

**Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, July 21, 2020**

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

**Others Present:** Executive Director Chris Witulski

**Absent:** Mike Ableidinger.

**Call to Order:** President Jim Conboy called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. via Skype

**Minutes:** Janet Young moved to accept the June 2020 meeting minutes. Tuffy Cross supported. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Michelle Miller shared her report, which is available at the museum's website, with the board. Sue Stender moved to accept the Treasurer's Report and Financials. Claudia Chapman supported. All ayes. Motion carried.

**New Business:**

1. **HVAC System:** ED Chris Witulski shared about major issues with the museum's HVAC system, particularly dangerously high humidity levels. Lakeshore Plumbing was contacted, which determined the system had shut off, the chiller needed recharging and the system is leaking freon. Air-N-Energy also was contacted, which found that the water was not cold enough to dehumidify the building, a sensor was out and some of the dampers are not working correctly. Since the HVAC system is part of the museum's larger Facility Renovations Plan, Susan Edwards of R.S. Scott was contacted regarding one chiller unit not working at all and the other having only 3 of 4 components working. Susan put together a contract for installing new chillers. The contract includes a \$12,000 fee for R.S. Scott to have their mechanical engineer determine specifically what is needed, to let bids and to manage the work on the upgrades/repairs to the HVAC system. Estimated cost to put in the needed chillers is \$120,000. On the recommendation of Board President Jim Conboy and Jim Johnson, Chris was asked to have Attorney Dan Florip take a close look at the contract before it is signed. There is \$145,000 left in the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Capital Campaign, which could be used to cover these expenses.

**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 she

had made contact with a log home repair specialist from Comins who should be able to do necessary work on the structure. She has applied for an Alpena County Youth & Rec Grant to help with some of the costs of this project. She also reported that Tuffy Cross has been working on the Kat V and that Besser Company has not given any indication of when they can start work on cradles for the Chinook. In the meantime, Mike Ableidinger agreed to have one of his companies submit bids for the work. Additionally, Chris reported that museum collections specialist Laura Quackenbush will be at the museum July 31 to provide consultation on devising a plan to inventory and do condition reports on the objects in the museum's collections. The day prior to this, on June 30, Chris and Laura will be looking over a large private collection that has been donated anonymously to the museum. Chris shared that moveable walls have been ordered and are expected arrive at the museum in October. The walls have been purchased with a grant from the Besser Foundation. Grant money will also be used for new lighting. Lastly, Chris shared that the Native American project still is moving along, and that one of the hired consultants recently visited the museum.

#### **Ad Hoc Committees:**

- 1. Governance Report:** Judy Suszek reported that an orientation meeting took place July 14 with the new board members.
- 2. Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Exhibit:**
  - a. **Chinook Project:** Jim Johnson shared that he's currently trying to track down the color scheme for painting the Chinook, and that his wife has been working hard on getting a large net untangled.
  - b. **Katherine V:** Tuffy Cross reported that landscaping is underway around the Kat V exhibit and that 20 yards of sand was installed to help with water run-off. He said that because of COVID-19, volunteers have been scarce.
- 3. Native American Exhibit:** Anne Belanger, even though her board term has expired, remains involved in this committee. The next report from the consultants is due the end of July/beginning of August.
- 4. Fine Art Committee:** ED Chris Witulski said Vicki Wright will be helping to get art in the collection out on display once the new movable walls arrive. She also said board members are needed to serve on this committee.
- 5. Collections Committee:** Claudia Chapman said progress and direction of the Collections Committee was adequately covered in the Director's Report.

#### **Other Business:**

- 1. Bob Haltiner Book:** Chris said at least 3 people recently inquired about getting a copy of Bob Haltiner's book, "The Town That Wouldn't Die," which is out of publication but which the museum holds the rights to. By the next meeting, she plans to have additional information about possible cost of reprinting this book.
- 2. Employee Handbook:** Board President Jim Conboy said the board should plan on having Attorney Dan Florip give a presentation on

suggested changes to the Employee Handbook regardless of whether the meeting is via SKYPE or in person.

**Adjourn:** Jim Johnson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Sue Stender. All ayes.  
The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Speer  
Board Secretary