

FINNISH GENEALOGY GROUP OF MINNESOTA: MEMBER MEETING
Zoom Meeting – 14 February 2026

9:00 a.m. Sign in and Chat.

1. CALL TO ORDER: 9:34 a.m. by President Barbara Wilson.
2. GUEST INTRODUCTIONS: Ed Ruitberg invited Linda Jokela, Becky Jokela. Bill Jokela, Jonne Lähteenmäki, and Liz Citrin. Steve Westmark who has mailed his dues check.
3. CHANGE REQUESTS TO AGENDA OR MINUTES: None.
4. CONSENT CALENDAR (AKA CONSENT AGENDA)
 - A. Member Meeting Minutes for January 10, 2026, were approved.
 - B. Financial report for the period ending January 31, 2026, was approved. Beginning balance on January 1 was \$5,274.72. Ending balance as of January 31 was \$5,464.72.
5. OFFICER AND COMMITTEE REPORTS
 - A. Treasurer Report (Jeanne Moe)
 - 1) January 2026 financials: Beginning balance on January 1 was \$5,274.72. In January 2026, 7 new membership dues were paid (one paid for two years). One expense was the recurring \$10 Zoom payment. Ending balance as of January 31, 2026 was \$5,464.72.
 - B. Membership Report (Jan O'Leary)
 - 1) 48 paid family members and 1 honorary. 49 total.
 - 2) Jan O'Leary will send out another email to members who have not yet paid their 2026 dues of \$25.00.
 - C. Vice President Report: Updates (Daina Rosen)
 - 1) Presentations
 - a) March 14: FGGMN has a round-robin discussion. Each member gives an introduction about themselves as new members do, including their connection to Finnish heritage.
 - b) April 11: Matti Erpestad, UMD instructor presents on his service as a Finnish-American in the Finnish Army.
 - c) May 9: Jim Johnson presents on writing family stories.
 - 2) Let Daina Rosen know if you are interested in doing a presentation—it doesn't have to be a PowerPoint presentation. FGGMN needs programs for coming year, starting this September.
 - D. Communications Report (Diane Pearson)
 - 1) Diane sent an email to members who had not yet paid their 2026 dues, requesting they continue their membership and pay their dues.
6. OLD BUSINESS
 - A. 2026 budget and projections

- 1) Income is from membership (\$1,025 for actual 2025; \$1,000 in the 2026 budget) and donations once in a while (\$0 in 2025).
 - 2) Larger expenses
 - a) Support and maintenance of Zoom and Zoom storage, website cost and assistance, and domain name.
 - b) \$100 honorarium fee for speakers: \$400, actual 2025; \$500, 2026 budget.
 - c) Fee for in-person meetings: \$237 in 2025 with a \$300 uncashed damage deposit paid to Danish American Center; \$475 in 2026 budget.
 - d) Book storage: \$250 to Plymouth Apostolic Lutheran Church in 2025 and 2026 budget. Storage will be discussed.
 - e) Bank fee (safety deposit box for storage to document non-profit status) will increase from \$55 in 2025 to \$115 in 2026. The bank said it will hopefully stay at this cost for a couple of years.
 - f) Donation: \$100 for Juhannus Celebration in 2025; none budgeted in 2026.
 - g) Total expenses were \$3,760.94 in 2025 and budgeted to be \$2,398.22 in 2026 (no website cost).
 - 3) Net loss was \$2,735.94 in 2025, and is budgeted to be \$1,398.22 in 2026.
 - 4) Budget projections for 2027 and 2028
 - a) Unless FGGMN has donations (like the 2024 Harju inheritance or member donations), FGGMN will run out money in 2028, given budget projections.
 - b) Memberships are projected to decline so income will decline if the membership fee remains at \$25 annually as shown in the projections. Membership has declined since COVID but was stable around 70 members pre-COVID. The reasons for the decline are unknown—e.g., content, Zoom meetings instead of live meetings, people using other people’s research on Ancestry and My Heritage to do their family trees, and some FGGMN members passing away. FGGMN is the only Finnish genealogy organization in the United States.
 - c) Many expenses are projected to increase due to inflation, and expenses that are not expected to change were kept at the same cost. Speakers were reduced by one for 2027 and 2028. FGGMN does not have to pay a significant cost for the website in 2026 and 2027 because it received a discount for prepaying these years in 2025. The website will be a significant cost in 2028. Some items do not have to be paid every year. Total expenses are projected to be lower in 2026 and 2027 than 2025 because there will be no website charge.
 - d) If FGGMN continues to lose members and spends as it has recently, it will run out of money in 2028 when the website cost is paid. We need to think about 2028 and address how to handle expenses being more than income unless FGGMN receives donations. Where should FGGMN cut back? It is not necessary to do something immediately, but FGGMN needs to think about it during the next two years. Would some members like to make a donation?
- B. Action Items from the board meeting on January 24, 2026
- 1) The board would like to engage members about what expenses could be reduced to sustain the organization and ways to increase membership—e.g.:
 - a) What should be done with the book storage? This will first be addressed at a special board meeting.
 - b) How many outside speakers does FGGMN want for its eight meetings during the calendar year?
 - c) How many hybrid meetings does FGGMN want to have? The 2026 budget shows two meetings in May and September.
 - d) Should FGGMN do anything different with the website?

- e) What should be done to increase FGGMN's marketing?
- 2) FGGMN will now accept donations at any time of the year to help support the organization financially. Members can make a general donation to be used as needed by FGGMN. If you make a payment over the required dues, please specify if the additional payment is for prepaid dues or a general donation. FGGMN will also send a letter out about donations to members to help reduce the financial losses.
- 3) Marketing will increase.
 - a) Diane Pearson sent a note to people who were members back to 2024 who had discontinued membership to encourage them to rejoin.
 - b) Diane is writing an article for *FAR (Finnish American Reporter)* to have a stronger presence in the public.
 - c) Diane will send an email, inviting people who are on the community list to join FGGMN. Joan Dwyer had started a list of names of interested people, which needs updating periodically.
- 4) To help budget the membership numbers better and facilitate marketing, FGGMN will create a membership spreadsheet with a few columns that will help us understand our membership better, including gains and losses and when have they occurred.
- 5) Diane Pearson is planning to have the results of researching a way to pay dues online for the next member meeting.
- C. Finland House: The objective of Finland House is to host Finnish American activities and have an archive library. FAA (Finnish American Association) is also anxious for a shared venue to be established to hold events and programs. If Finland House is created, it could be a location for FGGMN to have its library.
- D. Barb Wilson discussed officers whose terms are ending this year. FGGMN needs three new officers starting with 2026-2027 for two-year terms starting in September.
 - 1) President
 - 2) Secretary
 - 3) Associate Treasurer as a backup to Treasurer
 FGGMN also needs two backup positions:
 - 1) Backup for the Membership Standing Chair Jan O'Leary
 - 2) Backup for the Communications Standing Chair Diane Pearson. Diane has volunteers and will follow up.
- E. As a reminder, the Member Section of the FGGMN website has membership that includes member phone numbers, email addresses and mailing addresses.
- F. During the pre-meeting's chat, we discussed Finnish immigrants becoming U.S. citizens. For a time, female citizens who were born in the U.S. and married an immigrant lost their U.S. citizenship. The topic of citizenship would be an interesting presentation, including wartime citizenship for men. Two websites are [Step 4: Common Problems - Naturalization & Immigration Records - LibGuides at Minnesota Historical Society Library](#) and [A Timeline of Naturalization Laws Impacting Women - Family Tree Magazine](#)
- G. After the business meeting and before the presentation, Anne Tormanen suggested that members give family-member names and locations because members could talk to each other about finding distant relatives and learning from others' research in common locations. FGGMN library has this type of list, but it has not been updated.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- A. In the next few months FGGMN will discuss ideas about what to do with the library at the Plymouth Apostolic Lutheran Church. FGGMN has been voluntarily paying \$250 per year for storage. In the past, the storage was considered part of our payment for meeting

space. FGGMN held in-person meetings at the Church before COVID but cannot hold hybrid meetings because of the limited internet service. In the basement, FGGMN's library closet has two metal shelves with books, some of FGGMN's papers, references for genealogy, and a huge, very detailed map of Finland. The kitchen area has FGGMN's utensils.

8. MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A. Jan O'Leary is having knee surgery on 2/19/26. Diane Pearson is the backup for membership questions during Jan's recovery period.
- B. February 15, 2026: Finlandia Beach Club has its Laskiainen Festival at the Cloquet Armory from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. with split pea soup and sloppy joes and a kantele presentation by Sheila Coughlin.
- C. February 21, 2026: Laskiainen celebration from 1:00–2:15 p.m., sponsored by FAA in Lebanon Hills. The signup for the sauna is full.
- D. February 22, 2026, Sunday: The Ladies of Kaleva will hold their annual Kalevala Day from 12:00–3:00 p.m. at Our Saviours Lutheran Church in Duluth. Lunch will include piirakas, free live music by June Randall and Debbie Slygh, and guest speaker Lisa Fitzpatrick.
- E. February 22, 2026, Sunday: The Esko Historical Society and Minnesota Finnish-American Historical Society will have a screening of the Emmy-winning documentary film, *Fire and Ice: The 1939 Winter War of Finland and Russia*, at the Esko High School Theater at 2:00 pm. Free, donations accepted.
- F. February 28, 2026: Kalavala Day celebration at 6:30 pm on Zoom. FAA and VuoriVene will present an overview and excerpts of the Finnish national epic. It features Karen Ba and Suomi Sing-Along.
- G. March 21, 2026: The Swedish Finn Historical Society's annual meeting with interesting speakers will now be held this year in Seattle because of the ICE surge. It will also be held and on Zoom. There is no charge for attending on Zoom. Non-members can attend on Zoom. <https://www.swedishfinnhistoricalsociety.org/about/#board-of-directors>
- H. September 18-20, 2026: FinnFest 2026 will have presentations, films, live music, and a marketplace for Finnish items.
- I. March 20, 2027: Next year's Swedish Finn Historical Society will be held in the Twin Cities.

BUSINESS MEETING ADJOURNMENT: 10:21 a.m.

Presentation: FGG member Ed Ruitberg FGG member Ed Ruitberg will present the research he did on Linda Jokela's family as part of the FGG raffle basket for the Juhannus event.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Pat Zingheim, secretary, 14 March 2026.