

**Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 19, 2021 via Skype**

Board Members Present: Jim Conboy, Clarence Cross, Jim Johnson, Michelle Miller, Diane Speer, Judy Suszek, Janet Young, Sue Stender, Marie Fielder, Jean Thomas, Gary Goren, Claudia Chapman and Mike Beaulac.

Others Present: Executive Director Chris Witulski

Absent: Mike Ableidinger

Call to Order: President Michelle Miller called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. via Skype

Minutes: Judy Suszek moved to accept the minutes of the December 2020 meeting with a correction regarding Mike Ableidinger marked present as opposed to absent. Janet Young supported. All in favor. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Michelle Miller shared with the board her report, which is available at the museum's website. She noted that the museum's accountants are pleased with the current financial picture, especially in light of the pandemic and closures.

Reports to the Board:

1. **Director's Report:** ED Chris Witulski submitted a written Director's Report to the board accessible online at the museum's website. She shared that the Season of Light Exhibit was extended, with a favorable response from visitors. She noted that the modular walls are being installed this month. She also informed the board that about \$23,000 in Besser Foundation 50th Anniversary funds remain and that a decision needs to be made soon on how to spend those funds.

Ad Hoc Committees:

1. **Governance:** Judy Suszek shared that she and ED Chris Witulski still are working on updating financial policies. Draft policies are expected to be ready for board consideration at the February meeting. Judy said policies regarding board member recruitment and vetting will be the next set of policies to be examined.
2. **Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Exhibit:** Jim Johnson reported that he is working on a number of grant submissions. He asked Alpena's new city planner to make the museum part of the city's recreation plan in an effort to help with the grant applications. Jim added that both he and ED Chris Witulski are signed up for an upcoming DNR Workshop related to grant funding. It was noted that the LaBlance family interview project still needs to be completed. Zach Irving sent a quote of \$5,000 to complete the video project. Chris said some details still need to be looked at regarding Irving's request. It was announced that a \$1,000 donation from a Vogelheim family member was received for the Katherine V project.
3. **Anishinaabe Exhibit:** ED Chris Witulski shared that four tribal members have agreed to serve on the Anishinaabe Exhibit Advisory Council. The council will hold six advisory meetings in 2021 with the meetings tentatively to begin in February. Museum board members participating in the council include Marie Fielder and Mike Beaulac. Chris also noted that consultant Charlee Brissette will begin work on Phase 2 of the exhibit project this month.

4. **Fine Art Committee:** ED Chris Witulski shared that she will meet soon with local artist/educator/gallery owner Brian Schorn about serving as the Fine Arts Committee advisor as well as giving virtual lectures and helping with other art-related programming. Bringing Brian on board will help to elevate the museum's fine art program. Chris announced a New Beginnings non-juried exhibit opens Feb. 13. This exhibit takes on a different theme from the Winter Blues theme of years past. She said the non-juried exhibit is always fun, draws new artists and brings in some revenue for the museum.
5. **Collections Committee:** ED Chris Witulski said the work being done by staff member Sarah Honeycutt and volunteers is phenomenal. They currently are working on caring for 160 old maps and documents as well as continuing to build the collections PastPerfect database.

Old Business:

HVAC System: ED Chris Witulski said she still is waiting to hear from John Richard of Apollo Engineering and/or Susan Edwards of R.S. Scott Associates concerning much needed upgrades to the HVAC system. Chris plans to contact the owner of R.S. Scott Associates to find out the reason for the delay in response.

Log Cabin Renovation Project: ED Chris Witulski said that thanks to Jim Conboy and Mike Ableidinger, details of the proposed contract were nailed down. Chris expects to submit an invoice to Alpena Youth and Recreation to release grant funds for the museum to cover the cost of logs needed to begin this project. She also said she is waiting to hear about a \$5,000 CFNEM Community Impact Grant earmarked for the Log Cabin restoration.

New Business:

New Endowment Funds: ED Chris Witulski announced the great news that \$1,020,000 in endowment funds have been given to the museum by the Granum family, with a possibility for another \$80,000. She said details still are being worked out and that the museum expects to draw 5% of the endowment funds annually or about \$50,000 to be used to improve or build new local history exhibits, she said. Chris also indicated she is waiting on CFNEM Executive Director Patrick Heraghty to make the formal announcement to the media regarding this major endowment gift, since other entities also are receiving funds from the Granum family through the Community Foundation.

New PPP Second Draw Grant Fund Application: ED Chris Witulski said she has applied to MBank for a second COVID-related PPG grant, this one in the amount of \$36,000.

Adjourn: Jim Conboy made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Gary Goran. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Speer
Board Secretary