

**Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 21, 2019**

Present: Claudia Chapman, Jim Conboy, Clarence Cross, Jim Johnson, Michelle Miller, Gregg Resnick, Diane Speer, Judy Suszek, Anne Belanger, John Caplis, Heidi Haaxma, Director Christine Witulski and guest CPA Marie Williams

Excused Absent: Ann Diamond and Janet Young

Absent: Don MacMaster, Kristen Sharpe and Mike Ableidinger

Meeting called to order at 4:35 p.m. by President Anne Belanger

Minutes: Gregg Resnick moved to accept the April 2019 Minutes, supported by Clarence Cross. All ayes. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Heidi Haaxma presented a Treasurer's Report to the board. CPA Marie Williams discussed a recent Finance Committee meeting attended by Director Christine Witulski to discuss the next fiscal year budget. She also talked about usage of donor restricted funds versus non-donor restricted funds.

Motion to accept the next fiscal year budget: Jim Conboy moved to accept the budget for the upcoming fiscal year as corrected to reflect an additional expenditure of \$17,500. Judy Suszek seconded. All ayes. Motion carried.

New Business:

- Director Christine Witulski sought approval from the board for converting the Besser Museum's front yard sign to a digital one. Omega Electric gave a \$17,286 estimate, with funds available in the previous Capital Campaign Fund. When the sign first was installed in 2011 it originally was intended to be a digital one, but Lafarge, which gave funding for the sign, pulled back on that aspect of the project. Witulski indicated she will research service/warranty contracts on the sign.
- **Motion to approve funding digital sign:** Jim Conboy moved to authorize the expenditure for Omega Electric to convert the Besser Museum's front yard sign to a digital one as long as service/warranty conditions are met. Supported by Gregg Resnick. All ayes. Motion approved.

Director's Report:

- Director Christine Witulski told the board about the installation of the animal collection at JJ's Steak & Pizza House. She said it looks amazing. A placement has been designed for guests at the restaurant. Other signage that reflects the Besser Museum name also is in the works.
- Witulski shared that the video of Clarence Cross talking about the Katherine V restoration project and exhibit has gone live on YouTube.
- Witulski discussed some staffing issues through Work Study and Star Staffing. She indicated she still is working on the vacant Collections Management position

as well as the process for uploading the museum's vast collections into Past Perfect.

- Witulski announced the annual meeting will be held June 18 at 7 p.m. This takes the place of the regular board meeting.

Standing Committee Reports:

- **Collections Committee:** Based on a recommendation from the committee, Witulski sought permission from the board to properly dispose of two broken and cracked animals from the Cranbrook collection as well as a large box of hides. She advised donating them to Advanced Wildlife, which will use them for educational purposes.
- **Motion to approve donation of animals/hides:** Gregg Resnick moved to authorize the donation of two broken and cracked animals from the Cranbrook collection and a large box of hides to Advanced Wildlife. Supported by Jim Johnson. All ayes. Motion carried.
- **Governance Committee:** Gregg Resnick reported that the committee has begun working through ways non-profits can improve operations with a Steps Program from the American Association of State & Local History. The program involves grading various areas and discussing ways to improve. Areas already noted as needing some improvement are: 1. Fostering the idea of basing all decisions on the museum's mission. 2. Collecting better data on visitors. 3. Creating a written finance policy. 4. Doing an annual executive director review. 5. Doing an annual board review. He said the committee recommended changing the museum's mission statement to include the phrase, "inspire curiosity for all ages."
- **Motion to change museum mission statement:** Gregg Resnick moved to change the museum's mission statement to include the phrase, "inspire curiosity for all ages." Supported by John Caplis. All ayes. Motion carried.
- **Great Lakes Fisheries Exhibit Committee:** Clarence Cross reported the Katherine V is all set to take visitors in about another week. Work is continuing on the vessel's engine. Excellent PR pieces were done in both the Oscoda and Tawas newspapers. Jim Johnson reported pursuing a MCACA Capital Construction Grant for the Chinook. The board and Director Chris Witulski discussed some of the specifics needed for filing the grant.
- **Motion to pursue a MCACA Grant for the Chinook:** Jim Johnson moved to pursue a MCACA Capital Improvement Grant for the Chinook. Supported by Gregg Resnick. All ayes. Motion carried.
- **Native American Exhibit Committee:** President Anne Belanger reported that genealogist Matt McCormick is conducting further research at a cost of up to \$3,000 to identify stories of local families to be told through the exhibit. She also shared that a \$50,000 anonymous donation has been received for the renovation project.
- **HR Committee:** Jim Conboy reported that the committee plans to meet prior to the annual Business Meeting in June.

Old Business:

- **Board Retreat:** President Anne Belanger reported that details for a board retreat during the summer still are being worked out.
- **Study of space usage:** Director Chris Witulski reported that she still is awaiting a study report on how best to utilize the museum's space from R.S. Scott Associates.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m. The next meeting is the annual board meeting on Tuesday, June 18 at 7 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Speer