

# Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan Board of Trustees Meeting

## MINUTES

Tuesday, August 15, 2023

*Our mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit authentic articles and artifacts of art, history, and science to inspire curiosity for all ages, foster community pride, and cultivate personal legacy.*

Meeting called to order at 4:31 pm.

**Board Members Present:** President Gary Goren, Vice-President Mike Beaulac, Director Chris Witulski, Tuffy Cross, Janet Young, Juli Austin, Jon Gougeon Michelle Miller, Sarah Winter, Sue Stender (virtual) and Dan Florip (virtual). Not present were Brian Bartosh, Ashley Peterson (Secretary). Johnson offered to take meeting notes.

**Meeting minutes** were reviewed. Jon Gougeon noted next meeting date was incorrect. Motion to approve as amended by Janet Young second by Claudia. Motion passed unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** July 2023. Sue reported. Income up slightly over last year. About 300,000 in assets are now invested in Old Mission Fidelity and no longer show as assets. Health and facility insurance costs increased over last year. The report was filed as reported (see Museum's website for full report).

**Sarah Honeycutt:** The meeting room was filled with old furniture, all undocumented items. The museum is required to post a public notice to alert whoever donated this stuff in case they want it back. If we receive no response in the next 6 months, the items become the Museum's to disposed of as we wish. The Collection Committee sees no use for these items. Mike remarked that it seemed we have a lot of "stuff" that might be deaccessioned. Sarah said that when she does inventory, she has the opportunity to identify items to deaccession. Sarah has a part-time assistant scanning photos – now about 1,000 are digitized and in PastPerfect. A second volunteer is cataloging other items and entering them into PastPerfect. This is important progress toward what we need to do for recertification. These items need to be researched as to source, relevance, and provenance which Sarah has also done. A new full-time employee was recently hired as a "museum assistant" who has PastPerfect experience and will help Sarah and contribute to all other museum activities. Sarah was applauded for her hard and expert work.

**Director's report:** Much time spent with contractors. Plus running planetarium shows. A full report was submitted and is accessible online at the museum website. The vacant planetarium position has put extra load on the Director and all the staff.

**Great Lakes Fishery Heritage Report.** Next Great Lakes Fishery Heritage Trail Conference is at South Haven on September 11 and 12. Nate Moris with "Minimal Media" is producing a documentary on the plight of the Great Lakes commercial fishery and will interview Jim and Tuffy on September 5 and 6. The venue will probably be the Katherine V. Construction on the building to house the Chinook should begin on September 18. Matt installed over a dozen pilings along the boardwalks for mounting the interpretative signage, a huge improvement over the 2x4 stands we have been using.

Johnson with Sarah Honeycutt presented the Museum's "Flood of 1923" and the "Thunder of the Thunder Bay River" to the Michigan Historical Society virtually. Attendance was around 70.

**Discover Northeast Michigan report:** The steering committee met with Split Rock to come up with a new schematic that includes revisions proposed by the committee, of which there were many. The scheduled meeting with Split Rock on September 5 could integrate all these ideas.

A discussion ensued about transportation for cruise ship tours. This has been an unresolved need and Julie Austin, Museum, and others have worked together to find options for bringing these visitors to businesses and the museum.

**Collections committee:**

The Collections Committee recommended the Besser Museum Board of Trustees accept the following items into the museum's Permanent Collection:

1. Thunder Bay Originals wool car coat, circa 1940-50s.
2. Three business letters from Montmorency County regarding Herman Besser, circa 1890-1905.
3. Two photographs of students in front of Dent School and Beaver Creek School in Alpena County, circa 1940.

\*The following items are currently in the museum's prop collection. However, due to their provenance the committee recommends transferring them into the museum's permanent collection.

4. Rustic wooden headboard made by Ralph Gilchrist in 1905 and was part of the original furniture inside the Gilchrist Mansion Lodge in Alpena.
5. Handmade highchair made from a small barrel in 1922 by E.H. Furbush for his grandson E.H. Furbush III. E.H. Furbush was an early twentieth century businessman in Alpena, their home was originally on the corner of State and Chisholm.

Julie moved, Mike seconded accession of all five items. Motion passed unanimously.

**Strategic Plan:** Goals were mostly unchanged. The tables of goals and metrics were improved to better define the metrics of progress. Some activities to be completed in next cycle were added. Claudia noted a date error on page 7. Tuffy moved, Sarah seconded, accepting the plan with the correction noted by Claudia. Motion carried.

**Fine Art Committee:** Chris spoke of the need to address public perception that all our art is available on display. Inasmuch, museum staff will convert the Trelfa Gallery into a permanent fine art gallery in January to display these art pieces. Wilson Gallery displays are set until October. Trelfa Gallery will host Juried Art. The Center Gallery features The Alpena News 175th edition. (174 years).

Motion to adjourn: Janet moved, Julie seconded, motion to adjourn carried.