

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF THE ADIRONDACKS/
THE WILD CENTER**

August 27, 2010 – The Wild Center, Tupper Lake, NY

Board Present: Paul Alioto, Tom Aydelotte, Joe Beck (via phone call), Lynn Birdsong, Obie Clifford, John Colston, Rick Godin, Nancy Howard, Mike Hunsinger, Bill Hutchens, Dave Johnson, Tom Jorling, Peter Kindler, Claire Leonardi, Betsy Lowe, Paul Maroun, Sandra Strader, Dan Sullivan and Charles Svenson.

Board Absent: Michael Bettmann, Jim Carr, Charles Frenette, Robert Friedman, Kevin Keane, Nancy Lamb, Steve Potter, Nancy Simpkins, Karen Thomas and Tony Whaling.

Advisory Board Present: Tim Barnett, Sally Hart, Gary Hartwick, Chris McFadden, Carl Shedd, Ross Whaley and Eugene Zeltmann.

Staff/Consultants Present: Marci Bencze, Susan Clifford, Diana Fortune, Jen Kretser, Bob Kronenberger, Hillarie Logan-Dechene and Stephanie Ratcliffe.

Stephanie Ratcliffe took a few minutes at the start of the meeting to showcase some of the newest items for sale in our museum store. She also showed a prototype of a new fleece jacket that would be available to board and advisory members which was similar to the jackets worn by The Wild Center staff members. She stated that it was something that former long-time board member Nellie Staves had suggested before her passing last year. A form was passed around so that board members could place an order. Board President Lynn Birdsong then called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board unanimously approved the May 10, 2010 meeting minutes with revisions as well as the July 5, 2010 minutes.

Peter Kindler motion, Nancy Howard second.

REPORTS FROM THE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Board President Lynn Birdsong stated that it had been a spectacular summer in the Adirondacks as well as at The Wild Center. He also said that one of the great blessings of succeeding Obie Clifford as president of the Board of Trustees was attending so many Wild Center events and that everything had been well attended. He also thanked the staff for their hard work in ensuring that these events were first class. He acknowledged Board member and Consultant, Rick Godin, for his work on some recent films that he created for the museum. He stated that all board members should take the time to see “Scent of a Moose” as well as the Return of the Wild and Bio Blitz films that Rick created.

Lynn also acknowledged Sue Clifford and called her the “magician” behind the scenes when he spoke about the recent Wings events. He stated that the new Wings group has been launched and that he appreciates all of her efforts in making this happen.

He stated that there was a lot going on at The Wild Center to be proud of. He also mentioned that during a visit to the museum earlier in the day, U.S. Senator Charles Schumer said “tell me what you need” and that he took that opportunity to mention the new Bird Skytower and Skywalk.

Stephanie Ratcliffe began her report by showing a power point. She stated that our Director of Programs, Jen Kretser, had recently received an award for the Youth Climate Summit from Museumwise which is a regional museum association. She also reported that The Wild Center was profiled in a new book about museums written by Nina Simon called “The Participatory Museum”.

Stephanie reported that July attendance was down but that it didn’t tell the whole story. She stated that although attendance was down, use of the building was up and that in June there were six events bringing in 341 people, in July there were nine events bringing in 545 people and in August there were ten events which brought in 662 people. The people came as a result of room rentals, weddings and other external events. She mentioned that Congressman Bill Owens held a meeting with local farmers at The Wild Center and while he was here he stopped by the Farmer’s Market which is held every Thursday during the summer months.

Stephanie then spent some time talking about a recent meeting that she had with the Director’s of two comparable sized museums, ECHO in Burlington, VT and Montshire Museum of Science in Norwich, VT. They spent time together to share museum statistics and Stephanie stated that they all learned a lot from each other.

Board member Dan Sullivan asked if providing an institutional membership was ever thought of as an option especially for higher education institutions that benefit from The Wild Center being here. He stated that offering this type of membership as an option could enhance support. Stephanie Ratcliffe stated that she did like the idea of an institutional type membership.

Stephanie then reported on a few major grant projects totaling approximately \$781,640 that would be completed over a three year period. One of those grants was received through the Institute of Museum and Library Services. It will be used to support climate change education. The two year project totals \$370,000. The grant is \$150,000 with a match of \$220,000 from The Wild Center which consists of salary, materials and other miscellaneous costs. Another grant that was received was for an Exchange Program with a museum in Finland and was received from the American Association of Museums. This will be a 1.5 yr. project totaling \$144,000. The grant received was \$85,000 with a match of \$59,000 from The Wild Center which consists of \$8,000 in cash and a \$51,000 in-kind match consisting of staff time. She stated that we also received a Scenic Byways grant which would help to provide interpretive signage on Whiteface Mountain Memorial Highway and Whiteface Mountain Ski

Lodge and Gondolas. She said that we heard that we had received this grant approximately two years ago and are just receiving the funds now. This is a two year project in the amount of \$267,640. The grant received was \$214,000 with a match of \$53,000 from The Wild Center which consists of video development, staff time and \$8,550 in cash. Stephanie stated that we try to write grants for general operating support and it is often special projects that get the funding.

CAMPAIGN PLAN STATUS

Lynn Birdsong began by stating that the board had recently voted on a comprehensive campaign plan and that we would proceed with a working goal of \$20M which would include expenses of implementing the campaign. He said that the first step of the campaign was to organize leadership and form a campaign cabinet. He stated that Obie Clifford agreed to be the Honorary Chairman of the Cabinet and would help to raise money but would be relieved of administrative duties. Co-Chairs of the Campaign Cabinet would be Karen Thomas and Lynn Birdsong. Members of the Cabinet are Michael Bettmann, James Elrod, Kevin Keane, Peter Kindler, Nancy Simpkins, Dan Sullivan and Charles Svenson. Responsibilities of the Cabinet are to provide organization, structure and planning for the campaign, raise 50-60% of the goal and make phone calls, personal contacts and solicit donors. The first meeting of the Campaign Cabinet will take place in New York City on September 13 and the second meeting will take place in New York City on September 29.

Lynn stated that there are many things to sort out as the campaign moves forward. He said that it is a three part campaign including endowment, capital and annual fund and that a few items that need to be worked out immediately are the gift policy as well as the endowment policy. He asked for all board members to support the campaign to the best of their ability. He said that any dollar amount given counts as a contribution to the campaign and asked all to think about annual fund, endowment and capital needs when deciding how to contribute.

Lynn then reported that long-time Consultant Christine Owens had been retained as campaign counsel and that a campaign manager, Jamie Dyer, who is a graduate of St. Lawrence University, had been hired recently.

There was some discussion about staff participation for the campaign. Trustee Dan Sullivan mentioned that at St. Lawrence University there was 86% faculty/staff participation. The Wild Center would like to have 100% participation. There was also discussion regarding the best way to communicate our needs to the right people. It was stated that when rewriting the case statement that it needs to be clear and compelling.

Christine Owens handed out a copy of the Campaign Playbook to board members, and stated that the full case statement was in the process of being revised and that changes can still be made to the document.

Trustee Dan Sullivan asked what the percentage of Canadian visitors is and whether or not we have a Canadian tax exemption. Obie Clifford stated that nothing concrete has ever been

done involving attracting the Canadian market but it is worth pursuing. Advisory Board member Sally Hart suggested doing some type of outreach with the Bio Dome in Montreal.

COMMITTEE CHAIR GOALS

Lynn Birdsong stated that Committee chairs were asked at the beginning of the year to state their goals for the coming year. Committee chairs then shared their goals with the board:

Trustees and Governance Committee

Lynn Birdsong began the reporting by sharing his goals as chair of the Trustees and Governance Committee. Goals/accomplishments are as follows:

- The committee has been active and has met twice this summer.
- The latest draft of Board and Advisory Board job descriptions have been completed and will be distributed with meeting minutes. Stephanie Ratcliffe thanked Board Member Dan Sullivan for sharing the St. Lawrence University model.
- Set up a nomination procedure to solicit recommendations to add new board members. New members to join the board in July. Would like it to be a more formal and transparent process.
- Discussion of current board meeting calendar. Stated that his sense was that what has evolved in terms of the current calendar for board meetings has served the institution well but the committee feels the current schedule of meetings does not line up with financial reporting and that at the end of the year, accounting information is not available.

Lynn said that the new idea was to hold two meetings in the Adirondacks and two meetings in New York City. The first meeting of the year would be a Spring meeting which would take place around the end of March or early April and would take place in New York City. Year end information would be available and provided at this meeting. The second meeting would take place around the 4th of July, which would be a summer kick off meeting and would take place at The Wild Center. The third meeting would take place around Columbus Day weekend in October and would take place at The Wild Center. All summer financials would be available at this meeting. The fourth meeting would be around the first week of January and end of year information would be known and budget would be approved. This meeting would take place in New York City. He stated that the final 2011 Calendar would be set at the December meeting. Advisory Board member Eugene Zeltmann stated that he felt that it would not be a good idea to hold more meetings away from the Wild Center itself.

Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chair Claire Leonardi then reported on goals of the Finance Committee and they are as follows:

- Develop an online annual report – this has been done.
- Develop a different plan for financial reporting – in process.
- Update Financial Policies and Procedures – a draft has been completed.

Investment Committee

Investment Committee Chair Lynn Birdsong reported on the status of the Investment Committees activities. He stated that there have not been a lot of changes in the way The Wild Center has been investing. He reported that there is currently \$275,000 in an equity index fund and that there was \$250,000 in a US Treasury Bond which has made \$12,000 in two months as well as a CD worth \$250,000. He stated that the remainder of the museum's money was in a money market fund so that it stays liquid. He said that we are starting to build a portfolio and that an endowment policy needed to be created in the near future.

Audit Committee

Audit Committee Chair Bill Hutchens began by thanking all members of the committee for their help in updating the Audit Committee charter. He also stated that the Chairman of the Finance Committee and Audit Committee cannot be the same. The following were goals of the committee:

- Update Audit Charter – Included a reference to the Whistleblower Policy, also strengthened the wording of the required communications and benefit letter.
- Create a Whistleblower Policy – Completed last winter. The goal was to create an open-door policy.
- Refine clearing accounts which is the closing of the books at the end of the year.
- Update Financial Policies and Procedures – Draft has been completed.

Personnel Committee

Personnel Committee Chair Mike Hunsinger reported that there were two goals for the Committee.

- Assist staff in updating practices and policies in the employee handbook – This was completed and approved in May.
- Revise performance evaluation procedures – Consultant Deb Howard came and did a manager training, developed a new appraisal form which has been used, survey was done and the feedback was mostly good. Deb Howard then came back and made some revisions to the form and coached managers. Salary adjustments were made effective May 1 based on the process.

Internal Affairs/Education

Director of Programs, Jen Kretser, reported and noted the strategic plan was used to drive work plan and goals for the year.

- Continue to work on providing a world class experience – Restored a position, created a new exhibit, Return of the Wild, otter expansion completed, maintaining/growing the intern program with five over the summer and two more starting soon, 150 volunteers, expanded our animal collection.

- Continue to build a relationship with regional schools – 2010 Youth Climate Summit (adkyouthsummit.org), created a five year work plan for Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), held a free community day which attracted over 1200 people and 25 vendors, hired a new school program coordinator, continued to hold Farmer’s Market, Whiteface Project which began in November to expand our reach and bring in new partners, held two Bio Blitz’s this summer and also held two trips that were full with waiting lists to the Shingle Shanty Preserve and a Bring Your Own Boat (BYOB) canoe trip.

Marketing

Director of Marketing and Communications, Howard Fish, reported that the cost of doing a survey is expensive so given the price issue he wanted to combine our quantitative research. Some current steps taken to understand our visitors include:

- Surveying visitors
- Doing street surveys in Lake Placid
- Kiosk surveys
- Comparing data with other entities
- Analyzing ticket sales data
- Analyzing web traffic
- Studying Facebook demographics
- Began an internet promos test using Google
- Web surveys of people who have registered online

Howard also showed a demographic profile of Facebook visitors. He reported that the Marketing Committee met to discuss data collected over the first four years and the result was that web traffic is at its highest level. Website visitors from the United States are up 46% and visitors from Canada are up 78%.

Howard also reported that The Wild Center has received an in-kind grant from Google Ads for \$120,000 per year. He stated that the next award level is \$360,000 and that the goal is to “spend” the money as quickly as possible. He also mentioned that the museum is building a homepage for more fun online and shared a few interesting facts:

- 2,500 members on Facebook
- 589 people voted on mountain lions
- 236 followers on Twitter
- 12,150 people watched The Wild Center on You Tube in the last year

Howard also stated that it was very important for the museum to build good personal relationships with businesses in Lake Placid who could direct visitors to the museum.

Development

Development Committee Co-Chair, Charles Svenson stated the following goals:

- Encourage board and advisory board members to pledge and/or make their contributions to the annual fund early and not wait until the end of December – he appealed to all present to do so.
- Continue to have more board and advisory board members cultivate prospects and actively secure contributions.
- Secure \$300,000 more in contributed income this year than in 2009 to meet operating expenses.
- Continue to plan for the comprehensive campaign.

He also took a moment to thank Paul Maroun for his help in securing funding for school programs.

FINANCE

Claire Leonardi gave an overview of the finance materials that were provided in the board packet. She stated that when she reported at the July board meeting she gave financial information through May and said that the information provided in the current packet represents results through the end of July (so it includes two months of the summer season). Revenues through the end of July were about \$140,000 below budget, which is about 10% below budget. Claire stated that the major driver was admissions revenue which was \$83,000 below budget. This is 23% below budget and 20% behind last year. She said that expenses continued to be lower than budget and that the resulting bottom line was a loss of approximately \$460,000. This is \$25,000, or 6% behind budget.

Claire reported that year-to-date contributions total almost \$600,000, but were about \$40,000, or 6%, below budget, but continue to be above last year. She stated that about half of this amount was offset by unrestricted grants which were above budget by about \$20,000. She also mentioned that year-to-date unrestricted grants are about \$70,000 above 2009.

Summer attendance through the end of July has been challenging because of the fabulous summer weather. Visitors were down 17% year to date through July, with 23% fewer visitors in July this year compared to July 2009. So far, August has been much better with attendance up 3% and Claire stated that if you remove unpaid attendance from the equation, the combination of paid visitors and member visits is up almost 5% over last August. She reported that the museum has had just over 50,000 visitors for the year through August 25.

She reported that the museum had been sharing more detailed information with the Adirondack Museum to help both institutions better understand their businesses. She stated that through July, The Wild Center's results are comparable with Adirondack Museum's with regard to percent of attendance declines.

Claire reported that through July, gross profit from the retail store and café came in below budget by a total of approximately \$30,000 which is very much driven by attendance levels. She stated that one positive note is that store revenue per visitor has been trending up. Claire also reported that expenses through July were \$114,000 below budget and that savings

continue to be spread across categories. She said that about 20% of that amount, or about \$23,000, are deferred expenditures. Salaries and benefits, the museum's largest cost center, continues to be about 4% below budget.

On a final note, Claire reported that Director of Finance, Bob Kronenberger, and Wild Center staff have been working on updating the financial plan and that information to form the foundation of the plan has been gathered. She stated that they will be incorporating and working through campaign assumptions, impact of key variables such as impact of potential new exhibits, and changes in historical performance metrics. She said that the original intention was to prepare a three year plan and after further discussion, it was determined that a five year plan that would incorporate a three year campaign and then two years with normalized expense and revenue levels would be better. She reported that the timing of completion will be coordinated with the revised case statement.

DEVELOPMENT

Charles Svenson stated that it was very important to focus on the Annual Fund and said that it was important that we not experience pre-campaign paralysis and brought up the fact that the budget has been increased by \$300,000 from last year. He also asked board members to donate as soon as possible, preferably before December. He stated that the museum could not go into a comprehensive campaign without being in a strong financial position and getting those donations as soon as possible would be important to ensure that we ended the year in the black. He said that the board has to be responsible for meeting the annual fund goal.

Hillarie Logan-Dechene reported that Diana Fortune would be spearheading the annual fund drive. She stated that getting at least a verbal pledge about how much board members plan to donate would be helpful in determining our financial position at the end of the year.

Hillarie then briefly showed a power point and went over the reports provided in the board package. She stated that it was important for board members to make their annual fund gift early and that it was extremely important to get as many gifts as possible.

She then reported that all summer events went well and that they were well attended with approximately 860 guests. Hillarie thanked board members for bringing guests to the events. She mentioned that there had not been as many behind the scenes tours this summer as there had been in the past.

Hillarie stated that there has been great progress made on the Obie Tribute event and she also recognized Sue Clifford for the work that she did to make the Wings event a reality. She noted that all of the food for the event had been donated. She said that there were other Wings events planned and that there are weekly entries on the Facebook page for Wings to keep people posted.

She stated that the Development department was on parallel tracks with work on the campaign as well as ongoing Development. Hillarie then gave board members background information on Jamie Dyer, The Wild Center's new capital campaign manager.

MARKETING

Howard Fish reported that July attendance numbers were down. He stated that he was in the process of setting up two meetings to get ideas about which directions to go in terms of marketing. He said that he will get information to participants before the meetings and stated that he is open to all suggestions in regard to next steps to take for marketing in the upcoming year. He said that the first meeting will take place in September and the second sometime in October.

OTHER BUSINESS

Trustee Nancy Howard stated that she would like to have someone speak at the next board meeting about all of the great things that are planned for Tupper Lake in the near future.

Stephanie Ratcliffe reported that there has been no new action to date on the Klueck property but that it was currently an ongoing conversation.

NEXT MEETINGS

The next 2010 meeting of the Board is scheduled for the following date:

Tuesday, December 28, 2010.