

BOARD OF TRUSTEES RETREAT AND MEETING MINUTES
THE WILD CENTER
April 20, 2015 – American Museum of Natural History, New York City
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Board Present:

Tom Aydelotte, Joe Beck, Lynn Birdsong, George Cigale, Obie Clifford, John Colston, Amy Elrod, Connie Ferguson, Lynn Fox, Charles Frenette, Rick Godin, Sally Hart, Nancy Howard, John Huwiler, Thomas Jorling, Peter Kindler, Betsy Lowe, Rich Malloch, Chris McFadden, Jack Ryder, James Schoff, Nancy Simpkins, Charles Svenson, Karen Thomas and Joel Treisman.

Board/Advisory Board/Staff Present via Web Ex:

Katherine Alexander, Martha Bullock, Gary Hartwick, and Mike Hunsinger.

Advisory Board Present:

Linda Rosenstock

Board Absent:

Paul Alioto, Michael Bettmann, Robert Friedman, Paul Maroun and Sandie Strader.

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

Welcome

Discussion: Lynn Birdsong called the meeting to order at 9:05 am and welcomed all in attendance and on the phone. He began by stating that there was a lot to cover and that the Board had received a wonderful report from the Sustainability Committee on the progress to date of the committee. He mentioned that the two main topics that this meeting would be focused on are the audit report and the next phase of the Sustainability Committee.

I. Approval of Minutes

Discussion: Minutes of the January 12, 2015 meeting were unanimously approved.

Joe Beck motion, Karen Thomas second.

Action: N/A

II. Executive Director Report

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe began by sharing the following information about Wild Walk:

- Wild Walk is on time and on budget.
- Crews are continuing to do finish work and exhibit installation has begun.
- There will be a week worth of previews for members, programs will be tested on members that attend.
- There will be a donor celebration on July 3.
- Ribbon cutting is slated for July 4.
- There has been some weight testing of the spider web being done using sand bags to make sure it is safe. In the words of Facilities Manager Dave St. Onge, the web will hold 2400 pounds and one Facilities Manager.
- There will be signs around the deck of the spider web stating the suggested age of users for safety purposes.
- At the beginning we may limit the number of people on the web at one time to ten. There may be a staff member monitoring that at least for the first month after opening.

There was then a brief discussion about the need for people to sign a waiver of liability before using the spider web. Joe Beck asked if we can control traffic and also asked if there is a need to ask people to sign a waiver of liability. It was determined that there was no need to ask people to do that.

Stephanie also reported that we have been giving many tours, most on a moment's notice and that we had recently gotten a special visitor to Wild Walk. Greg Norman, who is a world famous golfer, came for a visit. Stephanie also mentioned that there are still naming opportunities available stating that there was a race to the finish. She mentioned that the deadline to have your name included on the Wild Walk donor plaque by July 3rd was May 8th. She also said that the main sign would be temporary with a permanent one being installed at some point in the near future.

Stephanie then took a moment to share the following information regarding Maple Season 2015:

- They now have the process down to a science.
- It is managed by Dave St. Onge, Andrew Pape and two maple interns.
- This year there were 100 families, 750 taps and yielded 110 gallons.
- The syrup was very light this year and the quantity was less but quality more.

Youth Climate Summit

- Completed sixth year.
- Jen Kretser has created an online toolkit.
- Working with ASTC to share information.
- The Wild Center will be part of a Climate Summit in Paris later in the year.

- The White House Office of Science and Technology has recognized the Youth Climate Summit.
- Gina Fiorile, one of YCS participants was also recognized.
- Meadow Hackett will be back at TWC doing Wild Walk evaluations this summer. Her goal is to work in museums.
- Jen Kretser would be receiving an award from the EPA later in the week. She was nominated for it by someone at St. Lawrence University and Plattsburgh State.

China Sales Mission

- Hillarie attended an I Love New York Summit and it was decided that we should participate in the China Ready Mission.
- Stephanie felt that we should participate because it could help our Admission numbers stating that if you make one sale to a tour group you are potentially making a sale to sixty people.

III. Audit Committee Report

Discussion: Joe Beck stated that the Audit Committee unanimously recommends adoption of the report by the Board. He reported that there were no management issues or material weaknesses noted and that we are in compliance with our covenants.

Action: A motion to accept the 2014 Audit Report was unanimously approved.
Nancy Simpkins motion, Rich Malloch second.

IV. Finance Report

Discussion: Bob Kronenberger went over the dashboard and provided a recap of last year's results as compared to 2013 and shared the following:

- The biggest % change was that grant revenues were lower in 2014 than 2013.
- In 2015 there are many new grants so this % will increase again next year.
- The number of contributors to Wild Walk increased significantly.
- Contributions as a % of total revenues were up from 42% in 2013 to 51% in 2014.
- Admission revenue was down slightly from 15% to 14% in 2014.
- Attendance was up slightly between 2013 and 2014 from 58,945 to 59,345.
- Store revenue per visitor was up slightly from \$5.14 to \$5.45.
- Café revenue per visitor was also up slightly from \$2.10 to \$2.17.
- Membership and admission expenses were up slightly from 2013 to 2014.
- Exhibit and program expenses were down 5% as a % of total expenses due to lower program grant expenses.

Tom Aydelotte asked if there was a way to capture first time visitors to TWC coming for Wild Walk. Stephanie stated that we will be doing exit surveys with money from an IMLS

grant and said that we could include a few marketing based questions. Bob Kronenberger suggested asking visitors who come through Admissions if this was their first visit.

There was then discussion regarding membership sales. Lynn Fox expressed congratulations to staff members who had worked so hard to rescue the membership program. There were also suggestions made on ways to add other membership levels, it was stated that we should create a business partner membership. Hillarie stated that upper level memberships sometimes transfer to donors. Peter Kindler asked if we have many members from the Lake George or Old Forge area. Stephanie said that there is a list of zip codes that show where our members are located.

Bob also went over a Board Designated Endowment Fund investment summary that he included in the Board packet which presented the Board Designated and Permanent Endowment Funds as of 3/31/15. Bob stated that it was the recommendation of the Finance Committee that the Board approve funding of the 2013 and 2014 operating losses with a distribution from the Board Designated Endowment Funds. This distribution would be in the form of forgiving the current \$250,000 loan from the Board Designated Endowment and an additional cash distribution of \$211,000. He then stated that the Finance Committee proposed the following resolution for Board approval:

“The Board authorizes a distribution from the Board Designated Endowment Funds in the amount of \$461,000 to fund 2013 and 2014 operating losses. This distribution will be in the form of forgiving the current loan of \$250,000 and an additional cash distribution of \$211,000”.

*The resolution was unanimously approved.
Joe Beck motion, Charlie Svenson second.*

There was then some discussion about the information that was presented and it was suggested by Charlie Frenette that a policy be drafted to prevent having to take money from the BDE to fund deficits in the future. John Huwiler stated that it is important to start operating at a break even and said that until we have a bigger endowment we need to be very careful. There was also discussion about the possibility of changing the fiscal year. Bob Kronenberger stated that if it were to change he would propose changing it to 9/30 as that would give him a better picture of where we were at financially in time to make necessary changes before the end of the proposed new fiscal year.

Bob Kronenberger also presented a document that outlined Wild Walk financing and pledge cash flow. He stated that the purpose of the schedule was to show the projected cash flow based on the terms of the soon to be converted bank term loan compared to cash in our pledged bank account plus future pledge receipts. He also reported that the bank term loan will require annual principal payments of \$350,000 beginning at the end

of 2016. Based on the amount of cash in the pledged account plus collection of existing pledges we have sufficient cash to meet the required principal payments through 2018 and are just short of the 2019 payment. He said that this is based on current pledges and does not include any new gifts we may receive. Joe Beck mentioned that if no more money was received then we would eat into equity, etc. Lynn Birdsong stated that rates had never been lower in his lifetime and now would be a good time to convert to a term loan. Bob Kronenberger mentioned that the loan would need to be converted when the project is complete but no later than 1/1/16.

IV. Development and Campaign Report

Discussion: Karen Thomas began by stating that in a year we will be sitting in the afterglow of the Wild Walk gala celebrating The Wild Center's 10th year. She stated that with 8 months left in the campaign, there had been over \$20,250,000 in gifts, pledges and bequest intentions raised so far. She said that we are also on the road to fully funding Wild Walk. She then shared the three main campaign priorities:

- To Sustain Annual Fund
 - Re-up multi-year commitments
 - \$1.6 m remaining to raise for FY 2015
- Finish Wild Walk
 - \$2.4 m needed to fully fund Wild Walk
- Support 10th Year Anniversary Celebration

Karen stated that it was very important that all Board members support Wild Walk as well as the other two priorities in some way. Karen then mentioned upcoming summer events stating that there would be many chances to thank our donors as well as to engage new friends. She then thanked Board members for all they had done and continue to do. Hillarie encouraged Board members to bring friends any time throughout the summer to introduce them to The Wild Center. Lynn Birdsong then thanked Karen and Hillarie as well as everyone else for all they have done. Karen then confidentially shared the following list of 10th anniversary honorees with those in attendance:

- Former Governor George Pataki
- Neil deGrasse Tyson

There was then much discussion about the event as well as possibilities for funding. Hillarie stated that there is a long list of people who have the capacity to give, the tick is to engage them in The Wild Center. Obie mentioned that the most important fundraising weapon that we have is our Board of Directors and said that it helps that they show their enthusiasm for The Wild Center. He also said that he thinks the potential for giving inside and outside of the Adirondacks is huge. Lynn Birdsong stated that he would love to be able to say that Wild Walk has been fully funded at the ten year gala saying that would be a wonderful message to send. Nancy Simpkins and Joe Beck are on the celebration committee and said that the celebration committee has

been on the phone every week since January. Obie and Betsy have been working on getting in contact with Jane Pauley and Garry Trudeau to possibly co-host the event.

Karen stated that the committee was still deciding on a theme but that they had a list of ideas and would report on that soon as well as send out save the date cards. She emphasized the fact that they would need help from all, especially with securing sponsorship for the event and would love to have \$1 million in hand before the event takes place. The location of the event would be at the Metropolitan Club in New York City. Joe Beck acknowledged Obie for making great connections stating that we had two great honorees. He asked Board members in attendance if anyone had any connections in the entertainment industry. Joe also reported that twelve Board members had committed to tables so far and encouraged others to commit. Hillarie mentioned that the committee was working on tickets, tables and pricing structures and said that information should be available sometime in June. Nancy Simpkins stated that she would keep everyone posted on the progress of the committee.

VII. Sustainability Committee

Discussion: Chris McFadden began by thanking all who were able to participate in the Sustainability Discussion last night at the Princeton Club. He stated that there were many great comments and that it was a very important part of the process. He said that he would distribute a copy of the slide from last night with the resolution saying that all would have a chance to comment on the resolution. Charlie Frenette stated that the conversation at the table was very thoughtful and informative saying that the details need to be fleshed out more. Jim Schoff said that the resolution talks about getting independent consultation and that this takes it to the next level. He said that it is essential to know if others agree with our vision and direction. Joe Beck stated that we need to test the hypotheses and refine them. Stephanie said that we embrace a fresh eye and Joe Beck said that we need the help to focus us and keep us on target. Chris McFadden stated the there was talk about sunseting the committee but all wanted to stay involved as well as expand participation. There was some discussion about what the succeeding entity would be called. The Governance Committee will convene at some point soon to decide.

Lynn Birdsong then stated that there was a resolution to take the next step which would allow us to spend up to \$150,000 which would be above and beyond the normal budgeted expenses. He then presented the following resolution for approval:

“Whereas the Board has received the report of the Sustainability Committee and endorses the content therein, it now directs the staff and appropriate board leadership to undertake the next phase of the project, a strategic competitive analysis of the programs and activities envisioned in the report. The strategic

competitive analysis will require input from experts in museum strategy and funding, therefore the Board endorses the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$150,000 over the 2015-16 period, funded by TWC resources and selected fundraising efforts. The Board asks that the Board chair develop an oversight process for this initiative and report on implementation as needed”.

The resolution was unanimously approved.

Connie Ferguson motion, Nancy Simpkins second.

XII. China Sales Mission

Discussion: Hillarie Logan-Dechene then gave a brief report on her recent trip to China. She stated that last July she was invited to a China Ready training in Albany that was sponsored by I Love New York. She said the I Love New York has opened offices in three different cities: Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou and stated that China was a huge tourism market opportunity for New York State. She then shared the following information:

- There are not that many untapped resources for New York State.
- It was a well-organized promotion.
- It could help us transform our revenue stream.
- She had 66 personal meetings in three cities, 22 meetings per city.
- I Love New York is there to support us to help us build an itinerary that would appeal to Chinese tour groups.
- The trip was grant funded.
- A by-product of the trip is a much closer relationship with I Love New York.

XIII. Wild Walk Marketing and Promotion

Discussion: Howard Fish stated that he has been working on The Wild Center’s brand and public relations and shared the following information regarding his major efforts at this time:

- National Media.
- I Love New York.
- Regional promotion.
- Travel and television – The L.A. Times has picked up the Wild Walk story and done an article about it.
- The Wild Center will be the featured guest at an I Love New York media event.

In terms of advertising, these are the major efforts:

- Regional travel sites.
- Television
- Public radio
- Regional print

Howard also mentioned the new brochure stating the following changes that had been made:

- New distribution areas.
- Revised content.
- Bigger brochure.

He also stated that social media gives you a chance to buy something at a margin of the cost and amplify it and the network takes over from there. He mentioned that the major efforts in terms of social media were in sharing, Twitter and Facebook. One other area that he talked about was targeting Lake Placid and shared the following on those efforts:

- The Wild Walk model is at the new Tourist Information Center.
- Blanket advertising.
- Coaster program.
- Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) promoting – we have a great presence on their website.

A few other major efforts were the website where we are attempting to drive new visits. We are showcasing Wild Walk and have seen growth in website visits by state as well as New York State overall. Howard also mentioned that we have updated the display at the Northway rest area.

Rich Malloch asked if we have looked at weather and its effect on visitors. He suggested micro-purchasing a resource to research this stating that it might be beneficial. He asked how many people look at the weather before they decide what to do that day. Howard stated that we know that weather moves the needle.

XIV. Executive Session

There was a brief executive session and the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm.

XV. Upcoming 2015 Meeting Dates

Monday, July 6, 2015 (TWC)

Friday, October 9, 2015 (TWC)