

**Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, May 20, 2025**

*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:**

**Present:** **President**, Mike Beaulac, **Vice President**, Ashley Peterson, **Secretary**, Jim Johnson, **Treasurer**, Sue Stender, Gary Goren, Michelle Miller, Claudia Chapman, Tuffy Cross, Janet Young, Dan Florip, Sara Winter, and Brian Bartosh.

**Absent:** Julie Austin (excused), Jon Gougeon

**Staff present:** Executive Director Chris Witulski, Angela Addington

**Introduced Angela Addington.** Prior to calling the meeting to order, the ED introduced the Museum's new Creative Media Specialist. Angela Addington has a BS in art. Most recently was at Model Printing. Angela began work at Besser by cleaning up our logo and working on the web page. Browsers can now search for artifacts on the web page, which has been reorganized. Rather than contracting for web redesign, Angela will do this.

**1) Call To Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:41 pm.

**2) Review April 15, 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. Jim thanked Dan Florip for recording the May minutes.

**3) TREASURER'S REPORT:** See Sue's reports. Two major departures from last year this month were a large DNR Invasive Species grant pass through for the *Chinook* project and costs of rental of billboards. Also, some payments to contractors for the Discover NE Michigan Exhibit and the *Chinook* project.

**4) Reports to the Board:**

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

1. The Board membership by June will number only 9 (10 if Jim Johnson's term is extended) when Claudia, Janet, Tuffy, and Michelle step down. June will be their last meeting - unless others are appointed to replace them. The bylaws specify there be a minimum of 12 members. One new member has been nominated, but recruitment of at least one more is essential.
2. Facility maintenance:
  - a. The Spratt Church roof is over 35 years old and shingles need replacement. Also, some window maintenance is needed, and the building needs to be repainted. Matt Klimczak is seeking proposals for this.
  - b. One of the two boiler pumps has failed. Matt has secured an estimate for a replacement: \$4,995.
  - c. Matt is securing bids to redirect water from the roof over the Trelfa Gallery. Water from the roof is washing away flower beds. (The whole roof will be due for replacement in a few years.)

- d. There is a need for more volunteers to help with landscaping and clearing debris from the ice storm.
3. An estimated 935 students, plus teachers and chaperones, will be visiting the Museum this spring, a few hundred more than last year.
4. The Alpena Public Schools Summer Enrichment Program will stage four events at Besser; the Museum will receive \$2,520 for these services. There will also be two 4-H programs this summer.
5. Lower-level exhibit renovation:
  - a. Split Rock has given an estimate of \$91,000 for a schematic design for Phase II. These schematics will be needed for grant writing and proposals. This will be paid from funds remaining from Phase I.
  - b. Still awaiting news of our \$1 million dollar proposal for a Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity Community Museum Grant.
  - c. Working with Tim Kent in designing and incorporating his early colonial artifacts in the new exhibit.
  - d. ED is soliciting input from community leaders and local experts.
6. Staff: Angela Addington started as the Creative Media Specialist May 13. Her first assignment is to redesign the website.
7. Planetarium: The Executive Director began exploring upgrades for the projection equipment. The existing system requires two projectors, but one has failed. The company no longer services this system, and we must replace it with an entirely new projection system. See Directors report. Cost ~\$100,000. Eastern Mich. Univ. has such a system. A meeting with Eastern is scheduled at Besser for May 30.
8. Gary Goren continues to work hard on the Planet Walk project.
9. Tax filing and audit are done.
10. ED will be a Museum Accreditation peer reviewer this year, which will be a good learning opportunity for our reaccreditation. Ours is up for renewal in 2028.
11. Alpena Flier Reader Rail project will be complete by end of month; Donar wall project was just delivered.
12. Log Cabin Day is June 28<sup>th</sup>.

## 5) AD HOC COMMITTEES:

- a. **GOVERNANCE REPORT:** (Dan Florip) The Museum Board needs at least two 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.
    - i. We received an advancement on the DNR grant in the amount of \$151,079. This money was electronically deposited into the museum's Nicolet bank account and will help cover ongoing expenses.
    - ii. John Schmit of Grand Valley State University assisted us in making the DNR's recommended changes in videos and in hosting the final versions of the videos. We can all share or play the videos from these sites. Grand Valley has contributed John's time to our project at no cost to Besser.
    - iii. Jim Johnson continued to research the interpretation of the exhibit.
    - iv. Began hosting student groups to the Fishery Heritage Exhibit.
  2. **Katherine V:** Tuffy Cross:
    - i. Began hosting student groups.

- ii. Mike Orr has been volunteering, so far so good, but finding volunteers and staff for these field trips needs to be addressed as numbers of students increase and as Jim and Tuffy get older.
    - iii. This will be the biggest year for student visits yet.
  - c. **DISCOVER NORTHEAST MICHIGAN HISTORY:** (Mike Beaulac)
    - 1. Phase II: Still waiting on news of the grant application. If grant fails, will have to solicit and write alternative grants. The schematic design (\$91,000) will be essential for writing these grants/proposals.
    - 2. Meanwhile we are working on an outline of the stories to be told.
    - 3. “Economic Generator” grant for \$15,000 has also been submitted and is pending.
  - d. **COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE:** (Claudia Chapman):
 

The collections committee recommended:

Accession of

    - 1. Portrait of William Hitchcock. Served in Spanish-American war.
    - 2. 4” metal screwdriver with inscription
      - Moved for accession by Ashley Peterson and seconded by Claudia Chapman. Motion passed

Deaccession of:

    - 1. Necklace - in poor condition
    - 2. Straight razor - in poor condition and we have others in better shape.
      - Moved to deaccess by Michelle Miller and Seconded by Sara Winter. Motion passed.

#### 6) Old Business:

- a. Strategic planning. Brial Bartosh will set up an ad hoc committee and meeting date Angela Addington will be an important addition to the committee.
- b. Youth and Recreation Grant for Planet Walk project. We now have nearly \$10,000 for this project, but need about \$22,000 more to complete. Gary Goren and Chris Witulski made the pitch for a \$22,000 grant proposal for an Alpena Recreation Grant. Angela will be helpful in designing the signs.
- c. Janet reported on some of her interesting research for the book on Native American History of northeast Michigan she is working on.

#### 7) New Business:

We must continue to recruit new people. The Board is asked to scour the community for potential good board members.

#### 8) Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Johnson, Secretary