

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
THE WILD CENTER**

**April 2, 2012 – American Museum of Natural History, New York City
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM**

Board Present:

Tom Aydelotte, Lynn Birdsong, Obie Clifford, John Colston, Connie Ferguson, Robert Friedman, Peter Kindler, Betsy Lowe, Dan Sullivan, Charles Svenson, and Karen Thomas.

Board/Advisory Board via Webex:

Tim Barnett, Jim Carr, Rick Godin, Sally Hart, Gary Hartwick, Nancy Howard, Bill Hutchens, Chris McFadden, and Eugene Zeltmann.

Board Absent:

Paul Alioto, Joe Beck, Michael Bettmann, Amy Elrod, Charlie Frenette, Mike Hunsinger, Dave Johnson, Thomas Jorling, Kevin Keane, Claire Leonardi, Paul Maroun, Steve Potter, Nancy Simpkins, and Sandra Strader.

Advisory Board Present:

Joel Treisman

Others:

Mary Beth Reiss (Wings Designee), Chip Reay (Wild Walk Exhibit Designer)

Staff/Consultants Present: Marci Bencze, Hillarie Logan-Dechene, Jamie Dyer, Robin Ellis, Howard Fish, Bob Kronenberger, Christine Owens, and Stephanie Ratcliffe.

I. Welcome

Discussion: Lynn Birdsong called the meeting to order and thanked all board members for attending in person and via Webex. He also introduced the two newest members of The Wild Center board, Connie Ferguson and Mary Beth Reiss who is one of four Wings board designees. He reported to board members on the recent Climaid event that he had attended at The Wild Center on March 29 that was done by ADKCAP in concert with New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to help make New Yorkers more aware of how to plan for the future in terms of energy useage, conservation, etc. He said that museum staff all pitched in to make the event happen and that it once again exhibited The Wild Center's role as a convenor. He asked board members to help circulate any publicity to their contacts. He also mentioned that he gave the new "Planet Adirondack" exhibit a plug in his remarks.

Action: N/A

II. **Approval of Minutes**

Discussion: Minutes of the January 9, 2012 meeting were unanimously approved. *Dan Sullivan motion, Peter Kindler second.*

Action: N/A

III. **Report from the Executive Director**

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe began by showing board members a couple of slides with math problems, one showed the number of hours that our volunteers have given to us in the last year (8,320) and the other showed how many interns the museum would have this summer (9). The increase in the number of interns this year is due to the new canoe program. She stated that the skill sets of the museum's volunteers was phenomenal and gave the example of a volunteer who provided a very detailed forestry plan for the Wild Walk site that saved the museum a considerable amount of money.

Stephanie then gave a brief update on the museum's Community Maple Sugaring Project. She shared the following information with board members:

- Connects people to nature through local food traditions and production
- Involves community in sap collection
- 116 attended workshops
- 23 families and 12 LP Quinn classes part of community sap collection
- Produced 15 gallons of syrup
- New branded products for sale
- Future efforts will emphasize energy efficient methods

Action: N/A

Stephanie Ratcliffe then gave a brief summary of the Planet Under Pressure conference that she had recently attended in London which she attended in concert with an ASTC board retreat:

- There is a call for urgency
- Call for actionable science at all levels (local, regional, global)
- Call for the restructuring of the scientific enterprise: more interdisciplinary collaborative research alongside engineers
- International collaborations, perspective and information sharing
- Increased level of public interface, step up the contract between science and society – can accurately measure but the bridge to the public is broken

She stated that what she learned at the conference will help us to think about future conferences. She also said that the current scientific enterprise is not helping the call to action as quickly as it should. She said that the international perspective that was shared overall was that the public interface was broken and that it needs to be fixed and that all leaders at the science center level want to

raise the profile in the role that is played. Stephanie also Skyped into the Climaid conference from Planet Under Pressure

Stephanie then reported on Shifting Sand and Trends:

- Long term trends (5 year) attendance down across the US and abroad but increment smaller and has stabilized in smaller institutions
- Traditional Funding (ISE) from NSF dissolving even though they are charged with public dissemination
 - Fewer quality traveling exhibit firms
 - Fewer external exhibit firms, museums downsizing exhibit departments (skills set becoming rare)
 - Good News – TWC attendance not driven by traveling exhibits
- Language for informal education added to No Child Left Behind reauthorization (US Dept. of Ed)
- ASTC: partnering with AAAS and other national and international organizations to raise the profile of science centers in society and in the informal education sector

IV. Wild Walk Update

Discussion: Stephanie then introduced Chip Reay, who has been working on the Wild Walk project stating that he has been working with The Wild Center on exhibits for the past twelve years. She stated that based on the results of the presentation given by Jason Drebitko in March of 2011, the museum re-engaged Chip as well as Wayne Striker from Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum (HOK) and Bill Palmer formerly of HOK to help develop new elements to the project. She stated that they are seeking an extension to the current Adirondack Park Agency (APA) permit as well as approval for the new elements. The four new elements of the project are:

- Uber twig tree house
- Walk through tree snag
- Spider web
- Eagles nest

Stephanie stated that the team is evaluating and cost estimating the new elements. She also reported that site prep had begun. Chip then showed board members three models depicting the new elements so that they could get a better feel for what the exhibit would look like upon construction. The models are currently being used by HOK's New York City office to create design and construction documents but they should be back at the museum this summer. The board felt that the models were very effective in conveying the design so Chip has been asked to continue to model the entire structure. There was discussion regarding the value of having the models for fund raising purposes. There was also discussion regarding the possibility of creating a video that could be used when meeting with potential donors that would be easier to transport than the models.

There was much discussion regarding the importance of the project to the future of The Wild Center. Tom Aydelotte stated that it is something that the museum **must have**. He also asked if there was any benefit to doing a critical flow timeline in regard to the project and Lynn Birdsong said yes. Stephanie Ratcliffe stated that she would work with fabricators to create a timeline and would work with a two year build out. Lynn Birdsong asked board members if there was consensus that the current plan was a good one and there was consensus. Hillarie Logan Dechene said that she was working on talking points regarding where the museum was currently in terms of the project.

Action: Stephanie will work with fabricators to create a timeline for the project using a two year build out. Hillarie will create a list of talking points regarding the project to show where the project is in terms of progress.

V. **Marketing 2012**

Discussion: Howard Fish then reported on Marketing strategies for 2012. He showed board members a list of the exciting things that are happening this summer at The Wild Center including:

- The new Planet Adirondack exhibit
- Canoeing on the Raquette River
- Buzz Fest
- Flavor Fest

He then showed a few slides with information regarding where marketing dollars go with costs so board members could see how much is spent on marketing and where the museums events are advertised. He mentioned that International Paper Co. donates all of the paper for our brochures, map guides and posters and that it is a significant savings.

He stated that the “center for” message is an important one. He also reported that lots of people like The Wild Center and that in terms of advertising it is easy to get people to give a better price or article placement in a publication as a result of that. He said that the museum is strengthened by the relationships that people who work at The Wild Center make with others.

Howard then spent some time talking about Google ads and how much more traffic there is to the website as a result of all of the keywords. He reported that currently the grant is for \$9,400 a month but that he was trying to increase the amount of the grant. He stated that if the museum did get the increase, it would be the largest web advertiser in the Adirondacks. There was then discussion about how to get people to come to The Wild Center once they have clicked on an ad and then visited the website.

Action: N/A

VI. **Audit Report**

Discussion: Bill Hutchens reported that the Audit Committee had recently met and had reviewed our financial reports as well as the report from our independent auditors. He stated that the audit went smoothly and that the independent accountants had expressed an unqualified opinion of our financial statements. He then stated that the Audit Committee recommended approval of the 2011 audit report and financial statements.

Bill also informed the Board that in his role as Compliance Officer he had not been contacted at all in the last year.

Action: A motion to adopt the 2011 Audit Report and Financial Statements was unanimously approved.

Jim Carr motion, Charles Svenson second.

VII. **Financial Report**

Discussion: Bob Kronenberger went over the highlights of the dashboard that was included in the board packet. He reported that:

- Private contributions continue to represent about 50% of total revenues.
- The pyramid of annual fund contributions is similar to 2010 in that 18 donors provided 62% of the total annual fund contributions (vs. 16 donors providing 59% in 2010).
- Admissions, Membership, Store and Café represented 37% of the overall revenues in 2011 (vs. 38% in 2010).
- Grants represented 13% of revenue which was up 7% from 2010.
- Total attendance was down 10% in 2011, while attendance revenues were down 16%.
- There have been 465,000 visitors to the museum since opening in 2006. We should have our 500,000 visitor this summer.
- Store revenue was down in 2011 but is even on a per visitor basis. Café revenues increased in spite of the lower attendance.
- Facilities expenses decreased by \$62,000 in 2011 and represented 20% of total operating expenses (down from 23% in 2010).
- Development and Campaign expenses increased to 17% of total operating expenses (up from 14% in 2010).
- Salary and benefits represent 57% of overall operating expenses.

Bob also reported that he had taken a look at the five year plan and updated it. He stated that the overall picture was similar but that the museum was operating on a lower cost basis. He said that it also shows that the board designated fund is growing slower than projected because some funds were used to cover campaign expenses. Lynn Birdsong asked Bob to send an updated five year plan to board members.

He also reported on actuals through February:

- Overall we are doing a little better than budget.
- Revenue is on budget.
- Attendance is up from budget (which means ahead of last year).
- Expenses are 6% below budget.
- There has been \$200,000 in unrealized gains from investments since the beginning of the year.

Bob then reported that a pricing committee had been formed over concerns about increasing admission prices. The committee met several times, gathered information about other area attractions and received input from Jason Drebitko of Consult Econ. As a result, the following decisions were made:

- Raise adult admission from \$15 to \$17 and children's admission from \$9 to \$10
- No increase in student admission
- All admission tickets will be good for two full days
- Two free community days, one being Mother's Day

He also spoke about the new library pass program that was being created to help underprivileged families enjoy free museum visits. There was then discussion regarding how we will market the program. Stephanie stated that social service organizations would help to inform families about the program.

Action: Bob K. to send updated five year plan to board members.

VIII. Development/Campaign Report

Discussion: Hillarie Logan-Dechene then gave her development report. Some key membership points from her presentation were:

- Membership income of \$24,930 through March 27 is up 22% over 2011.
- Renewing membership income is up 40%, while new membership income is down about 12% in the first three months of the year.
- Staff and volunteers will be encouraged and trained in a consistent effort to promote the value of membership.
- Tim Holmes will be convening an ad hoc group of board members to help conceptualize a revamping of the membership program.

Hillarie also reported on the current state of the campaign stating that gifts, pledges and known bequest intentions were at \$10, 511,275 which was an increase of \$162,756 since the January 9, 2012 board meeting. She stated that the remaining need to reach the working goal of \$20 million was \$9,488,725. Lynn Birdsong thanked all who have participated. Obie Clifford stressed the importance of putting The Wild Center in wills.

She then spoke regarding the annual fund reporting that to date it currently stands at \$442,530 from 151 gifts. She reported that it is ahead of last year at the

same time, but when anticipated pledges of \$256,000 are deducted the remaining need for 2012 is \$840,000.

Hillarie then reported on the new bequest society, The Linda Vaughan Society. A mockup of the brochure was passed around for board members to see. She then asked Jamie Dyer and Robin Ellis to say a few words about the bequest society. Robin stated that the public rollout would happen in either late May or early June.

Hillarie also reported on departmental goals for the next six months:

- Organize prospect and donor cultivation events
- Cabinet and staff will be working to achieve a minimum of two contacts per week on the Top 80 campaign prospects to be seen by October
- Roll out the Linda Vaughan Society to raise endowment commitments
- Continue to refine the conceptualization, design and projected budget for the Wild Walk and gather input from those donors most interested in the project
- Size and structure the Campaign

Hillarie stated that the role of Trustees is that they should be supporters, scouts and ambassadors of The Wild Center. Lynn Birdsong then thanked board members for all that they do and asked them to help get others involved in what the museum is doing.

Action: N/A

IX. Governance

Discussion: Lynn Birdsong stated that governance was currently under review as the museum is a transitioning organization. He said that it was now an operating entity with a well developed professional staff. He told board members about two summer retreat sessions that were currently being planned. The first would take place on July 9, 2012 from 9:00 am until 12:00 pm, prior to the board meeting. The focus of this retreat will be to determine which board committees were necessary as well as the board's role in governance. The second retreat would take place on October 4, 2012 from 9:00 am until 12:00 pm which is prior to the board meeting on that day as well. This retreat will be related to strategic priorities.

Action: N/A

X. Other Business

Lynn Birdsong again introduced Wings board designee, Mary Beth Reiss who gave board members a brief background on the relationship that Wings has with the museum and the events that they organize to benefit The Wild Center. She

reported to board members about a Wings event on April 26 at Affirmation Arts in New York City and asked for possible donations for the silent auction.

XI. Executive Session

XII. Upcoming 2012 Meeting Dates

- July 9, 2012 – The Wild Center
- October 4, 2012 – The Wild Center