

Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan
Executive Director Report for Board of Trustees Meeting
February 2020

1. **Board Retreat:** The meeting on Saturday, January 18th was a good start to updating our strategic plan and focusing on our top 3 goals. An update on the 6 Main Strategic Goals was given, along with an overview of the major projects underway and the budget.
2. **Facilitator, Ron Bloomfield:** Submitted his report for the January Board meeting. The Board voted to hold a workshop at February's meeting to focus on the Retreat findings and draft new goals and objectives for the years ahead.
3. **It is important to understand the elements of a Strategic Plan and the difference between Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Plans.** Following are some basic definitions found in several different articles about developing a strategic plan and what the difference is between goals and objectives. We may not want to use all four terms when developing our strategic plan.

Goals: are the destination. The best goals will align with your mission, vision and culture and describe longer term aspirations before laying out specific actions.

Objectives: are precise actions or measurable steps to move you closer to your goals. They are specific targets that typically have a time-bound schedule or timeline for completion.

Strategy: is our path to getting somewhere, it is the plan.

Action Steps (Tactics): are the short-term steps and actions that should be taken to achieve the goals described in the strategic plan.

4. Ron's report clearly shows how some of the current 6 Strategic Goals were not given any merit by Board members as they considered where resources need to be allocated to address current and immediate needs. Ron recommended possibly considering adding 3 more goals to the current 6 goals.
5. Based on the universally defined role of museums, which is to "collect objects and materials of cultural and historic importance, preserve them, research into them and present them to the public for the purpose of education and enjoyment," I would recommend we adopt three main goals with all other objectives falling under one of the three goals.

With that idea in mind, I started drafting the following outline using the three main goals: Artifact Preservation, Exhibit Development and Financial Stability.

1. Goal: Artifact Preservation Ensure all artifacts entrusted to the Besser Museum are properly preserved and interpreted according to AAM standards.

a. Objective: Do what is necessary to gain and maintain intellectual and physical control of the museum's artifact collections.

i. Strategy for Facility: Work with architects and museum professionals to draft and implement a plan of action that will improve the exterior and interior environment of the facility with the safety of the collections in mind. (prevent agents of deterioration)

Action Steps:

1. Work with architect to achieve proposed improvements.
2. Conduct Energy Audit.
3. Investigate options for HVAC systems.
4. Obtain bids for exterior improvements.
5. Obtain bids for interior improvements and shelving for storage areas.

ii. Strategy for Collections Management: Work with museum professionals and museum volunteers to establish AAM standards for collection care and preservation.

Action Steps:

1. Catalogue Collections in PastPerfect.
2. Process Temporary Custody Receipts.
3. Continued training for museum volunteers.
4. Draft and implement the plan to reallocate collections storage space.
5. Inventory Collections – Condition Reports for Objects.
6. Hire a Collections Manager.

2. **Goal: Financial Stability:** Ensure the Besser Museum maintains adequate funding to support the mission of the museum, which includes operational expenses along with long-term and short-term projects.

a. **Objective:** Develop multiple revenue streams.

i. **Strategy:** Identify granting opportunities, potential corporate sponsors, private donors, potential members, paid programming and fundraising events to increase revenue.

Action Steps

1. Create a master list of granting opportunities and submit more grants.
2. Increase community awareness of museum services through marketing / advertising / promotions
3. Increase paid programming / special events / fundraisers
4. Increase museum memberships by asking all visitors if they would like to be a member, and by having an annual membership drive campaign.
5. Reduce staff turnover by attracting and maintaining professional staff, offering competitive wages, benefits, and professional training opportunities.

3. **Goal: Exhibit Development:** Ensure our permanent exhibits proudly depict the community's heritage in 21st century museum standards in a way that fosters an appreciation for art, history and science for visitors of all ages and interests.

a. **Objective:** To update all permanent exhibits by 2025.

i. **Strategy:** Work with professional museum exhibit designers and other museum professionals to evaluate our current exhibits and implement improvements where needed.

Action Steps:

1. Determine what stories the museum should tell using artifacts and interpretive labels so to interconnect those stories to Northeast Michigan's heritage.
2. Scrutinize the current exhibits to see what stories, text, and artifacts are being presented to tell visitors about our community's heritage.
Determine what parts of the story are missing.
3. Recruit local historians to review exhibits and give suggestions of what information should be included in the exhibit.
4. Conduct research to add information and/or artifacts to the exhibit.
5. Secure funding for implementation of exhibit designs.
6. Design exhibit labels based on museum industry standards to have a consistent look throughout all permanent exhibits.
 - i. Avenue of Shops / Historical Village
 - ii. Anishinaabe – First Peoples Exhibit
 - iii. Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Exhibit
 - iv. Industries of Northeast Michigan (Lumber/Lakes/Limestone)
7. Ensure exhibits align with State curriculum standards to reinforce grade-level benchmarks for area educators and students.