

Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan
Executive Director Report for Board of Trustees Meeting
September/October 2025

Admission Rates:

- Members of the Finance Committee meet on Tuesday, October 14. Mike Beaulac, Gary Goren, Brian Bartosh, and Chris Witulski discussed several options for admission rate increases starting with \$10 upwards of \$15 for adults.
- Community feedback was gathered after the meeting from several local residents and stakeholders, including the other Finance Committee members. The consensus was clear: a jump from \$5 to \$15 is too steep and would not be well received in our community.
- This proposed increase of \$15 more than triples the current rate and risks alienating the very community that has generously supported the museum, both corporately and privately, especially in light of our recent fundraising success for the new exhibit. Implementing such a drastic change immediately after asking for financial support sends a conflicting message and could damage the museum's reputation.
- Community members expressed concern that the new rates would make visits unaffordable for many families. Several individuals calculated the cost for their groups and concluded they would likely choose not to visit. This sentiment suggests that rather than increasing revenue, the proposed rates could lead to a decline in attendance and community goodwill.
- A more thoughtful approach would be to implement incremental increases. Suggestions included raising adult admission to \$7.50 or \$10 initially, with the possibility of future adjustments. This strategy would allow the museum to gradually build revenue while maintaining accessibility and public trust.
- We must remain community-minded in our decisions. Our operational funding depends not only on admissions but also on ongoing public support. With Phase 2 of the history exhibit on the horizon, preserving our positive relationship with the community is essential.
- Given the recent uptick in admissions due to the new exhibit and marketing efforts, a modest increase to \$10 for adults and \$5 for children strikes a balance between financial sustainability and community accessibility. This approach supports our mission and ensures continued public engagement. I propose an increase of \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.

Membership Rates:

- Angela Addington and I have been working on the proposed new membership brochure which includes new membership categories, fees, and benefits. This membership structure was modeled after a combination of several different museum membership programs.

FACILITY:

1. The contract has been signed with Control Solutions to replace the faulty valves and actuators on the HVAC system. The parts have been ordered, and the work should commence soon.
2. Orkin pest control was brought in to treat carpenter ants in the Log Cabin. Multiple treatments have resolved the issue, however, Orkin will perform maintenance treatments quarterly. Orkin checked all the other historic buildings and found no evidence of carpenter ants.
3. Orkin also had to remove a large wasps nest from the Katherine V exhibit after a utility person and Jim Johnson were stung multiple times.
4. Matt is seeking bids for snow plowing for this upcoming season.

HISTORY EXHIBIT:

1. **PHASE 2:**
 - a. Split Rock Studios is working on SD1 designs. They should have some drafts to us by early November.

GREAT LAKES FISHERIES HERITAGE EXHIBIT:

1. **Chinook:**
 - Good Design Group has placed an order to print and fabricate all of the exhibit panels. They should be shipped to the museum the first of December. Omega Electric will install all the signage.
 - A Change Order was approved for contractors to install the water lines to the boats, finish installing lights and outlets in the exhibit areas, and install rain gutters. That work should start the first of December.

PLANETARIUM:

- September 13th, Mike Beaulac and I traveled to Eastern Michigan University to meet with Norbert Vance and see how the Digitalis Education equipment works and if it will be a good fit for the Besser Museum.
 - a. Norbert Vance is the planetarium director/educator at Eastern Michigan University.
 - b. Eastern Michigan University recently installed a Digitalis Education Solutions “Digitalarium Lambda” which comes in at around \$100,000 verse \$300,000 and up. For more information on this system:
https://www.digitaliseducation.com/products-digitalarium_lambda_fixed.html
- John Heath has been operating the Spitz ball for planetarium shows on Friday and Saturday.
- **Planet/History Walk:**
 - Besser Museum was awarded the Youth and Recreation Grant application.
 - Angela Addington will work with Gary on graphic design for the signs. One side will be planetarium information, and the other side will be Alpena history information. Sarah will be able to provide photos and information of the history.

Misc.

- This year's Fall Harvest was a nice event and well attended.
- More updates are being made to the website.
- Plans for this year's Season of Light Exhibit is underway.
 - The Members Only Gala is scheduled for **Sunday, November 16.**
 - Applied for Raffle License
 - JJs will cater
 - We will charge \$10 per member
 - Marketing will go out November 1
 - Museum will be closed while decorating October 31 through November 16.
- Working with Judy Dawley on a new fundraising event for 2026. More information to come.
- Working on audit for FY 2024/2025.
- Cherie Honeycutt will be volunteering to host a children's story and craft time program at the museum. The programs will take place one Saturday a month.