

Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan
Executive Director Report for Board of Trustees Meeting
June/July 2025

DATA SUMMERY OF ACTIVITIES IN MAY

Collections Management

| Major Activities | Number |
|-----------------------|------------|
| New Accessions | 0 |
| Artifacts cataloged | 154 |
| Artifacts inventoried | 364 |
| Inquiries handled | 8 |

Attendance June

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Adult | 475 | 453 |
| Senior | 310 | 252 |
| Child | 279 | 259 |
| Free | 373 | 225 |
| TOTAL | 1437 | 1189 |

Museum Memberships

June

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Membership Renewals | 26 |
| New Memberships | 5 |

Planetarium

2025

2024

| | | |
|-------|-----------|------------|
| Adult | 96 | 136 |
| Child | 36 | 68 |

EUDCATION: June 2025 – August 2025

1. The first week of June was filled with school field trips. We hosted 433 from June 2 through June 6.
2. This summer we will be hosting four programs in partnership with Alpena Public Schools grant funded program MI KIDS BACK ON TRACK. The programs are free to APS students going into 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. The Besser Museum will receive \$2,520 for the four sessions. See attached flyer.
3. We will also be hosting two programs in partnership with 4H Great Lakes and Natural Resources program. Jim Johnson and Tuffy Cross will assist with this program.

FACILITY:

1. Lakeshore Plumbing installed new water pump for a total cost of \$4,995.
2. We have been having issues with one of the older HVAC control sensors. Due to the expense to replace all the old sensors at once, we opted to exchange one sensor at a time as they fail. This faulty sensor has caused the HVAC to shut down a few times in July. Matt has been working with Control Solutions. They believe they have identified the faulty sensor and will be getting us an estimate of what it will cost to replace.
3. Facility Manager Matt Klimczak received an estimate from John’s Home maintenance of \$9,095 to put a new roof on the Spratt Church. We are still waiting for two more contractor estimates before moving forward. We would like to get the roof done before winter if possible. The roof is missing a few shingles. It may be good until next spring. There are no water leaks yet.
 - a. The church windows still need some repairs. Estimate will be sought.
 - b. The exterior of the building needs to be painted. Estimates will be sought.
4. We are still waiting for an estimate from TRC roofing for the museum roof over the Trelfa Gallery. We have had issues with water draining off that corner of the roof in the past. We are experiencing this again. The water is washing away the earth in front of the concrete flowerbeds. When we had the

roof repaired over the new history exhibit due to leaks, TRC we had a couple more years before the entire roof will need to be replaced.

5. There are several facility projects that need attention in the near future (3 to 5 years). Matt has compiled a list. See attached.

HISTORY EXHIBIT:

1. PHASE 2:

- a. The contract \$45,500 with Split Rock Studios for phase 1 schematic design has been signed. The SD1 phase will produce the graphic design images needed for the fundraising campaign.
- b. The kick off meeting with the SRS design team is scheduled for August 6th and 7th. SRS is working on an itinerary for the meeting. Time will be allotted for the Board members and content experts to participate in a dinner meeting during their visit.
- c. Below is a reminder of the interpretative concept for the lower-level exhibit that was drafted.
 - i. Tim Kent has his exhibit layout and interpretation of the French, British, and Early Colonial Period exhibits completed.
 - ii. John Schmitz from the Conservation District. John agreed to serve on the exhibit committee. John has provided some big picture ideas for the natural science exhibit components.
 - iii. Brad Jensen, Executive Director of Huron Pines, said their organization could be of help in some areas of content development and vet information.
 - iv. I have invited ACC instructor, Amanda Campbell to participate.

GREAT LAKES FISHERIES HERITAGE EXHIBIT:

• Chinook:

- Jim Johnson is putting in an enormous amount of time and energy working on the interpretation panels for the Chinook exhibit.
- Good Design Group is continuing to refine the schematic design and secure bids from subcontractors for the fabrication and installation. They have projected that the installation will occur by August/September.
- We received an extension on our grant deadline. We know have until April 30, 2026, to complete this grant funded project.
- 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 for the expenses on going expenses.

Planetarium:

- Mike Beulac is reaching out to Digitalis Education Solutions to schedule a representative to visit the Besser Museum and demonstrate the system Norbert Vance told us about.
 - a. Norbert Vance is the planetarium director/educator at Eastern Michigan University.
 - b. Eastern Michigan University recently installed a Digitalis Education Solutions "Digitarium Lambda" which comes in at around \$100,000 verse \$300,000 and up. For more information on this system: https://www.digitaliseducation.com/products-digitarium_lambda_fixed.html
- **Planet/History Walk:**
 - Gary Goren is putting in a lot of time and energy in the planet walk project.
 - Gary Goren and I presented the grant proposal to the Youth and Rec committee on June 23. We will not hear if the grant is being funded until November. The funds are made available in January 2026.

- 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.

- I worked with Board Treasurer, Sue Stender and accountant Marie Williams to draft a budget for fiscal year 2025-2026. The budget reflects a \$157,300 deficit. We do have some reserves in savings and funds at CFNEM in endowments to offset the deficit. However, we need a fundraiser for general operations.
 - **Fundraiser Income** is currently set at **\$5,500**. However, we have not held an operational fundraiser since **2009**, when the **Croesus Venture**—an annual event for 15–20 years—concluded due to declining returns.
 - Our fundraising efforts in recent years have been focused solely on **Capital Projects**, not ongoing operations.
 - This year, to support our operational needs and close the gap in the budget deficit, we must organize a new **fundraising event**, with a **target goal of \$100,000**.
 - A major budget increase is driven by **employee payroll and benefits**, and we are still operating with a somewhat limited staff.
 - I've begun preliminary conversations with Sue, Ashley (at Log Cabin Days), and **Judy Dawley**, with whom I'll be meeting to explore some longstanding ideas we've had for a fun fundraiser. I'll have more updates on the event planning by the time we meet.
- Juried Art Exhibit will open to the public August 2nd.
- Sarah Honeycutt and Angela Addington created a special exhibit for Dinasour Gardens in celebration of their 90-year anniversary. Dinasour Gardens participated in Log Cabin Day as part of the exhibit opening. The exhibit will be on display **June 28th through October 30, 2025**.
- I will be on vacation **Monday, September 22 through Monday October 6**. I will be traveling to Switzerland September with the Chamber of Commerce group.
- Michigan Historical Society State Conference in being held in Alpena **September 26 and 27**. The Besser Museum is cohosting and has been working with the Historical Society to plan this event. . Janet Young will be one of the presenters at this event. The main event will be held at ACC. The Besser Museum will be hosting a meet and greet reception Friday, **September 26**. Sarah Honeycutt, Isabel, and Nicole will be hosting the museum.
- **October 4** is the annual Fall Harvest Fest event from 12pm to 4pm.
- Museum staff will start meeting with DeLynn Medina to plan this year's Season of Light exhibits.