

Nathaniel Davis Fund Committee
Annual Report to the Brunswick Town Council
May 15, 2023

The Nathaniel Davis Fund was created 90 years ago, in 1933, through a bequest in the will of Samuel Gross Davis, a Boston lawyer, who died in 1932 and is buried in Pine Grove Cemetery. The will states, *“I bequeath \$2,000 to the Town of Brunswick, Maine in affectionate remembrance of my father, Major Nathaniel Davis, who chose Brunswick for his home ... to be called the NATHANIEL DAVIS FUND, the income thereof only to be used each year for the pleasure of its inhabitants as the government of Brunswick of that year shall decide.”*

Because of another stipulation in the will that *“any lapsed legacy or devise or other property not disposed of I give to the Town of Brunswick to be added to the NATHANIEL DAVIS FUND,”* the fund quickly grew from \$2,000 to \$60,000. In February of this year, the Trust Fund Committee reported that the 20-quarter rolling average value of the Davis Fund was \$513,851, yielding an allocation of \$20,554 to fulfill the mission of the fund in 2023-2024.

The Nathaniel Davis Fund Committee includes seven members appointed by the Town Council for staggered three-year terms ending on June 30th. The current members are: Alison Harris, David Knight, Steve Podgajny, Jym St. Pierre, Annee Tara, and Jeff Ward. Julia Brown, who filled the last year of an unexpired term, is currently seeking reappointment to the committee. We have excellent staff support from the Town Manager’s office – Deb Blum for many years, and now Deb Young.

The Davis Fund Committee typically meets twice a year. We have an organizational meeting in December at which we make plans for the upcoming grant cycle and assign members to contact the current year’s grantees for progress reports on their projects.

Grant application forms are available in March with a submission deadline in mid-April. This year we publicized grant applications with a public notice and a feature story in the *Times Record*, on the Town’s Facebook page, on the home page of the Town’s website, and through word of mouth.

Traditionally, the committee meets on the first Wednesday evening in May to interview applicants and make recommendations for grant awards. In recent years, including this year, we have met on Thursday, also, because of the volume of applications. Grants typically range from \$500 to \$2,500.

After meeting with the applicants, and taking into consideration adherence to the mission of the fund, the number of people served, the timing of projects, and other factors, the Davis Fund Committee is making the following recommendations for 2023-2024 grants totaling \$16,455:

- **Arts Are Elementary** – to support engaging former Penobscot Nation chief and artist Barry Dana to make two visits each to the eight 5th grade classes at the Harriet Beecher Stowe School in May & June, 2024, and to hold one public forum at Curtis Library. (This year’s public forum with Barry Dana is on May 22, 2023 at the Library.) (\$1,000)

- **Brunswick Area Teen Center** – to support field trips and other activities, and meals and snacks, year-round (\$2,000)
- **Brunswick Downtown Association** – to support the annual tree-lighting event on the Mall on November 25, 2023 (\$2,000)
- **Brunswick-Topsham Memorial Day Committee** – to partially underwrite the cost of the brass band playing at the gazebo before the end of the parade and during the observance on May 29, 2023 (\$1,000)
- **Growing to Give** – to hire musicians for the 5th Annual “FarmYard Jam” community music festival on September to benefit the grow-for-donation organic farm operation on September 16, 2023 (\$1,530)
- **Longfellow Days** – for honoraria to scholars, poets and performers and incidental expenses of activities celebrating Henry Wadsworth Longfellow throughout February 2024 (\$2,000)
- **Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association** – to support publishing a Brunswick-specific booklet about living and working in a waterfront community (\$1,000)
- **Midcoast Symphony Orchestra** – to underwrite costs of a free “Meet the Instruments” event in January 2024 (\$1,000)
- **Pejepscot History Center** – to purchase two computers (with accessories) required for collections documentation and administrative functions, and a device to digitize oral histories and other audio cassettes (\$1,925)
- **People Plus** – to support and enhance year-round activities for seniors, including field trips and a picnic at Thomas Point Beach (\$2,000)
- **The Theater Project** – to support the production of the musical “Squeeze Me!,” to run July 3-23, 2023 (\$1,000)

Following the funding deliberations and consensus vote, the committee elected Annee Tara to serve as chair and Alison Harris to serve as secretary for July 2023 through June 2024.

Going forward, we are looking for ways to publicize the availability of grants. During the pandemic, programs were interrupted and applications dropped off. Because the grants are modest and the terms of the Samuel Davis’s bequest are quite specific, some organizations seem to be deterred from applying.

We also have learned that two committee members do not plan to seek reappointment in June. We hope that citizens will apply for these seats so that we have a full complement in time for our December meeting.

Truly, it is a joy to serve. We meet only two or three times a year – one day in December and one or two in the first week of May – and we have the happy task of learning about interesting activities in town and recommending funding to bring pleasure to the inhabitants of Brunswick.

Respectfully submitted,
 Annee Tara, Chair
 Nathaniel Davis Fund Committee