

**Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, March 18, 2025 @ 4:30 p.m.**

*Our mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit authentic articles and artifacts of art, history, and science to inspire curiosity for all ages, foster community pride, and cultivate personal legacy.*

**Board Members: President,** Mike Beaulac, **Vice President,** Ashley Peterson, **Secretary,** Jim Johnson, **Treasurer,** Sue Stender, Gary Goren, Claudia Chapman, Tuffy Cross, Julie Austin, Jon Gougeon, Janet Young, Dan Florip, Sara Winter, and Brian Bartosh,  
Absent: Michelle Miller (excused).

**1) Call To Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:34 pm.

**2) Review February 18, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes for approval (*action item*)**

The motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Brian Bartosh and seconded by Ashley Peterson. All in favor. Motion carried.

**3) TREASURER'S REPORT:** (Chris Witulski for Sue Stender): See Sue's reports. Admission income is increasing because of interest in the new DNEM Exhibit: attendance for February was up 2.7-fold over February 2024. The treasurer's report was filed as submitted.

**4) Reports to the Board:**

a) **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Full report can be found on the Museum's website.

- 1) Attendance was much higher after the reopening compared with last February.
- 2) A full-time museum assistant, Isabel Rudy, started March 3.
- 3) Mathew leaves March 20.
- 4) Still looking for a person to fill the Facility Assistant position.
- 5) Considering two other positions: a seasonal education coordinator and possibly a full-time marketing/communications person.
  - a) There was discussion over the latter position. Needed for maintaining website, outreach, advertising, coordinating with newspapers and other media. The question of potentially hiring a full time outreach person will be on the April agenda.
- 6) Working on a summer marketing campaign, to possibly include billboards, an advertisement for the cruise ship booklet, and advertising on WATZ, Alpena News, etc.
  - a) Working with Lamar advertising on the billboard proposal. See new business.
- 7) Should hear whether grant application to Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity Community Museum Grant Program was successful by May.
- 8) The Executive Director and Sara Winter have been working on reestablishing an Education Committee. They are consulting with teachers/educators about how Besser can collaborate with educators on addressing gaps in curriculum. Reaching out to community for possible committee members. Preparing and planning for spring class tours (600 students attended in 2024).
- 9) Planet History Walk: We have \$7,000 from Giving Tuesday in this account. Gary Goren continues to lead on this project, is applying for a Youth and Recreation Grant, and is working with Fossil Inc. and others on signage. There was strong support for one more sign explaining why Pluto is no longer considered a planet.
- 10) Working on permissions and plans to make prints of Native American artwork. The products could include note and postcards. Johnson suggested adding such cards with images of the *Katherine V* and the *Chinook*.

## 5) AD HOC COMMITTEES:

- a. **GOVERNANCE REPORT:** (Dan Florip no report). The Museum Board needs four new members by June.
- b. **GREAT LAKES FISHERIES HERITAGE EXHIBIT:**
  1. **Chinook Project:** (Jim Johnson report) – continued to work with Good Design on the interpretive design. John Metcalf is seeking bids from Omega and Fossil Inc. for signage. We filed for and received a one-year no-cost extension for the Invasive Species Grant, which will now expire April 30, 2026. Working with DNR to seek validation of and suggestions for the interpretative plan. Attended the annual Great Lakes Stewardship Place Based Education networking meeting to give them an update on our exhibits.
    - i. Propose postcards/note cards for the Museum store.
    - ii. Propose teaming with Austin Bros on busing Viking tourists.
    - iii. Can we add Fisheries Heritage opportunities to the Viking notices?
    - iv. Discussion of how to get Viking more interested in busing their clients to Besser. The Viking visitation season for Alpena is April 26-September 18.
  2. **Katherine V:** Tuffy Cross:
    - i. Will open the Exhibit in the next few weeks.
    - ii. The Michigan Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Consortium Conference has been postponed: instead of May, it will be held in South Haven this fall, dates yet to be announced.
- c. **DISCOVER NORTHEAST MICHIGAN HISTORY:** (Mike Beaulac)
  1. Need a scoping/brainstorming committee to help with the “Vision-level” and schematics for Phase II.
  2. There were a lot of applications for the Community Museums Grant so the competition is intense, and the review period will go into May.
  3. Need a schematic plan to illustrate our intentions for use in grant applications. What do we want, what do we now have, and what do we have that might not fit the vision? How to enliven the taxidermy: for example, using dioramas with them displayed in their habitat. The outline of the project will be shared on the Besser website. Discussion ensued of what the overall theme would be; maybe seasons of the outdoors? Mike is assembling a planning committee.
- d. **COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE:** (Claudia Chapman):

The collections committee recommended accepting into the current collection:

  1. Two 1960s “Besser Block News” pamphlets, Vol. 6 No. 4 and Vol. 5 No. 12.
  2. A 1943 church program for St. Anne Church “Public Holy Hour for Peace”.
  3. A WWII Uniform from Alpena

Claudia Chapman moved, Brian Bartosh seconded to accept, motion carried.

  4. Recommended deaccession of:
    1. A pocket map carrying case - lack of relevant information (empty).
    2. A panoramic photo of McPhee School students in front of the school - duplication in the collection.Claudia Chapman moved to deaccess, and Ashley Peterson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

## 6) Old Business:

- a. Ad-hoc committee for marketing: Executive Director is looking over old documents and strategies for marketing.
- b. Committee yet to be appointed.

## 7) New Business:

**a. BILLBOARD PROMOTIONAL**

1. Executive Director proposed 5 billboards for a summer promotional project. Total cost \$12,800 for May-August. The General Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan endowment fund has \$112,000 and she proposed tapping into this.
2. ED is working with graphic designers to build our message for these.
3. Our marketing budget is much less than the generally recommended 10% of budget.

Dan Florip moved Jon Gougeon supported motion to approve this billboard expenditure. Motion carried.

**b. IRA Account**

- The board opened an IRA in 2001 which was managed by Edward Jones. We now need to transfer this to another institution. Board approval is required to make this move. The proposal is to transfer the funds to Old Mission.

Dan Florip moved to authorize the Executive Director to sign the documents to make this transfer. Ashley Peterson seconded. Motion passed.

**8) Adjourn:**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Johnson, Secretary