

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**  
**THE WILD CENTER**  
**January 13, 2014 – The Princeton Club, New York City**  
**1:00 PM – 5:00 PM**

**Board Present:**

Michael Bettmann, Lynn Birdsong, Obie Clifford, John Colston, Amy Elrod, Connie Ferguson, Lynn Fox, Robert Friedman, Sally Hart, John Huwiler, Thomas Jorling, Peter Kindler, Betsy Lowe, Rich Malloch, Jack Ryder, James Schoff, Nancy Simpkins, Charles Svenson, Karen Thomas, and Joel Treisman.

**Board/Advisory Board Present via Web Ex:** Tom Aydelotte, Joe Beck, Martha Bullock, Rick Godin, Nancy Howard, Dave Johnson, Paul Maroun, Sandra Strader, Dan Sullivan, Ross Whaley and Gene Zeltmann.

**Board Absent:** Charles Frenette, Mike Hunsinger, Claire Leonardi and Chris McFadden.

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

Prior to the start of the business meeting, over lunch, Hillarie Logan-Dechene presented the Adirondack Nonprofit Network Economic Impact Report that was recently conducted by the SUNY Oswego Office of Business and Community Relations. She stated that the goal of this study was to build awareness about the role that nonprofits play in our society and to inform policymakers, the media and the public about charitable activities in the Adirondack region. She reported that of the 36 participants, 26 of them were members of ANN (Adirondack Nonprofit Network). There were also 10 organizations that had been chosen by an ANN sub-committee.

Stephanie Ratcliffe then took some time to give a brief presentation on the 2013 Year in Review which was an overview of all of the wonderful things that had happened over the last year at The Wild Center:

- **Sweet Maple:** With the last grant we were able to build a mobile sugar shack which was transported to different events (i.e., the Governor's Adirondack Challenge, the New York State Maple Museum, etc.). She stated that the project was only going to get bigger and said that the community maple project was a wonderful aspect which showcased the connection with nature and local food pieces.
- **Wild Walk:** Staff took a trip to Syracuse, NY to see the towers being constructed, very exciting, there are now no worries about how sturdy the structure will be, it is very sturdy.
- **Farmer's Market:** Now in its sixth year, the farmer's co-op recently donated \$400 back to The Wild Center.

- **Broadband Summit:** The Wild Center participated in a live stream broadcast to the Governor's Broadband Summit in Albany at his request. Stephanie stated that distance learning is an amazing opportunity for the museum. She reported that on the day of the broadband summit, the Whiteface exhibit also opened. She also mentioned that Governor Cuomo had just pledged \$14 million to repair the Whiteface Memorial Highway.
- **Flight of the Butterflies:** Happened as the result of a partnership with Adirondack Action. We were already talking with Marsha Stanley and she helped raise the \$20,000 needed to secure the film. It was a quality film with the content that we wanted. There was a butterfly tagging program and a talk given by Chip Taylor who is the Founder and Director of Monarch Watch, an outreach program focused on education, research and conservation relative to monarch butterflies.
- **Monday Night Zumba class:** We are providing the space to a local Zumba instructor at no charge, class is free for Wild Center employees.
- **Wired for Learning Conference:** Alan November, was the keynote speaker. He is the most influential person in the world of distance learning.
- **Youth Climate Summit:** A key project. Did live Skype with the Finland Youth Climate Summit. YCS is a huge piece of outreach for The Wild Center.
- **Nonprofit Summit:** One of the wonderful examples of being a convenor, the theater was a perfect venue.
- **Stalking the Governor:** TWC was invited to the 2013 Regional Economic Development Council Awards as a featured project. The museum was awarded \$250,000 more towards Wild Walk exhibits. Obie Clifford reported that he had recently run into Governor Cuomo at the polls and spoke with him regarding The Wild Center. He subsequently received a personal note from the Governor stating that he felt The Wild Center was important to the Adirondacks and that Obie should let him know if there is anything he could do for the museum. Obie stated that he is still figuring out how to use that offer.
- **New Website Launch**

## **Welcome**

Discussion: Lynn Birdsong welcomed all in attendance and thanked Board members who were in the room as well as on Web Ex for their participation. He also mentioned that a small group of Board members had convened at The Wild Center to participate. He then stated that the first order of business was Board elections. He invited Nancy Simpkins to give this part of the report. Nancy began by mentioning that this was the annual meeting and that the two most important items on the agenda were board elections and approval of the budget. She stated that there were four candidates being considered for election to the Board. She then gave Board members a brief biography of each candidate:

- **Sally Hart** - She stated that Sally is a current member of the Advisory Board, and that she is a licensed Real Estate Agent and also works as a Marketing Consultant and Project manager. Nancy stated that Sally also serves on the board of the

Adirondack Landowners Association and co-chairs the Annual Fund for Planned Parenthood Mohawk Hudson and is a Hospice volunteer.

- Jack Ryder – She stated that Mr. Ryder is a current member of the Advisory Board, and that he is Managing Partner at Cadent Consulting Group, a consulting firm focused on marketing in the consumer package goods industry. Nancy also stated that Jack is passionate about the Adirondacks and conserving them for future generations. He has been a lifelong seasonal resident of the Adirondacks, first at Schroon Lake at his family's camp, and now at his own camp at Tupper Lake.
- Joel Treisman – Nancy stated that Mr. Treisman is also a current member of the Advisory Board. Joel is carrying on a family legacy of support for The Wild Center. She reported that Joel is a certified individual and organizational systems coach and an experienced group process facilitator with more than twenty-five years of experience in the fields of marketing, sales, advertising, product innovation, nonprofit management, strategic planning and leadership development. He is President of Strategic Diligence, LLC, a Westport, CT based executive coaching and organizational consulting firm he founded in 2001.
- Rich Malloch – Nancy also reported that Mr. Malloch joined the Hearst Corporation in 1991, and currently serves as president of Hearst Business Media. Hearst Business Media provides information and real-time databases and software solutions to the automotive, electronics, financial and health industries. Mr. Malloch and his wife Suzy are seasonal residents at Big Wolf Lake.

Action: A motion to elect Sally Hart, Jack Ryder, Joel Treisman and Rich Malloch to the Board of Trustees was unanimously approved.

*Robert Friedman motion, John Huwiler second.*

After the vote, new Board members were welcomed back into the room. Nancy Simpkins then stated that there were some Board members whose terms were expiring who would need to be re-elected as well as officers who would need to be elected.

Action: A motion to re-elect Paul Alioto, Tom Aydelotte, Joe Beck, Michael Bettmann, Lynn Birdsong, Obie Clifford, John Colston, Amy Elrod, Charles Frenette and Chris McFadden to the Board of Trustees was unanimously approved.

*James Schoff motion, Charlie Svenson second.*

Action: A motion to elect the following officers to the Board of Trustees was unanimously approved:

- Donald K. Clifford, Jr. – Chairman
- Lynn S. Birdsong – President
- Nancy K. Simpkins – Vice President
- Nancy Howard – Secretary
- Claire Leonardi – Treasurer

*Tom Jorling motion, Elizabeth Lowe second.*

Nancy also mentioned that the Governance Committee welcomes any suggestions for new Board and Advisory Board members.

**I. Approval of Minutes**

Discussion: Minutes of the October 11, 2013 meeting were unanimously approved.

*Sally Hart motion, James Schoff second.*

**Action: N/A**

**II. Report from the President**

Discussion: Lynn Birdsong stated that the entrepreneurial spirit of The Wild Center was amazing and that it was always willing and open to partnering with other organizations. He also stated that being nice is great but being necessary and essential is better. He mentioned that the meetings main focus would be on dollars and cents. He reported that the finance committee had met with Stephanie, Bob and Hillarie last week to review the results of the 2013 budget and the proposed budget for 2014. He stated that two things would be recommended later in the meeting, one, that a deficit be funded for 2013 and, two, that the Board would approve the 2014 budget as presented. He stated that the revenue projections for 2013 were ambitious and in the end, we did not meet our operating needs. While overall fundraising dollars were up \$800,000 for the year with the launch of the campaign, Annual Fund dollars were short. He then invited Director of Finance Bob Kronenberger to give his report.

**III. 2013 Financial Roundup and Development Report**

Discussion: Bob Kronenberger began by stating that at the conclusion of his report he would be asking for Board members to approve the budget. He stated that department heads developed their budgets this fall based on 2014 programming goals. He reported that because we are on a calendar fiscal year, it wasn't known until a few weeks prior to the Board meeting how 2013 would end or if the 2013 budget was repeatable. After 2013 revenues were compiled late in December, it was determined that there would be a deficit of approximately \$250,000 for 2013. Bob said that department heads were then asked to take another look at their budgets and try to cut them down more. He said that all were diligent and made significant cuts which cut \$250,000 from the budget. He stated that the budget that would be proposed had been cut in every area of operation; maintenance, development, administration and programs. Some of the strategies employed were:

- Re-deployment of staff in different ways.
- Reduction in healthcare benefits to cover increase in premiums.
- New cross department team to grow events and café revenue.
- Reduce program expense by deleting outside speaker and travel costs.
- Reduce travel and training budget.
- Defer equipment purchase and building maintenance when possible.

- Leasing all IT equipment instead of purchasing.
- Eliminated some donor and cultivation events.

Bob stressed that the main goal when making cuts to the budget was retention of staff jobs and preservation of programming.

Lynn Birdsong then spoke about the evolution of the budgeting process. He stated that in 2007, the revenue line was viewed as a plugged in number. He said that it was always stated that the budget was balanced but the Board wasn't always sure that it would be. This year, he stated that the Finance committee asked Bob Kronenberger to present the Board with a realistic budget that showed that there was still money to be raised. He said that showing a deficit at the beginning of the year was the best way to present it to the Board. He also stated that people were giving, but in different areas and that it was part of the learning process, deciding whether to ask for a gift to the annual Fund, Wild Walk or the Campaign.

#### **Annual Fund – How Did it Go?**

Hillarie Logan-Dechene thanked all for their Annual Fund support, she then shared the following facts about the Annual Fund with Board members:

- Did not reach \$1.76 million Annual Fund goal.
- 2013 Annual Fund Goal was \$130,000 more than the 2012 goal.
- \$1,437,808 raised vs. \$1,635,670 in 2012.
- 1286 gifts vs. 1260 in 2012.
- \$204,000 of the difference was in 6 non-renewed gifts: 1 death, 3 donors decided to give to other Campaign priorities, and 2 large outstanding Campaign asks.

Hillarie also shared the following information about the Campaign:

- Launched in July.
- Total gifts, pledges and bequest intentions \$18,300,000.
- Raised \$1.2 million since July launch including the Trustee Challenge.
- Secured a second NY State grant for \$250,000.
- There were 20 new \$1,000 or more gifts this year.

Hillarie then talked about increases over 2012 in Campaign and Non-Campaign Restricted Fundraising – Cash In for 2013:

- Increases in Board Designated Endowment Fund \$460,000.
- For Wild Walk \$350,000.
- For other non-campaign restricted projects \$230,000.

She also talked about the overall 2013 fundraising results:

- More donors gave to The Wild Center than last year.
- When you count all giving programs, so far this year we have raised more than last year: \$3,350,000 million vs. \$2,500,000 in 2012.

- Overall giving was up \$850,000 – but the money went into different pots.

There was then much discussion regarding ways to increase giving as well as what constitutes a major gift. Lynn Birdsong stated that anything over \$50-100,000 is considered a major gift. Lynn also mentioned Obie's 5-5-10 plan which provides a \$1 million baseline and Obie stated that he believes that it is still possible for that plan to come to fruition. Hillarie Logan-Dechene stated that having an active Board sets The Wild Center apart from other Adirondack organizations and that the museum is raising a lot more money than any other organization in the Adirondacks. In terms of acknowledging gifts that are received, New Board member Rich Malloch stated that he felt it was important for a thank you letter to be sent or a call to be made within a month after receipt of the gift.

There was then some discussion regarding the sustainability of The Wild Center. Lynn Birdsong stated that the museum had a board designated endowment, not a true restricted endowment. He said that it was important to focus on raising funds to help sustain the organization over the long term which a restricted endowment would do. He stated that there had been some discussion and the idea of creating an ad hoc sustainability committee was being explored. A few Board members, Charlie Frenette, Chris McFadden, Lynn Fox and Joe Beck had been approached to be involved in the committee along with Stephanie Ratcliffe. The goal of the committee was not to recreate the wheel on what had already been done but to research other revenue sources, to develop a prospectus to explain who the museum is, what it is doing and how to sustain it into the future. Lynn stated that it might help to find out where the gaps are and help to close them.

Trustee James Schoff asked how we could plan better to re-align budget/expenses throughout the year to help ensure that the budget is met at the end of the year. He also stated that we needed to be realistic and also needed to control expenses, being careful not to expend more than what was being taken in. Obie Clifford stated that we needed to take a harder look at our Board as a wonderful resource for the connections that they bring to the table. Christine Owens stated that even though there had been a public launch of the Campaign, people in the database had not yet been asked to give a "stretch" gift. Obie mentioned that there are 11 bequest intentions of \$1 that he thinks will be significantly higher.

John Colston asked if naming opportunities had been discussed for Wild Walk. Hillarie stated that there had been a document created that outlines the naming program that she would share. Stephanie stated that this was a great opportunity to get people involved who weren't in on the ground level of The Wild Center stating that it would be the "iconic structure" of the Adirondacks.

Joe Beck then stated that the sustainability committee will be important to help understand what the financial imperative is for The Wild Center and it is a fact that we need an endowment. He said it is also important to figure out what we want to be and what we can be. He also mentioned that it would be wonderful to host an annual gala at The Wild Center and invite people to come and participate in dancing and festivities and raise money. Stephanie Ratcliffe stated that this would be a good idea to put on the agenda for the sustainability committee. Obie stated that it is a great idea if there is some way to make it different and stand out from all of the other galas in the Adirondacks.

#### **IV. Financial Report**

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

- Overall revenues are projected to be 12% under budget and 1% less than last year.
- Admissions revenues are 7% below budget and last year.
- Total attendance was up about 1% over 2012 – with a 26% increase in member visits.
- Contributions were 12% or \$216,000 below budget and 2% or \$25,000 less than last year.
- Membership revenues are 5% below budget and last year.
- The number of active members at the end of 2013 was 2775, compared to 2917 at the end of 2012.
- Store revenues are 8% below budget and 6% below last year.
- Café revenues compared to last year for both line sales and event catering.
- Facility rentals are down 6 fewer events held at the museum compared to last year.
- Campaign support revenues are \$68,000 less than budget due to lower expenses.
- Projected 2013 expenses are about \$111,000 or 3% under budget and \$190,000 or 7% more than in 2012.
- Salaries and benefits are our major operating costs.
- 2013 costs are 2% or \$38,000 below budget, but 4% or \$74,000 above last year. Reasons: restoration of furlough and conversion of consulting position to staff position.
- Consulting fees are \$42,000 above budget and \$70,000 above last year. Contributing factors: website development costs, campaign counsel to support unfilled position and IT consultant to support conversion to new systems.
- Maintenance and supplies were \$13,000 under budget but \$83,000 more than last year. Reason for this large increase over last year: Bridge repairs - \$33,000, LSS PVC pipe replacement - \$14,000, Asphalt resealing - \$12,000 and IT equipment purchases - \$20,000.

- Utilities are \$9,000 less than budget and \$8,000 above last year.
- Without final numbers an operating deficit of about \$280,000 is being projected for 2013 compared to a surplus of \$22,000 in 2012.
- The Board Designated Endowment Fund is \$4.6 million at the end of 2013. Investment gains in 2013 were \$596,000.

There was then discussion regarding the Board Designated Endowment. Bob stated that in 2013, \$415,000 was used to fund campaign expenses. He also shared a history of the endowment from inception. Lynn Birdsong stated that historically there had been a little “magic” saying that the Linda Vaughan gift had helped fund Planet Adirondack, helped pay off old debt, and gave the museum the confidence to fund a \$20 million campaign. He stated that without it we may not have launched the campaign or had the courage to go to the bank for the Wild Walk loan. Stephanie mentioned that she had done a comparison with similar museums based on endowment and said that our endowment is amazing.

Bob then reported on 2014 budget revenue:

- Projecting flat attendance revenues for 2014.
- Increase over 2013 in facility rentals – working on repackaging weddings. There are 3 contracts for weddings so far this year.
- \$78,000 earned income on endowment.
- Campaign support to fund campaign expenses is at \$416,400 for 2014.
- 1% increase in revenue and support.

Bob then talked about 2014 budget expenses by function:

- Reduction in payroll cost due to reassignment of program staff for exhibits and backfilling some jobs with interns.
- Increase in employee benefits due to 16-31% raise in health insurance premiums.
- Increase in Promotion – International Paper is no longer donating paper for brochures.
- There was a savings on supply line – plan for 2014 is to lease IT equipment.
- Increase in repairs and maintenance due to needed repairs on the otter exhibit.
- There was also a savings on repairs and maintenance – staining of south side of the building was deferred until 2015.

Bob then went over the extensive list of budget cuts which netted a reduction of \$269,400. There was then discussion about whether or not it was possible to make more cuts to prevent submitting a deficit budget. Gene Zeltmann suggested looking at other line items to try and make more cuts. Jim Schoff asked if the budget has ever been stress tested and Stephanie stated that it would be an issue for the sustainability committee to take a look at. Michael Bettmann stated that we have a board designated endowment and asked if we should use

it to fund Wild Walk or use it to fund the endowment asking if both were needed now. Lynn Birdsong answered yes, stating that we are using the endowment to help carry us through until we can sustain. Lynn also said that during 2014, we will be looking at the bigger picture in terms of financials to help sustain us over the long term.

Lynn Birdsong then stated that there were two issues to be considered:

- Borrow money from the board designated endowment to pay down the line of credit before the next annual meeting.
- Vote on accepting the 2014 budget with a deficit.

Action: A motion to borrow money from the board designated endowment to pay down the line of credit before the next annual meeting was unanimously approved.

*Tom Jorling motion, Charlie Svenson second.*

A motion to accept the 2014 budget with a deficit was unanimously approved.

*Michael Bettmann motion, Tom Jorling second.*

There was then discussion about the budget. Joe Beck stated that the challenge will be the next five or ten years. He said that he supports approval of the budget as long as everyone made sure that sufficient cuts had been made. Lynn Fox was in support of approving the budget only with the assurance that the budget be looked at again. John Huwiler felt that the marketing and consultant budget should be looked at again for potential additional cuts. Stephanie Ratcliffe stated that Howard Fish, Tracey Legat, Christine Owens, Rick Godin and Pat Donnelly are classified as consultants saying that they all do the work of full time employees without the added expense of providing benefits and that the relationships were all advantageous to The Wild Center.

## **V. Wild Walk**

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe then spoke briefly about Wild Walk.

- Foundations have been poured.
- Took a team to Camp Topridge to look at twig details for inspiration for the Uber Twig element.
- Deep into the details at this point.
- Looking at exhibits, met with local carver Mike Trivieri to look at his animal carvings.
- Someone is coming to look at the interactive elements to ensure that ours will withstand the weather, etc.
- Working full bore on exhibits – Rob Carr, Naturalist, is doing exhibit design which eliminates the need for an outside developer.
- The Wild Walk model is being displayed in the museum as long as it is not on the road somewhere.

- Rick Godin did a photoshop picture of the exhibit on the site which shows that we are trying to preserve as many trees as possible.
- Did lots of tours this past summer just to see footprint pours, we took anyone who wanted to go – it was amazing.
- Obie Clifford stated that before The Wild Center was built, many tours were given and people were so excited.

There was then much discussion about ways to build the excitement once again for Wild Walk. Lynn Birdsong stated that at different times he has heard people standing at the Wild Walk model say that they won't believe it until they see it. He stated that those people needed to be proven wrong. Michael Bettmann said that it would be a great idea for Howard Fish to create a story arc showing that The Wild Center broke ground in 2004, now they are expanding, etc. Howard stated that he would work on that when producing the media kit for Wild Walk. Joel Treisman said that a construction site web cam would be a great idea, Stephanie said that she would work on making that happen.

Action: N/A

#### **VI. Status of Ad Hoc Committees**

Discussion: Stephanie then gave a brief status of the ad hoc committees:

- Website – Need to let a year go by and then get back into stats, committee will stay intact for the next year.
- Wild Walk – There is now a smaller group talking about communication.
- Distance Learning – The distance learning conference was the big deliverable for the year. Working on getting a \$300,000 grant to help move forward further, now in a semi-holding pattern.
- Building and Grounds – Hit a snag, behind in mapping the ten year plan, final spreadsheet will be finished within the next month.
- Sustainability – Will get underway soon.

#### **VII. 2014 Program**

Discussion: Stephanie then spoke about program plans for 2014.

- Maple continues with 2014 grant. 2014 goals – more products, exhibit in museum, syrup in restaurants, gathering stories and more web content.
- Attended maple conference in Verona which is the largest gathering of maple producers in the world.
- Wildlife Art exhibit – Moments, our summer offering, Allen Blagden – a very prominent artist in the world of nature art. His art will be the centerpiece, staff are working on interpretives. All art in his show is for sale in hopes that it will help offset the costs associated with the exhibit.

Karen Thomas asked if there would be an event associated with the opening of the exhibit. Hillarie stated that the opening party would double as the July Board reception. There was then brief discussion about whether or not there might be

any backlash from local artists, Stephanie said that there might be but we are prepared.

- Buzzfest/Flavorfest – Both events will take place again this summer.
- Building a Greener Adirondacks Expo – Stephanie included a flyer in the board packet and asked Board members to share with anyone that they think might be interested.

Action: N/A

**VIII. Executive Session**

**IX. Upcoming 2014 Meeting Dates**

Monday, April 7, 2014 (NYC)

Monday, July 7, 2014 (TWC)

Friday, October 10, 2014 (TWC)