

**Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan
Executive Director Report for Board of Trustees Meeting
March 2020**

- 1. The Besser Museum closed to the public on March 13th due to the COVID-19 virus.**

On March 13th the Governor of Michigan closed schools and forbid gatherings of large groups and by March 16th she ordered bars, restaurants, museums, libraries, theaters, etc. closed. The Executive Order was extended until April 30th.
- 2.** The Besser Museum applied for the \$10,000 MEDC grant was denied. The Alpena Chamber of Commerce received over 300 applications for the relief grant.
- 3.** The Besser Museum applied for the Paycheck Protection Program through mBank in the amount of \$42,766. This loan can be used to cover payroll and utilities payments. The PPP loan could be considered a grant, or forgiven loan depending. We are waiting to hear if we were approved for the loan.
- 4.** Both the Executive Director (Christine Witulski) and Facility/General Manager (Matt Klimczak) have been coming to the museum to check on the facility and do essential administrative tasks to maintain the operations. Johnathan Winckowski, Amanda Kucharek, and Katrina Brooks are working from home. Staff do report on what activities, research, development, etc. they are doing to benefit both the museum and their professional development on a weekly basis. Both Johnathan and Amanda are working to keep the museum's Facebook page activity. They have partnered with the Alpena Library on the April Earth Day event. Johnathan has also made a few videos about astronomy and continues to share content on the Museum's Planetarium Facebook page.
- 5.** March membership was down by \$665 from last year. Museum Membership renewal letters went out for April. Several members have sent in their membership dues. We will have to wait until the end of April to compare the revenue to last year. The May membership letters will be going out at the end of April with a letter to our members letting them know about the work that is ongoing to protect and preserve historical artifacts. This letter was included in the April membership letter.
- 6. Besser Museum Strategic Planning:**
 - a.** Has been postponed until the Board can come together and meet in person.
- 7. Collections:**
 - a.** Volunteers are continuing to work from home during the COVID-19 Executive Order to close the museum to the public.
 - b.** Before closing, volunteers were making great headway with processing the backlogged Temporary Custody donations. Over 90 TCs have been processed.
 - c.** R.S. Scott has provided a proposal for space reallocation. Susan Edwards explained the findings and budget narrative to me, and Matt. Susan will present the report to the full Board during April's online meeting. The Board will need to decide which steps to take to implement the improvements to the facility identified in the study.

8. FUNDRAISING Activities:

- a. Due to the COVID-19 shutdown, the Besser Museum has not engaged in fundraising. The Winter Blues people choice vote was down this year due to being closed.

9. Education: Amanda continues to work on assigned tasks at home:

- a. Amanda is also working on the graphic layout for the Historic Village signage. She will use the visitor guide that has been created and in use now, along with further research to find more photos associated with each building. The goal is to have the new signage up by the June Log Cabin Day event.
- b. Amanda is also continuing to work on developing the Besser Buddy idea. This is geared to our youngest visitors. The idea is to create cartoon characters young visitors can relate to/identify with. Signage will be in each gallery with about fun facts or questions that will help initiate conversations with their adult.

10. Planetarium Highlights:

- a. Johnathan is working on developing online content during the shutdown.
- b. Before the shutdown, the Besser Museum received a grant from CFNEM to purchase a new planetarium video on the history of WWII. We will use this video for ACC students, AHS students, and the general public.
- c. Johnathan also continues to coordinate with the local dark sky parks, including the Headlands Dark Sky Park in Mackinaw City.

11. Other: These notes are from the previous report as these projects are ongoing.

- a. Chinook: We are still waiting on the Besser Company for the cradles. They said they should have them completed by June in time of our Log Cabin Day. Once completed and in place, the Chinook can be moved into its permanent position. The committee continues to work on funding streams and exhibit design details. Jim Johnson is providing information on all the artifacts that are part of the Chinook. His information will be helpful
- b. Katherine V: Tuffy would like to see an accessible pathway put in from the sidewalk to the exhibit. There are other projects that Tuffy would like to finish up this summer as funding permits. We are at a stage where these two separate projects need to be considered one Great Lakes Fisheries Exhibit campus as we decided on sidewalk paths, water, electric, and signage and such.
- c. Giving Tuesday raised over \$13,000 for the Historic Village. We will be working on the strategic plan for the Historic Village.
 - i. There have been renovations to all building except the Log Cabin. The Log Cabin needs repair. A log cabin builder came to the museum last week to inspect the cabin and give us ideas of what we can do to preserve the cabin. I will need to contact an architect. I am also looking into grant opportunities to help fund the renovation/restoration of the Cabin.
 - ii. All the buildings could use more props and better exhibit development
 - iii. All the buildings need interpretive signage outside of the buildings.
 - iv. We are looking into ways we can make the buildings accessible throughout the year by adding Plexi-glass entries that allow visitors to see

the interiors without being able to go in when there are no volunteers hosting the buildings. We have researched and visited other museums for ideas. We have already added Plexi-glass to the School and Log Cabin, whoever if someone wanted to step over it and get in the building they could. More works needs to be done.

- v. We are also making plans for pioneer gardens and flowerbeds around the historic buildings.
- d. Log Cabin is being planned for June 27th. However, we are unsure at this time if the government will allow large events due to COVID-19.
- e. Accounting:
 - i. The audit was completed, and the 990 Tax Returns were also completed.
- f. Besser Foundation 75th Anniversary Gift of \$25,000.
 - i. The Besser Foundation approved these funds be used to purchase modular walls to increase exhibition space in the galleries. We are currently researching options and seeking bids. We've received a bid from one company so far.
 - ii. Vicki Wright will assist with curating an exhibit of the museum's fine art.