

Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan Board of Trustees

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

MEETING MINUTES

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.

Present Board Members: President, Gary Goren, Vice President, Mike Beaulac, Treasurer, Sue Stender, Jon Gougeon, Michelle Miller (virtual), Claudia Chapman, Tuffy Cross, Jim Johnson, Janet Young (virtual), Dan Florip, Sara Winter (virtual), and Brian Bartosh (virtual and in person).

Absent: Ashley Peterson (excused), Julie Austin

1) Call To Order

The meeting was called to order by President, Gary Goren at 4:30 p.m.

Jim Johnson agreed to record the meeting minutes.

Guest: Lenny Avery from Target Alpena. Explained some possible funding opportunities through USDA Rural Development programs for the Discover NE Michigan or any other projects we might wish to accelerate.

Museums are specifically identified eligible borrowers as “essential community units”. Funds can be used for construction and improvement of essential facilities. We fall under the category “Educational Services”, which includes 501(c)(3) Museums. There are two major sources of funding: direct loans and grants.

- Direct loans. These are for a maximum of 40 years. Interest rates are fixed for life of the loan by Rural Development. The current rate is 3.875%. Lenny talked about how to view risk management. We could look at a loan to expand present work improvements, say, elements in the Strategic Plan, especially those items that might increase the Museum’s future income. Target Alpena can help us in preparing applications.
 - No banks can match USDA rates;
 - We are a “rural” area and low prosperity region: we hit all the “buttons” for qualifying.
 - Application (just about 10 pages) requires us to show 3 private banks cannot match the USDA interest rate.
 - Can use funds we have raised to make payments toward loan (exclusive of loans from other institutions).
 - The processing period is about 60 days, from application to receiving the funds.

- You can only receive one loan. No further loans can be obtained until the first loan is paid off.
- Lenny suggests we set up a subcommittee to explore all our questions and limitations/rules to our drawing on loan funds.
- Can Besser use a loan for current projects so that we can hold on to our existing funds for future projects? Answer is yes.
- Grants. USDA grants under this program are very limited. The maximum is \$50,000 and is usually limited to military and housing projects. It is unclear whether museums even qualify.

Gary Dawley helped the Board consider some of the many implications to the Museum taking out such a loan and agreed to send us a list of some of his concerns. Even with a relatively small loan, say a million dollars, the monthly payments could prevent us from, for example, fulfilling our staffing plan, let alone future staffing needs. The Board thanked Lennie and Gary for their information and insights.

2) Review January 23, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes for approval (action item)

Board minutes from January 23, 2024, were reviewed. Jon Gougeon made a motion to approve minutes with support from Mike Beaulac. Motion carried.

3) TREASURER'S REPORT: (Sue Stender)

The written treasurer's report for January was presented by Treasurer, Sue Stender. Report was filed as written.

4) Reports to the Board:

a) DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Full report submitted.

1. AAM progress report was written by Janet Young and the Director. The report, which amounts to an impressive listing of achievements, was shared with the Board.

2. A proposal to hire a fund-raising consultant is being prepared.

b) AD HOC COMMITTEES:

- GOVERNANCE REPORT: No report

- GREAT LAKES FISHERIES HERITAGE EXHIBIT:

a. *Chinook* Project:

i. Jim Johnson and Tuffy Cross reported that the *Chinook* Shelter is nearly complete and electrical service installation is beginning. Tuffy and Matt have posted a photographic record of the construction of the *Chinook* cradle and building to date – see the Board website.

ii. Jim Johnson continues working with Brandon Schroeder on the Great Lakes Science in the Classroom project. The work contributed (several thousand dollars in contributed hours of work) qualifies for local match for the Invasive Species Grant.

iii. Jim Johnson is updating the conceptual exhibit plans to submit to Good Design. Jim Tuffy Cross, E.D. Chris Witulski, and Matt Klimczak met to compile updates for the plan.

• DISCOVER NORTHEAST MICHIGAN HISTORY: (Mike Beaulac)

Split Rock meeting coming up – March 12. See Director’s report.

• FINE ART COMMITTEE: Exhibits have been set. No report

• COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE: (Claudia Chapman): Committee Accession recommendations:

- WWI mess kits
- Photos of Alpena County Bean Factory
- Robert Haltiner’s “Mysteries of Michigan’s long-ago people.

Tuffy Cross moved to keep these items. Second by Jon Gougeon. Motion carried.

Deaccession:

- Several taxidermy items that are damaged and no longer useful.
- Gospel News from Cleveland, 1895. In poor condition and no relevance to NE Michigan.
- Broken brush hook, no blade.

Motion to deaccess by Claudia Chapman, seconded by Brian Bartosh. Motion carried.
report.

5) Old Business:

a. Revised Five Year Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029.

Responding to comments by board members during the January meeting, Brian Bartosh, Chris, and a small subcommittee of Board Members met to go over suggested improvements to the plan. The plan now includes more process, is divided into “strategic areas”, and the action plan now has multiple phases. Phase 1 = 2024, Phase II = 2025 or 26, Phase III further out.

The plan was restructured from the last version, but nothing was omitted or added.

Mike Beaulac moved the Board approve the plan, given that there were no objections to the plan last meeting and nothing from that version has been removed. Dan Florip seconded. Motion passed.

6) New Business:

Action Items:

- 1) Proposal from Control Solutions: Reheat coils to deal with humidity and temperature must be replaced. Their bid was \$11,720 for seven of them. Funds to come from savings, specifically, the Henry Miller Endowment Fund, dedicated to artifact preservation, is an appropriate source. Sue Stender moved, Claudia Chapman seconded, that the bid be accepted. The motion carried.
- 2) Katie Wolf is helping Chris with fundraising. Chris proposed a contract be entered with Katie for \$60.00/hr and a maximum of 60 hours per month for 10 months of her work (\$36,000). Funding source: the Museum is minus one employee and those funds could be used for this. This contract will help identify and apply for future grant opportunities and other fund raising. Brian Bartosh moved, Jim Johnson seconded that this proposed contract be approved. Motion passed.
- 8) Adjourn: Brian Bartosh moved, Tuffy Cross seconded. Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting at 4:30 March 19, 2024

Commented [JJ1]: I am not sure I have the technical description right. Matt should have a look at this.