

**Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, January 28, 2020**

**Present:** Claudia Chapman, Jim Conboy, Jim Johnson, Michelle Miller, Gregg Resnick, Diane Speer, Judy Suszek, Anne Belanger, Sue Stender, Mike Ableidinger, Janet Young and Executive Director Chris Witulski

**Excused Absent:** Ann Diamond, Clarence Cross, and Kristen Sharpe

**Absent:** John Caplis, and Heidi Haaxma

**Call to Order:** President Anne Belanger called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. and thanked those who were in attendance at the recent Museum Board Retreat.

**Minutes:** Janet Young moved to accept the November 2019 meeting minutes. Claudia Chapman supported. All ayes. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** CPA Marie Williams and Michelle Miller put together the financial summary, which showed an increase in admissions for December. ED Chris Witulski attributed the increase to several factors: field trips during the month, volunteers coming to decorate Christmas trees and marketing. Jim Johnson moved to accept the Treasurer's Report. Sue Stender supported. All ayes. Motion carried.

**New Business:**

1. **2020 Board Retreat Report:** The board discussed the report generated by Ron Bloomfield following the recent Board Retreat. In the report, Bloomfield suggested adding three more strategic goals to the previous six goals. ED Chris Witulski asked board members to take a good look at the report prior to the February meeting and then give their suggestions on how best to proceed, especially in regards to condensing, reordering, rewriting and refocusing some of the goals and making stronger statements about each.
2. **Native American Exhibit Consultant Contract:** ED Chris Witulski and President Anne Belanger presented a proposed contract with Charlee Brissette and Kalvin Hartwig as Native American independent consultants who will be hired for one year to create an exhibit narrative for the museum's planned Annishinaabe Exhibit. Both will be paid an initial \$1,000, with an additional four payments of \$850 each per quarter, provided the museum is satisfied with the work they are doing. The two also will receive a \$1,500 travel allowance. Money for their services will be paid from the Cook Fund. Jim Conboy made a motion to approve the consulting agreement for the Annishinaabe Exhibit with the condition that ED Chris Witulski check with tribal experts for clarification on tribal government law as it would pertain to the

agreement and then use her discretion accordingly. Janet Young supported. All ayes. Motion carried.

3. **Alpena Sunrise Center request:** ED Chris Witulski discussed a request from the Alpena Sunrise Center to bring their clientele to the museum for four free museum visits per year. While she doesn't have a problem with allowing the center usage of the museum, she also doesn't want to set a precedent, she said. She plans to contact the agency's director for more information. The board left the decision up to her discretion.
4. **Changing of the guard:** The board took action on approving new officers for 2020. In relinquishing her role as the 2018-2019 president, Anne Belanger said what a pleasure it has been to serve in that capacity for the last two years. Board members also expressed their sincere appreciation to her. It was noted that the board doesn't currently have a Second Vice President and that three members, including Ann Diamond, Anne Belanger and Gregg Resnick, will be going off the board at the end of the year. The 2020 officers include:
  - a. **President:** Jim Conboy. Motion by Gregg Resnick, supported by Jim Johnson. All ayes except for an abstention by Jim Conboy. Motion carried.
  - b. **VP/Treasurer:** Michelle Miller. Motion by Jim Conboy, supported by Gregg Resnick. All ayes. Motion carried.
  - c. **Secretary:** Diane Speer. Motion by Janet Young, supported by Judy Suszek. All ayes, motion carried.

#### **Reports to the Board:**

1. **Director's Report:** A written report was submitted to the Board. In lieu of a formal report, ED Chris Witulski stated that the museum is doing great and that she is pleased with the response to the Winter Blues Exhibit, which has drawn over 70 entries. She said a reception for the exhibit is Feb. 13 at 6 p.m.

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

1. **Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Exhibit:**
  - a. **Chinook Project:** Jim Johnson reported that there has not been a lot of progress on the project in the last month or so, but that they are hoping to get the cradle in place, which ED Chris Witulski said she anticipates happening by June 1. After the cradle is in place, the Chinook can then be moved and other work initiated, Johnson said.
  - b. **Katherine V:** ED Chris Witulski reported on how impressive it was to see the video of Tuffy Cross presented at the recent Maritime Center Film Festival and how worthy it was of inclusion.
  - c. **Native American Exhibit:** No other report was given beyond the approved exhibit consultant contract.
  - d. **Fine Art Committee:** ED Chris Witulski said she is looking into module walls for Wilson Gallery to give the museum more flexibility in exhibiting art from its own collections. Purchase of the module

walls could be covered by the recent \$25,000 anniversary grant from the Besser Foundation. This idea is being discussed with Chairperson, Ann Diamond. A proposal will need to be submitted to the Besser Foundation by February 12<sup>th</sup> for their March meeting if we would like approval to use the financial gift in the next few months. Otherwise we will need to wait and submit a proposal to the Foundation by May 12<sup>th</sup> for approval at their June meeting.

**Old Business:**

1. **Exterior/Interior Study Report:** ED Chris Witulski said the recently completed report by R.S. Scott Architects was broken down into phases, including both exterior and interior. Overall cost estimate is between \$950,000 and \$1.3 million, without the architect and engineering fees factored into the costs. Undertaking the project would require a fundraising campaign, with additional funds drawn from the previous Capital Campaign and possibly other museum funds. ED Chris Witulski plans to share the report with Gary Dawley and the Besser Foundation. She also asked board members to familiarize themselves with the report and to provide feedback.
2. **Employee Handbook:** Jim Conboy shared that Attorney Dan Florip, who practices employment law, went over the handbook and recommended it be completely rewritten to conform to current standards. He would be willing to do the work on behalf of the museum. Anne Belanger made a motion to engage Attorney Dan Florip to edit and provide a new employee handbook at a cost not to exceed \$1,500. Gregg Resnick supported. All ayes. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m. with the next Board Meeting to be held February 18, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. The February Board Meeting will be a workshop to discuss the findings from the Board Retreat and revise/draft new goals. Please review the Retreat Summary document and be prepared to share your thoughts.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Speer  
Board Secretary