

**Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, November 17, 2020 via Skype**

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

**Others Present:** Executive Director Chris Witulski, Anne Belanger and consultant Charlee Brissette

**Absent:** Mike Ableidinger (excused), Kristen Sharpe and Jean Thomas

**Call to Order:** President Jim Conboy called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. via Skype

**Minutes:** Janet Young moved to accept the minutes of the October 2020 meeting. Mike Beaulac supported. All ayes. Motion carried.

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

**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 also shared that because of COVID and in consultation with President Jim Conboy and Treasurer/Vice President Michelle Miller, the decision was made to close the museum to the public for a 3-week period ending Dec. 9. Staff will work from home and at the museum, plus volunteers will be able to still come in and provide assistance on projects. The Season of Light opening was moved from Nov. 21-22 to Dec. 12-13. Chris also announced that the museum received a \$25,000 grant from Alpena County Youth & Rec and should be getting a \$8,700 grant from Alpena County Older Persons for the McKay Log Cabin refurbishment project. Funds raised during the 2020 Giving Tuesday also will be earmarked for the Log Cabin, the same as in 2019. Estimated cost is \$63,000 for Phase I and \$23,000 for Phase II. Chris also touched on the status of bids being submitted for the work.

**Ad Hoc Committees:**

- 1. Governance Report:** Nothing to report
- 2. Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Exhibit:** Tuffy Cross reported that volunteers worked a total of 342 hours on the Chinook, beginning Aug. 18. The work involved painting, helping with the relocation of the Chinook, and constructing a protective cover and ramp. Jim Johnson expressed his appreciation to the volunteers who generously gave of their time and put in

many hours. ED Chris Witulski shared that Board member Janet Young will be working with Tuffy and Jim to develop a narrative regarding their experiences with the Chinook.

- 3. Native American Exhibit:** ED Chris Witulski shared that she and Anne Belanger met with Sandra Clark, director of the Michigan History Center, to discuss the Native American Exhibit renovation project. She said it was extremely helpful in moving forward. She plans to form an Advisory Council of tribal leaders/educators and pay each a stipend of \$100 per meeting to help ensure that the renovated exhibit is handled accurately and with sensitivity. Professional consultant Charlee Brissette will facilitate the Advisory Council meetings. Charlee attended Tuesday's board meeting to give details regarding the work she has conducted to date on the project. A written copy of her report is accessible to the board online at the museum's website. Also attending to give input on the ongoing project was Anne Belanger. Board member Mike Beaulac expressed the importance of getting a diversity of opinion from the various tribes.
- 4. Fine Art Committee:** ED Chris Witulski shared that the Season of Light Exhibit has been extended through Jan. 31 and that the new modular walls for displaying fine art will be installed after that exhibit goes down. She is still looking for a chairman of the Fine Art Committee and hopes to find someone with an expertise in art since the museum holds over 600 pieces of fine art.
- 5. Collections Committee:** Board member Diane Speer shared about the work volunteers currently are doing on the collections along with new staff member Sarah Honeycutt.

**Old Business:**

**HVAC System:** The board learned a contract was signed with R.S. Scott for the new chiller unit as part of the HVAC project.

**Social Media Presence:** ED Chris Witulski reported that her staff continues to devote time and energy making sure the museum has a strong presence on social media. Their efforts are paying off with a good volume of interest from the public.

**Adjourn:** Jim Johnson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mike Beaulac. All ayes. The meeting adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Speer  
Board Secretary