

Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan
Executive Director Report for Board of Trustees Meeting
October - November 2020

COVID-19: Plan for another Shut Down:

- Governor Whitmer issued a Pause Order on **November 16th**. This order allowed museums to continue to be opened at limited capacity. However, I chose, with the support of the Executive Board, to close the museum to the public in support of the Pause Order. During this time staff could work from home and at the museum, with many working at the museum. Museum volunteers continued to work at the museum. And because we could be opened, I did allow the public to shop in the gift store and visit the Juried Art exhibit.
- During this time, the Besser Museum also entered a rental agreement with the StarBase program to hold their education program in the classroom at the museum. Their students are denied access to their facility at the Air Force Base until further notice. They will rent the space at the museum for the next 3 weeks, possibly longer.
- On November 16th, Facility Manager, Matt Klimczak was off work on emergency medical leave. He will be returning on light duty December 22nd.
- The Besser Museum reopened to the public on December 9th following the same safety guidelines put in place at the June reopening.

The Besser Museum will follow all the CDC health guidelines we already have in place:

- The Besser Museum will be opened for self-guided tours from 10 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Visitor capacity continues to be limited to 25 people in the building at a time. Planetarium capacity is limited to a maximum of 15 people in the planetarium at a time.
- CDC guidelines are still in place: masks, social distancing, disinfecting.

ONGOING PROJECTS

FACILITY:

- **HVAC:** I had a long conversation with John Richards from Apollo Engineering on December 10th. John is the subcontractor under R.S. Scott for the HVAC project. John is working to present a scope of work draft to the Board by December 15th.
 - John has reviewed the original blueprints and installation documents of the current HVAC system. He said that both chillers were put in place to provide 90 tons or 12 BTU per hour capacity to the building. This capacity is what the museum needs and is what the air handler was designed to handle.
 - One of the chillers has been out of service for several years, and the second chiller is malfunctioning and ready to be completely out of service.
 - We also discussed the control panel and if it needs to be replaced or if it can have components added on to perform at the capacity we are trying to achieve.

- We discussed putting another unit in the collections area that would tie into the system but provide the constant temp/humidity levels needed for the collections, while maintaining the levels needed for the rest of the building.

HISTORIC VILLAGE:

- **Log Cabin project: Robert Kenel estimated the renovation to be \$85,000:**
 - **\$62,000 Phase 1 - \$23,000 Phase 2**
 - **Funding Plan:**
 - **Committed: \$56,710**
 - **Pending: \$5,000**
 - We received a **\$25,000** grant from Alpena County Youth and Rec.
 - We received a **\$8,750** from the Alpena County Older Persons grant
 - Besser Museum will use **\$10,000** towards the Log Cabin from 2019 Giving Tuesday. (Last year's Giving Tuesday campaign raised \$15,000)
 - 2020 GIVING TUESDAY raised **\$11,210**.
 - We requested \$2,500 from the CFNEM Youth council and received **\$1,750**.
 - We submitted a **\$5,000** grant request to CFNEM for the January 2021 cycle.
 - Robert Kenel contacted me to see if we are going through with the project in 2021. He normally cuts the logs during the winter so they can kiln before spring.
 - We have not received a bid contractor John Cook. John is researching materials and will get back with us.
 - The Board will need to decide on who to award the contract to.

GREAT LAKES FISHERIES HERITAGE EXHIBIT:

- **Chinook**
 - Jim Johnson wants to schedule a meeting after the holidays to investigate grant opportunities for the exhibit.
 - Janet Young is working with Jim and Tuffy to capture their personal histories of working aboard the Chinook. Their stories will play a big role in the exhibit narrative.
 - The LaBlance family interview needs to be complete. I have reached out to Zach Irving and waiting for his reply.
- **Katherine V**
 - Tuffy and volunteers closed the Katherine V for the season.

ANISHINAABE EXHIBIT REVITALIZATION PROJECT (Native American Gallery)

- Consultant, Charlee Brissette next report is due the end of 2020.
- An invitation to join the Besser Museum's Anishinaabe exhibit advisory council went out to several tribal members through Northern Michigan. We plan to hold six (6) virtual meetings in 2021.

ART: Work is ongoing

- **Wilson Art Gallery Renovation:**
 - The modular walls from EmagiSpace will be installed by Panel Processing in January.
 - I have had conversations with local art teachers about forming a Besser Museum Fine Art Advisory Committee.
 - I am talking with local artist and gallery owner, Brian Schorn about curating some exhibits, presenting some virtual art lectures, and overseeing the Advisory Council. The museum could arrange to pay him a stipend for his contracted services. We are still discussing how this arrangement could work.
 - We will also continue to work with volunteer Vicki Wright to set exhibits from our own collection for 2021 in the new spaces.
- **2020 Juried Art Exhibit:** The exhibit will be open Nov. 1st through Dec. 31st.
- **2021 Non-Juried Art Exhibit:** New Beginnings

ARTIFACT COLLECTIONS: Major work continues in the collection storage areas.

- **Reorganizing of Space for Collection Storage**
 - Much of the reorganizing of space has been put on hold due to the Season of Light Exhibit and Matt Klimczak being out on sick leave. Work will resume in 2021.
- **PastPerfect Data Software**
 - PastPerfect database. Volunteers have been continuing to enter the handwritten accession logs. This project is almost completed.
 - The Collection Volunteers and Committee continue to work on the backlog of artifacts that came during 2010 and 2019. This includes all the Temporary Custody items. Progress continues to be made in this area.
 - Sarah Honeycutt started working part time at the front desk and is also working with the collection volunteers. Sarah is doing an outstanding job with the collections. I plan to offer Sarah a full-time position as a Collection Technician. I worked with the accountant, and it is within the fiscal budget to do so. The museum budgeted to hire a Collections Manager in January 2021 (halfway through our fiscal year).
- **Temporary Custody donations**
 - Museum professional, Laura Quackenbush collections training workshop has been postponed at this time due to COVID-19.
 - I am also working with Laura to devise a plan to process a large private donation that will enhance the museum's collection of indigenous artifacts and the renovated Anishinaabe exhibit. This would include using the funds from the donor to hire museum professionals to process and catalogue the collection.

- **Inventory**

- Soon, the Collections Committee and Volunteers will be devising a plan to inventory and do condition reports on the objects in the collections.
- Laura Quackenbush will provide consultation for this project also.
- Before inventory starts, Facility Manager, Matt Klimczak will need to complete setting up the new collection storage areas.

MISCELLENOUS:

- **Education Outreach:**

- Both Johnathan and Amanda continue to produce virtual education programs that are reaching large audiences on our social media platforms.
- Both have worked on components of the Season of Light exhibit and opening events. Katrina Brooks (Guest Services/Administrative Assistant) coordinate the opening festivities on Dec. 12th and 13th. Information is on our website.
- The museum purchased some new equipment that can enhance Johnathan's virtual outreach on social media. A 360-video camera and some equipment that allows Johnathan to take pictures and video through a telescope. Johnathan will be hosting a ZOOM presentation in the planetarium with an elementary school in Alaska. This small island school started a ZOOM Around the World program recently. It is a unique opportunity for the museum that could potentially turn into more national and global outreach.
- Johnathan and Amanda (Education Coordinator) will use the new 360 video camera to make virtual tours of the museum. Amanda has also been working on the Season of Light exhibit helping to decorate. Amanda and Katrina decorated the Avenue of Shops. Amanda also worked with volunteers to decorate the Trees of Nations exhibit. Amanda updated all the education outreach materials for the Trees of Nations.

- **Season of Light Exhibit set to open November 21st/22nd.**

- The staff and volunteers did an outstanding job preparing for the 2020 Season of Light exhibit.
 - DeLynn Medina and her mother Marilyn worked alongside museum staff to create a beautiful exhibit for the main entrance.
 - Season of Light exhibit has been extended to run through January 31, 2021.
 - Information about the Season of Light exhibit can be found on our website and Facebook page.
- SLK should have the audit completed soon. Much of that work took place virtually the last week of November and the first weeks of December.
 - Judy Suszek and I have been working on updating the Financial Polices this month.