

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
THE WILD CENTER
April 7, 2014 – AMNH, New York City
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Board Present:

Lynn Birdsong, Obie Clifford, John Colston, Amy Elrod, Lynn Fox, Charles Frenette, Sally Hart, Thomas Jorling, Peter Kindler, Rich Malloch, Chris McFadden, Jack Ryder, Nancy Simpkins, Charles Svenson, and Karen Thomas.

Advisory Board Present:

Lee Bailey and Linda Rosenstock

Board/Advisory Board/Staff Present via Web Ex: Joe Beck, Martha Bullock, Rick Godin, Gary Hartwick, Tim Holmes, Nancy Howard, Betsy Lowe, Sandra Strader, and Ross Whaley.

Board Absent: Paul Alioto, Tom Aydelotte, Michael Bettmann, Connie Ferguson, Robert Friedman, Mike Hunsinger, John Huwiler, Dave Johnson, Claire Leonardi, Paul Maroun, James Schoff, Dan Sullivan, and Joel Treisman.

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

I. Approval of Minutes

Discussion: Minutes of the January 13, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved.

Nancy Simpkins motion, Peter Kindler second.

Action: N/A

II. Report from the President

Discussion: Lynn Birdsong called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm and asked all Board members in attendance and on the phone to observe a moment of silence for Mary Clifford. He then shared the top three priorities for 2014:

- The completion of Wild Walk.
- Complete Annual Fund fundraising.
- Initiate sustainability review and ad hoc group.

Lynn then stated that many people were working hard on the different ad hoc committees and said that the marketing group has met several times and there was lots of great work being done by Wild Center staff and Board members.

III. Report from the Director

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe began by sharing some recent Wild Center news with Board members.

Maple Season Three

- 71 families, over 800 taps
- Some families delivering sap
- Syrup in three local restaurants
- Project funded for 2014 and 2015
- Team working on developing a long term sustainability plan
- Participated in the Taste of Maple event in Lake Placid
- Will use the story kiosk so that people can record their childhood maple stories

Wild Walk

Stephanie then spoke about the tree snag on the Wild Walk exhibit.. She described a design process that started one and a half years ago. A group visited the largest white pine stand in the Adirondacks in Paul Smiths where they measured and documented the trees so a similar look and feel could be replicated.

- She also showed photos of a recent trip to Syracuse to see progress on other aspects of the structure.
- Stephanie and Chip Reay recently traveled to Cost of Wisconsin, the exhibit fabricators working on the tree snag. She stated that they had created a clay model of the exhibit element and bark molds.

Science Centre World Summit 2014

Stephanie reported that she had recently attended the Science Centre World Summit in Brussels, Belgium and gave board members a brief synopsis of her time there. She stated that it was a world summit of science center leaders who came together to discuss current issues of science centers. She presented at the conference in a session on the future of science centers, The Wild Center has garnered some attention because of our community based work. In her Summit presentation she posed the question “If all science centers focused on THEIR individual communities needs then how would we all evolve?”:

- What would be the common denominator across organizations?
- What would be different?
- What would the term science center come to mean?

Stephanie then shared some of her reflections from the summit:

- There was a focus on the future of science centers explicitly acknowledging the shifting sands of who disseminates knowledge in the age of the internet.

- There were HUGE disparities among countries internationally as to their level of science center development. The US is a clear leader.
- There are major differences across the world about who pays for and supports science centers.
- While the Summit Declaration called for more dissemination of current science, at least in the US we are witnessing a decrease in support for museums and public TV to help with this task.
- The responsibility of communicating climate change was an ethical issue.
- Deepening your relationship with your immediate community, in whatever form that takes, was an ongoing conversation.
- Science is CULTURE as much as art and music and we have a charge to take lead on civic science literacy.

She also shared concepts presented in a Summit session on the influence of the internet on our sector:

- The building of the internet is more important than the design of cities.
- Virtual is good but at some point you need a touch point.
- Beyond surfing – you need to know how to use the internet and surf skillfully but the more important question is how to make waves (be first, be creative and use the tool differently).
- Ministers of Education should be like Ministers of Transportation – the transportation system does not tell you where to go but instead offers you good infrastructure.

She stated that the science center profession is international, there were director's in attendance from New Zealand, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Scotland, Abu Dhabi and Finland as well as many other countries.

IV. Sustainability Ad Hoc Group Report

Discussion: Lynn Birdsong stated that at the January Board meeting there had been discussion about building a sustainability committee to assess the long-term financial sustainability of The Wild Center and it was determined that the creation of this committee would be very important to the future of the museum. Since the January meeting, the committee has been formed. Board members Charlie Frenette, Chris McFadden, Joe Beck, Lynn Fox and Lynn Birdsong (ex-officio) and staff members Stephanie Ratcliffe, Hillarie Logan-Dechene and Bob Kronenberger make up the committee.

Lynn Birdsong then asked Chris McFadden and Lynn Fox to bring those in attendance up to date on the progress of the committee. Chris McFadden stated that Board member Charlie Frenette had challenged the Sustainability team to think about the future of The Wild Center and that it might take six months to a year to build consensus and come to any conclusions. Chris McFadden said that they determined that the “why” is very important and that they continue to struggle with “how” TWC can afford all its current aspirations. It is very important to link everything to a strategic planning process and

that the last one was done in 2009. He stated that Bob Kronenberger and Stephanie Ratcliffe were working to create a baseline to help establish the museum's financial complexion. One question that the committee is looking at is "what are the museum's infrastructure needs"? Next is a financial modeling and future scenario analysis to determine our next phase of work.

Chris then reported that Stephanie Ratcliffe would be sending emails asking people to join focused ad-hoc committees and that the committee will have the tools it needs by the July meeting to take the next steps.

Lynn Fox added that the committee will be sending the first charter around stating that Charlie Frenette has been very thoughtful in helping to create the document. She stated that the Volunteer piece from each Board member would be helpful and that assessment is a very important part of the process. Some of it would be technical and based on comparative reporting (e.g., pricing).

Charlie Frenette stated that the process had been interesting but he felt that the output is much more exciting.

V. Finance Report

Discussion: Bob Kronenberger went over the highlights of the financial dashboard that was handed out in the board packets:

- Contributions are a large portion of the overall revenue pie
- Contributions are 60% of total revenue
- From 2012 to 2013 the percentage of revenue from grants went from 6% to 14%
- Some of grant money is covering salaries which is allowing us to do some of our programming
- Attendance overall is up slightly in 2013 from 2012
- There was a large increase in member visits – canoe trips and films helped with that
- Revenue down slightly
- The Board Designated Endowment was up slightly from 2012
- Grants are a larger piece of total operating expenses
- Earned income in the store was down slightly from 2012
- There was a slight increase in earned income for the café from 2012

Lynn Fox stated that she expected that the rainy weather might spike an increase in attendance, she asked whether or not it had helped the numbers at all. Bob Kronenberger said that in order for it to make a big difference, the rain needed to come in July and August. Hillarie Logan-Dechene stated that we needed to draw people here and then it needed to rain. Tom Jorling asked if café and store revenue were getting close to Admissions revenue, Bob K. said yes on a gross sales basis. Chris McFadden asked how catering factored into 2013 numbers. Bob K. said that 2013 was a down year

for catering events, weddings were down from 10 to 4. He reported that there had been some changes in staffing and he was looking forward to a rebound in that area for 2014.

- On the expense side, programs were 60% of overall operating expenses and administration was 40%.
- Salary and benefits are the largest component.
- There was an increase in Maintenance/Supplies primarily due to grant related maple expenses.
- In support and revenue – There was about a \$250,000 operating loss for 2013. At the last board meeting, the Board gave authorization to borrow \$250,000 from the Board Designated Endowment Funds to fund the loss.
- We were able to repay the line of credit and maintain a zero balance for 30+ days. However, have borrowed from the line of credit again in March.
- Current operations are operating close to budget.

Bob Kronenberger asked the board if the funds borrowed from the Board Designated Funds should be left as a loan or if they should vote to approve a distribution of the \$250,000 to cover the 2013 deficit. Lynn Birdsong stated that it should be left as a loan for now.

There was a question about when we could draw on the \$1,000,000 grant and Bob Kronenberger stated that we need to fulfill certain requirements before we can request that reimbursement. He did say that it would be requested in this calendar year. He also said that any contributions that come in for Wild Walk will be put into the pledged collateral account at Community Bank.

Lynn Birdsong stated that at the January Board meeting there was discussion about Board Designated Endowment funds. He said that there was a high in the market and that the investment committee met and decided to sell \$300,000 in funds to create more liquidity and reduce our overall equity exposure.

Action: N/A

VI. Audit Committee Report

Discussion: Joe Beck began by thanking all audit committee members for their work and then shared the following highlights:

- Was a good and thorough session with the auditors.
- Performance was up from last year.
- No major changes.
- No weaknesses in management report.

Joe Beck stated that all Board members share concerns about how to put The Wild Center in position as a not-for-profit to help the community. He stated that the museum is clearly a growth company that is successful in raising money to

meet its needs. Joe also said that all can read the auditors notes which were provided in the Board packet.

At the conclusion of his report, Joe Beck asked Board members to accept the 2013 Audit Report.

Action: A motion to accept the 2013 Audit Report was unanimously approved.
Joe Beck motion, Chris McFadden second.

VII. Campaign Report

Discussion: Karen Thomas began by stating that \$18.5 million had been raised so far and thanked all in the room for their generosity. She stated there were 20 more months left in the campaign and that the next one and a half years would be challenging. She reported that the campaign cabinet and Development had been doing wonderful work. Karen stated that the campaign was kicked off with a larger event last July and now the focus will be on smaller get togethers to help share the museum's wonderful mission with others. She mentioned that Board member Connie Ferguson had recently hosted a small party in Vero Beach and stated that other board members have volunteered to host such gathering this year. These will be small gatherings with one or two trustees and a chance to get to know new prospects and donors better.

Karen then stated that the Wild Walk towers would rival the Lake Placid ski jumps as iconic Adirondack structures and that the cabinet would be asking for more help to reach the \$20 million goal.

Hillarie Logan-Dechene then thanked all for what they had done so far. She then went over the following:

- The goal is very ambitious for this year.
- There is a deficit budget that needs to be funded.
- Development needs to reach out this year to get leadership gifts to help construct Wild Walk.
- Hillarie took a moment to introduce the newest Development staff member, Katherine Alexander, who was hired as a Campaign Assistant.
- Ruth Burnell and Natalie Zurek had been hard at work doing research to help identify new prospects, specifically looked at people who had recently purchased Adirondack properties.

Action: N/A

VIII. Development Work Session

Discussion: Christine Owens and Robin Ellis then took some time to lead a work session. Christine shared the following information:

- The willingness of the Board to makes calls is wonderful.

- Board outreach is so important, she asked Board members to expand their circle of influence.
- Board members commitment will help spark interest of others.
- It is important to have face time with prospects and donors, doesn't have to be slick, just authentic.
- Don't take it personally if they don't have time or don't give.
- Some may not be interested or want to give at the level that we want them to or ask them to.
- It is important for Board members to read all research materials before meeting prospects.
- Practice the 80/20 rule, Listen (80) and Speak (20).
- After three or four attempts to meet with no luck, send a hand written note to keep the conversation going.
- After interactions, please debrief staff.

Hillarie then told Board members about welcome baskets that her department had recently made. They are typically given by Board members to people that they would like to introduce to The Wild Center as a welcome. They include some Wild Center goodies, as well as some guest passes so that they can come and visit the museum. The basket is a gift and also a first step in developing new relationships with people who may invest in The Wild Center.

Robin Ellis then took some time to highlight different donor relationships:

- Challenge is to get in front of them to determine whether or not they will get more involved
- He has been reaching out to mostly cold calls – friends of The Wild Center with no known base in the Adirondacks.
- Approximately 25% of people don't return calls, 15% do get back promising to continue to support but don't have time to meet. 15-20% say the timing is not right the rest will meet
- We have had more success meeting with people in their homes; better than meeting at camps.
- Most people are usually generous with their time.
- All are very strong supporters, all have comments – mostly great about TWC.

Robin then shared some recent scenarios with potential donors. Karen Thomas stated that Robin was the museum's secret weapon on the ground. Christine Owens stated that having Wild Walk at this stage of the campaign is perfect timing and that it can show people how they can make a difference. She said that having it half built will make a compelling case for attracting people. Getting them on site will help generate excitement for what is happening in the community and at The Wild Center.

Christine then split Board members up into groups and asked them to come up with different scenarios about how to attract new donors to The Wild Center. After Board members shared their ideas, Hillarie handed out a signup sheet and asked Board

members to choose names of people that they are willing to take on as a new assignment. She also asked Board members to take a look at a list of names of corporation directors and if they know anyone to put their initials next to the names to hopefully make some connections. A small group of board members, Nancy Simpkins, Charlie Frenette and Jack Ryder volunteered to host an event for the new prospects from Tupper Lake in July.

IX. Moments Exhibit Report

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe welcomed Caroline Welsh to give an overview of the new Moments art exhibit which features the wildlife art of Allen Blagden. She then gave a brief presentation on the creative process by which the exhibit was put together. She said that Allen Blagden was chosen because he was a nationally known wildlife artist. She stated that the exhibit was a multi-sensory, child friendly exhibit that was accessible to all learning levels.

She then unveiled two paintings, one of Stickley, the museums resident porcupine as well as one of a pair of bears. Both are animals that might be encountered in the Adirondacks.

Hillarie Logan-Dechene stated that the exhibit was different in many ways from traditional art or science museum exhibits. She reported that when the exhibit was conceived and negotiated, the artist proposed that paintings could be sold and that the museum could earn some income from the sale of the paintings. This would be in the form of a 70/30 split between the artist and The Wild Center. The artist also painted Stickley the porcupine, and the Bear painting specifically for the show and offered to split the proceeds at 50/50 if those paintings were to be auctioned. Hillarie stated that the staff wanted the board's opinion on the auction concept. She commented that were we to proceed with an auction that we would need a short list of committed bidders who would promise to bid the night of the auction. She then took a poll of Board members asking whether they thought it would be a good idea to auction the paintings. After much discussion, it was decided that the paintings would not be auctioned but could be discreetly sold outright like the other paintings in the exhibit. Stephanie Ratcliffe stated that The Wild Center had the right to reproduce some of the art for other sales opportunities. Caroline Welsh, guest curator, stated that there will be a range of products available in the museum store and that Mr. Blagden will create some limited edition etchings and small reproductions that will also be available for sale.

There were questions about whether or not the prices for the art would be posted. It was decided that there would be a discreet note in the exhibit area stating that people should inquire at the store regarding pricing and purchases.

The exhibit will be the feature of this year's Patron Circle and Donor Reception after the July 7th Board meeting that would be the official unveiling of the exhibit.

X. Marketing

Discussion: Howard Fish then gave a brief presentation on marketing efforts for the museum for summer. He stated that he has looked back at what has been done in the past and will focus on what has worked best for this season. He then shared a list of some of the top things that have worked in the past:

- Brochures – will produce three different brochures
- Coasters – to hotels, restaurants and bars
- Posters – for Fests, Moments, Rainy Day
- Media Sponsorship – for Buzzfest, Flavor Fest
- Social Media – Wildwire, Facebook, Twitter
- Moments – Posters, brochure, radio, messaging, online advertising, etc.
- Joint marketing with Adirondack Museum
- Lake Placid – Tickets, tours, coasters

Howard also reported that Wild Walk promotion was in full swing. He stated that:

- A slim jim brochure was being created
- An exhibit for rest stops on the Northway was being put together
- He was starting the process of making sure that there was an awareness about wild Walk
- More information and a timeline would be available at the July board meeting

Lynn Birdsong mentioned the rainy day posters, asking if we would ever get to the point of doing a sunny day poster. Howard stated that in the case of the campgrounds, the museum was fighting for the attention of campers and that we were trying to give them a rainy day plan and that the idea of promoting us as a rainy day destination is helpful to the customer. Charlie Frenette stated that he was amazed at how little was spent on marketing. He also asked if it was possible for someone to man Facebook all the time to monitor comments and personally respond to questions, etc. Howard stated that there was a learning curve to it. Stephanie stated that Howard and Tracey Legat need to take that on as they understand it more intimately. Charlie then stated that it feels like the museum markets “in” and that it needs to market “out” especially with the construction of Wild Walk. He said that we should take the time to think about how to shape Wild Walk in the minds of people before they form their own opinions and theories and that we need to create the correct perception. Howard said that he will be taking a closer look about how to influence the market on Wild Walk.

Rich Malloch then asked what The Wild Center spends on marketing. Howard stated that the museum has never used an outside firm but that he was considering getting pricing from some firms. He said that we may partner with other organizations to co-market. Rich stated that getting them to present to us what they do is key and that getting in front of the right audience right now was also key. Lynn Birdsong asked Rich to lend a hand with this.

XI. Executive Session

- XII. Upcoming 2014 Meeting Dates**
Monday, July 7, 2014 (TWC)
Friday, October 10, 2014 (TWC)