIELD FIVE-YEAR PLAN

presented to trustees September 18, 2021

Approved by membership 12/31/21

MISSION STATEMENT

The Friends of Monmouth Battlefield are dedicated to protecting, preserving and interpreting the military and social history of the Monmouth Campaign of 1778 and the cultural landscapes of both the battlefield and associated sites within a broader geographic area beyond the Park. The preservation and interpretation of the Monmouth Campaign is a vital link in commemorating New Jersey’s role as the Crossroads of the American Revolution.

INTRODUCTION

 The Friends of Monmouth Battlefield, Inc. (FOMB) was formed in 1990 as a 501 (c) (3) not-for profit organization for the purpose of supporting Monmouth Battlefield State Park (the Park) and working to protect, preserve and interpret sites associated with the battle of Monmouth, which was fought on June 28, 1778.

 No change is being proposed to the current mission statement [see above]. As part of the present five year plan plan, FOMB By Laws have been recently amended and updated. The Board of Trustees is currently set at 9-13 members, which is adequate to get our job done. A major continuing problem is that the bulk of the organization’s work is done by only a handful of Trustees/Officers. The activity level of most current trustees has been good, and additional active trustees have been recruited. Membership has grown to over 130, with new record levels being attained almost every year. However, many members live out of state or are elderly, which affects the number of active members. A major goal continues to be to increase both the number of members and the number of active members. The level of monetary contributions by the members when renewing yearly memberships is strong. Our newsletter is good, though not professionally done, and our programs are uniformly excellent. We definitely need to advertise our activities better through local media.

Our website is excellent, well maintained, and up to date. The current meeting schedule of four general meetings a year and bimonthly Trustee meetings seems adequate; though these have been necessarily curtailed because of the Covid-19 crisis.

 FOMB is grateful to the Park for the expanded book store, which was opened in 2013. However, we still do not have adequate storage for our records or office space per se, which is supposed to be supplied through our ORFO agreement. The effort to use the building on Park property formerly occupied by Owl Haven literally collapsed in our faces in 2006 when the building developed roof and structural problems and the State was not able to repair them. Consequently, the building had to be abandoned before being taken down. Our records were temporarily stored in the old snack bar area of the Visitor center for several years until that building was demolished in 2012. Though the Park can still provide us with a meeting space and a nice library, we still do not have accessible office or storage space.

 We are disappointed that the research library that we established in the old visitor center area five years ago had to be dismantled due to temperature and humidity issues. The large number of research books collected and catalogued is presently in storage. We are looking forward to the reestablishment of the research library, but all preparation for it is presently in the hands of the Park.

FOMB is delighted to see the erection of a lovely and versatile new Visitor Center, complete with an electric map, an auditorium, and brand new exhibits. We are happy to see interpretive wayside exhibits being erected on the battlefield and are pleased to be supporting the erection of more of them. We are also pleased to continue sponsoring our successful history hike brochures and the descriptive pamphlet of the Craig House.

We will continue to support the Park in its efforts to restore the battlefield to battle era appearance. Specifically, we would like to see the view shed improved from Combs Hill to the Hedgerow/Parsonage area. Historic fence lines need to be repaired and extended. We are pleased to provide the docents who keep the Craig House open to visitors but continue to be distressed at the building’s physical deterioration. We are especially concerned that the Park has not done an architectural evaluation of the building and that a plan of restoration or rehabilitation has not been developed.

 As mentioned, we are pleased to see the erection of wayside interpretive displays on the battlefield and the expansion of the trails system. We will gladly assist the Park in developing additional interpretive displays and in developing a full tour road program.

 We are pleased that additional encroachments have not been made on the borders of the battlefield. We will continue to work in every case to defend and protect the integrity of the Park. We do not have any plans for acquiring significant pieces of land for inclusion in the Park.

 FOMB also has an interest in interpreting the Monmouth campaign outside the confines of the Park proper. We will be working to interpret the battle in areas not included in the Park, as well as sites associated with the Monmouth campaign.

 We remain greatly disappointed that there has not been a full time Superintendent at the park for several years. On the other hand, we highly commend Park Historian Michael Timpanaro for his dedication, energy and support. He and his staff are professional, helpful and friendly.

 FOMB is proud of our accomplishments at the Park: co-sponsorship with the Park each year of a successful battle reenactment and commemoration every June; help with the History Fair; publication of brochures on the Craig House and two historic walking trails; maintenance of a gift shop at the Visitor Center on Sundays all year; providing docents to keep the Craig House open every Sunday from April to December; a fine schedule of historic programs about the battle; walking tours and interpretive assistance at the Visitor Center. We plan over the next five years to continue these programs, with expansion in the areas indicated, as we continue to assist the Park and help interpret the battle and campaign of Monmouth.

 We are gravely disappointed about the necessary curtailment of activities and the cancellations of the popular battle reenactments in 2020 and 2021 because of the coronavirus epidemic. We look forward to restoration of all our events and activities, with appropriate health precautions, in the near future.