

**Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, December 15, 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

**Absent:** Mike Ableidinger 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 November 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. Tuffy moved to accept the Treasurer's Report and Financials. Sue Stender 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 General Manager Matt Klimczak is back to work following a month-long medical leave. The Season of Lights opening had to be cancelled for a second time due to weather. A raffle license has been filed for the Season of Light door prizes, with the raffle to extend through Jan. 31. Giving Tuesday 2020 raised \$11,200 for the Log Cabin restoration project. In January, part-time staff member Sarah Honeycutt will move to full-time and concentrate on collections management.

**Ad Hoc Committees:**

- 1. Governance Report:** Judy Suszek shared that she and ED Chris Witulski have been working on updating financial policies. Once completed, the updates will go before the Governance Committee for approval and then the Board of Trustees. Among policies under review is check signing, including a \$10,000 cap on checks written by the executive director within the approved budget. The credit card usage policy also is being reviewed. Chris advised the board a new signature card authorizing who can legally write checks is required by MBank. Judy Suszek made a motion authorizing the following to sign museum checks: Executive Director Chris Witulski, Board President Michelle Miller, Treasurer Sue Stender and Secretary Diane Speer. Gary Goren supported the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

2. **Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Exhibit:** Both the Chinook and Kat V have been closed up for the winter. Jim Johnson reported that the cover over the Chinook appeared to hold up well with the recent big snowfall. He planned to remove the excess snow build-up from the cover. He also said he plans to meet with city officials next month to strategize on DNR grant applications.
3. **Native American Exhibit:** ED Chris Witulski shared that invitations went out to various tribal leaders/educators to become part of a Native American Exhibit Advisory Council. She has already received several favorable responses. Chris said development of the exhibit is moving slowly but definitely in the right direction and that several key exhibit donors are pleased with the progress.
4. **Fine Art Committee:** ED Chris Witulski shared that she has approached local artist/educator/gallery owner Brian Schorn about coming on as a Fine Arts Committee advisor as well as to give virtual lectures and help with other arts-related programming. She is hoping money to provide a stipend to Brian will be available through the museum's arts endowment funds and/or targeted grants. Bringing Brian on board would help to elevate the museum's fine art program. Chris expects the new modular walls to go up in January.
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:** ED Chris Witulski met with John Richard of Apollo Engineering to go over the first draft for the scope of work on the HVAC upgrade project.

**Log Cabin Renovation Project:** President Jim Conboy shared that the Log Cabin is in serious need of renovations to preserve it and make it safe. He expressed that he is comfortable with moving forward with Bob Kennel, who has submitted a bid, since Kennel has proven expertise in the area of renovation of log structures for other museums and historical societies. The project will be done in two phases estimated at \$62,000 and \$23,000. The first phase involves ensuring structural integrity and replacing rotten logs. Funding is in place for Phase I through multiple grants and Giving Tuesday funds. Judy Suszek made a motion to authorize ED Chris Witulski to move forward with a Phase I contract. Supported by Claudia Chapman. All in favor. Motion carried.

#### **New Business:**

**Museum Credit Card:** ED Chris Witulski shared that the museum needs its own credit card to replace the one currently being used that remains under the name of a previous museum director. MBank offers such business credit cards. After discussion among the board, Judy Suszek made a motion to place a \$10,000 limit on a new MBank credit card. Supported by Jim Johnson. All in favor. Motion carried.

**Election of Officers for 2021:** The following slate of officers was presented: Michelle Miller, President; Sue Stender, Treasurer; Diane Speer, Secretary. There currently is no candidate for Vice President. Mike Beaulac made a motion to elect

the slate of officers as presented. Supported by Gary Goren. All in favor. Motion carried.

**Parting Remarks:** Outgoing President Jim Conboy gave parting remarks to the board. He said it has been an interesting year due to the pandemic, but that he believes ED Chris Witulski, her staff, the board and volunteers have handled the challenges well and that the museum has come through in good shape. He also is pleased that an update of the employee handbook was completed. Jim is looking forward to remaining on the board.

**Adjourn:** Marie Fielder made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mike Beaulac. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Speer  
Board Secretary