

**Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, August 17, 2021**

**Board Members Present:** Clarence Cross, Jim Johnson, Michelle Miller, Diane Speer, Judy Suszek, Janet Young, Sue Stender, Marie Fielder, Gary Goren, Mike Beaulac and Ashley Wilmot.

**Others Present:** Executive Director Chris Witulski

**Absent:** Mike Ableidinger (excused), Claudia Chapman (excused), Jim Conboy (excused) and Jean Thomas

**Call to Order:** President Michelle Miller called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

**Minutes:** Janet Young moved to accept the minutes of the July 2021 meeting. Mike Beaulac supported. All in favor. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Sue Stender gave the financial report for the month, noting the record amount of admissions for July. She said revenue came in at \$13,615, up 300 percent over last year. Her report was accepted as presented and is available at the museum's website.

**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 made note of the positive admissions numbers as well as briefly discussing the challenges of finding a new employee to work the museum's front desk. She shared that plans are being developed for a Fall Harvest Day event on a smaller scale. Witulski told the board she has not yet received a bid from Meridian Construction on proposed updates to the museum's exterior. She said the HVAC equipment installation and McKay Cabin restoration are both projected to be finished in October. A rescheduled meeting of the Advisory Committee for the Native American Exhibit revitalization project will take place Sept. 18. She also announced the opening of the 2021 Juried Art Exhibit on Aug. 16, with an open house to announce the winners set for Aug. 21.

**Ad Hoc Committees:**

1. **Governance:** No new business.
2. **Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Exhibit:** Jim Johnson noted that the museum's financial report reflected receipt of a \$5,000 DNR grant and an \$18,000 Great Lakes Fisheries Commission grant, both for the Chinook project. He will next be working on submission of an Invasive Species Grant. Tuffy Cross said minor maintenance work and clean-up of the Kat V have been taking place over the summer months.
3. **Anishinaabe Exhibit:** ED Chris Witulski shared that elements of the Anishinaabe Exhibit are slowly coming together and progress is being made.
4. **Fine Art Committee:** ED Chris Witulski shared that the public absolutely loves the new gallery.
5. **Collections Committee:** The committee recommended accession of 10 items into the museum's permanent collection. Judy Suszek made a motion to accept the items as presented into the collections, supported by Tuffy Cross. All in favor. Motion carried. The 10 items are as follows:

- a. Sign for Dr. John W. Bunting, local doctor, circa 1960s-1970s
- b. Logging boots with cleats on the bottom, circa 1911
- c. WWII silk pillowcase with design and "mother" printed on front
- d. Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Kodak film tank
- e. Two fur stoles, circa 1960s
- f. Beck Brewery bottle, fully intact
- g. Film splicer
- h. 1966 letter from Jesse Besser to Mrs. Stevens of Atlanta, Mich.
- i. Large collection of military memorabilia documenting Don Keller's WWII military service. Includes many medals, insignia, photos, Western Union telegrams, letters, and news articles
- j. Full WWII AAF uniform of George Van Wormer, a local veteran

**Old Business:**

**Phase 2 Approval for Log Cabin Renovation Project:** Prior to the meeting, the board approved a proposal submitted via email to move forward with Phase 2 of the Log Cabin Project and finish the work on the interior, which includes the windows, sills, doors and inside chinking. \$23,000 for Phase 2 will come out of the museum savings account.

**New Business:**

**Planet/History Walk Proposal:** Gary Goren presented to the board a concept for a Planet/History Walk in Alpena that would start at the museum and extend into the community. Signage with narratives about each planet in the Solar System would be installed to scale at various locations yet to be determined. The reverse side of the sign would focus on local history, starting with the Native American presence in the area and moving forward. Goren has talked with both ED Chris Witulski and the Museum Planetarium Coordinator about the proposal, and both are in favor. He also has done some preliminary groundwork, with an initial estimate of \$25,000 for the signage. Jim Johnson made a motion to support the concept of a Planet/History Walk, seconded by Janet Young. All in favor. Motion carried. Goren will continue to explore the possibility.

**Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Speer  
Board Secretary