

Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan  
Executive Director Report for Board of Trustees Meeting  
June 2021 – July 2021

**On June 21<sup>st</sup>, Governor Whitmer ended the COVID-19 restrictions which included mask mandates and indoor limited capacity.**

- The Besser Museum is now fully open to the public. However, by request of our planetarium coordinator, we are continuing to limit capacity inside the planetarium hosting only 30 people at each show. However, he will add an additional show at the end of the day if the demand requires.
- We have also implemented special planetarium shows for only \$3 on Mondays and Tuesdays when the planetarium coordinator is off. These show specials have been well attended and are creating additional revenue streams for the museum.
- The Besser Museum is pleased to report unusually high attendance so far this summer. This increase may be due in part to the inclement weather, cancelations of the glass-bottom boat, NOAA visitor center being closed, and an increase in advertising and marketing. The following is a comparison of revenue for admissions for date range of July 1-18:
  - **2021 \$6,873**
  - **2020 \$1,913**
  - **2019 \$3,623**
  - **2018 \$3,073**
  - **2017 \$3,454**
- **July 2020/June 2021 Fiscal Budget**
  - The Finance Committee meet to review the 2020/2021 fiscal budget that I worked with Marie Williams to put together. The budget does include raises for all staff members for this year.
  - The museum also submitted the PPP Second Draw forgiveness application in the amount of 46,500.
  - The Museum qualified for another Employee Retention Tax Credit and will be receiving a tax return of \$18,890 for the last quarter. I believe this is the last credit the museum will qualify for.

**Staffing:** Guest Services Specialist, Katrina Brook resigned her position to move back to Texas to be with her family. I currently hired Lillian Broad part-time to cover the front desk. Lillian will be leaving Alpena in September. I am also looking to hire a second part-time employee for this position.

**Log Cabin Day:****Besser Museum Online Log Cabin Day was well received.**

Besser Museum Education Coordinator, Amanda Kucharek created several virtual Log Cabin Day posts that included fun facts and at home activities the whole family. Those posts gained lots of attention on social media. And, despite not hosting a traditional Log Cabin Day event this year, attendance was still comparable, if not better, to Log Cabin Days in the past.

Admission revenue for the last Saturday of June 2021: **\$440** (and the planetarium was closed).

Admission revenue for the last Saturday of June 2019: **\$426** (includes planetarium admissions).

Total revenue for the day in 2021: **\$817.37**

Total revenue for the day in 2019: **\$639.69**

- **We are currently discussing plans for Fall Harvest Day event which is held the first Saturday in October.**

**HVAC Project**

- Control Solutions was contacted recently due to issues with the current HVAC system. They had to replace a few parts on the HVAC system to maintain the system until our new one arrives sometime in October.
- Control Solutions will begin preparing the control systems for the changeover.
- Johnson and Woods also reported some work will commence prior to the new boiler arriving.
- Susan Edwards from R.S. Scott is our acting project manager for this project. Just a reminder that the cost for their services on this project is \$12,000.

**MUSEUM EXTERIOR:**

Todd Britton from Meridian Construction came to the museum on July 12<sup>th</sup> to examine the exterior of the museum and prepare a bid to fix the columns, eaves, flower boxes, and remove the window wells. Todd Britton has performed other work at the museum through the years which includes installing the elevator and the lift station for the new handicap restrooms. Meridian also sealed the back patio to stop the leakage that had been occurring.

**LOG CABIN PROJECT:**

Contractor apologizes for the delay on this project caused by health issues and COVID restrictions. The logs were delivered, and he said the work will begin soon.

**GREAT LAKES FISHERIES HERITAGE EXHIBIT:**

- **Chinook**
  - Thanks to support from Suzanne Stone, DNR Program Support Manager/Education and Outreach, the museum received \$5,000 from the DNR

education department to be used for excavating the exhibit site and prepare for the dock and ramp for around the Chinook.

- C.R. Yockey excavated the site on July 13 and 14.
- We are also looking to received funds from the Great Lakes Fisheries Trust to cover the expenses to build and install the dock and ramp.
- We are still working to submit a proposal to the DNR Invasive Species Grant Program for the infrastructure for the Chinook exhibit.
- **Kat V**
  - Tuffy and his volunteers continue to work on adding components to the Kat V exhibit. They have added a walkway that leads from the Fossil Park to the Kat V. They have also added some blue tarps to give the illusion of water under the boat.

#### **ANISHINAABE EXHIBIT REVITALIZATION PROJECT (Native American Gallery)**

- Things continue to move along in a positive direction.
- July 9 and 10, I traveled with consultant Charlee Brissette to visit Anishinaabe exhibits in the Sault, St. Ignace, and Mackinac Island. We meet with an exhibit designer and museum executive director at the Ojibway Museum in St. Ignace.
- Charlee and I also meet with native American artist, Anny Hubbard. The Besser Museum has several pieces of Anny's work in our permanent collection. Anny will assist us where needed.
- The Anishinaabe Committee meet with Colleen Medicine on June 29 and set some objectives for narrative development that Colleen and Charlee will work on in July and August.
- Museum Collections Consultant, Laura Quackenbush is continuing to work on processing the private collection donated by an anonymous donor. This collection will be incorporated into the new exhibit.

#### **ART: Wilson Art Gallery Renovation:**

- The new renovations in the Wilson Gallery are being greatly appreciated by the visiting public.
- Security cameras will be added to the gallery next week. This expense is being covered by the remainder of the Besser Foundation gift.

**ARTIFACT COLLECTIONS:** Sarah Honeycutt continues to excel in the position of Collections Manager working with volunteers and staff major works continues to be achieved in this department. Sarah has reconvened the collection committee meetings at the museum as of July 14.

### **EDUCATION Outreach:**

- Amanda has been busy with several educational outreach programs including developing new exhibit interpretation labels. After completing additions labels for the Besser Company hallway, she started working on new signage for the Alpena Motor Car Company. Two signs have been installed so far, with a few more on the way.
- Amanda is also booking groups visiting this summer, which includes 4H groups, day care camps, and adult touring groups.
- Amanda is also continuing to help create interesting Facebook posts.
- Planetarium Shows are continuing to be huge part of our education outreach. Johnathan is hosting regular shows Wednesdays – Sunday. Amanda and I are both running the special planetarium shows on Mondays and Tuesdays.
- Johnathan is hosting an Astronomy & Ales event with Austin Brothers Brewery August 6<sup>th</sup> 10pm – 12am.

### **MISCELLENOUS:**

- **Catholic Central High School Time Capsule**
  - I am continuing to work with the Boys and Girls Club on hosting the time capsule opening event at the old CCHS gymnasium. The museum has several graduating class photos, other random photos, and news articles about the donation of the land by Jesse Besser and the building of the new school. We are working on creating a mini exhibit, including a media event to highlight Jesse Besser's generosity and dedication to the educational and cultural enrichment for the citizens of Alpena.
  - The opening event is scheduled for Thursday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> at 3pm.
- **Other art exhibits**
  - With the renovation of the Wilson Art Gallery and the installation of the Modern Art Exhibit, the decision was made to hold Juried Art Exhibit in the Trelfa Gallery this year. That decision also resulted in changing the dates of the exhibit. The Juried Art Exhibit will now open in August and run through October 31<sup>st</sup>.
  - Erv Lewandowski will be this year's juror.
  - Last year's Juried Art Winner, Stephanie Laframboise's exhibit will open August 21<sup>st</sup>.
- **Gift Store:**
  - Gift store sales have been very good so far this season.
  - Many of our vendors have closed their business so we are challenged with having to seek out new vendors to secure merchandise at a reasonable price for our gift

store. We also work with several local artists carry their merchandise on consignment.

- **OTHER NOTABLES:**

- Matt is working on or overseeing several facility projects, including the excavation of the Fisheries Exhibit site, the Collection Storage areas, exhibit maintenance (lights and such), bathroom repairs (mainly faucets this month) and cleaning. All the staff chips in to help with maintaining the cleanliness of the facility. I am currently seeking to find help with cleaning the building.
- Matt also maintains the lawn with help from a museum volunteer. The Garden Club volunteers maintain the front flowerbeds.
- The Town That Wouldn't Die has been ordered. Gary Goren has drafted the introduction letter which will be an insert the new book.