

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**

### **THE WILD CENTER**

**July 1, 2016 – The Wild Center, Tupper Lake**

**2:00 PM – 6:00 PM**

#### **Board Present:**

Paul Alioto, Tom Aydelotte, Joe Beck, Michael Bettmann, Obie Clifford, Lynn Fox, Charles Frenette, Rick Godin, Nancy Howard, Michael Hunsinger, Thomas Jorling, Peter Kindler, Betsy Lowe, Rich Malloch, Paul Maroun, Chris McFadden, Linda Rosenstock, James Schoff, Nancy Simpkins, Sandra Strader, Charles Svenson, and Karen Thomas.

#### **Board/Advisory Board/Staff Present via Web Ex:**

Christine Owens

#### **Advisory Board Present:**

Lee Bailey, Tim Barnett, and Eugene Zeltmann.

#### **Board Absent:**

Lynn Birdsong, George Cigale, John Colston, Amy Elrod, Robert Friedman, Sally Hart, Jack Ryder, and Joel Treisman.

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

#### **Welcome**

#### **Discussion:**

Nancy Simpkins called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm and Stephanie Ratcliffe welcomed all in attendance. Stephanie began by handing out recognition pins to all who have been on the Board for at least ten years. Stephanie then invited interns to come up and introduce themselves. She also mentioned that bios for each intern were included in the days meeting materials. She also took a moment to introduce new staff member Stanzi McGlynn who was recently hired as the new Digital Content Fellow. She will be responsible for maintaining all of The Wild Center's Digital media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc. She will also create content to share with our followers to help promote TWC and share all of the amazing things that we do here.

Interpretive Naturalist Kerri Ziemann then provided all in attendance with a wonderful Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) demonstration. The purpose was to provide a better understanding of the program to Board members as we decide if The Wild Center will continue to pursue funding opportunities for the program.

**I. Approval of Minutes**

Discussion: A motion to approve the minutes of the April 11, 2016 meeting was unanimously approved with corrections per Obie Clifford.

*Nancy Simpkins motion, Charles Svenson second.*

Action: N/A

**II. Presidents Report**

Discussion: Nancy Simpkins then gave a brief report. She began by welcoming Rich Malloch back. He was in attendance after a brief absence. She then took a moment to thank Rick Godin for all of his hard work on the ten year film that he had created which follows the creation of The Wild Center from its early days of public meetings in order to stimulate interest to groundbreaking, construction, opening day and where it is today stating “who knew where we would be today”. She said that it has certainly grown beyond her imagination and she loved Joe’s analogy that we punch above our weight. She also mentioned that we should sell DVD’s of Rick’s film in the store and possibly even send a copy to former Governor and Advisory Board member George Pataki who was instrumental in helping us to secure a large grant which allowed us to complete construction of TWC among other things.

**III. Executive Director Report**

Discussion:

Stephanie Ratcliffe began her report by showing a photo that was taken during the ground breaking ceremony. Today, a number of the children in that photo either volunteer here or are employed here. The following are some of the other newsworthy items that she shared:

- The Wild Supply Co. Outpost – Had the idea for a remote store near the Wild Walk kiosk because people would visit Wild Walk and then leave. It is an experiment in capturing more revenue. The building is on a temporary foundation and can be moved if necessary.
- First Wild Walk wedding.
- Broke our own record for total student visits this summer.
- Hired a new PR firm to help promote Wild Walk, it got a lot of great coverage, summary was provided in packet. (*Conde Nast Traveler, What to do in the World list, etc.*)
- Hillarie was asked to present the Presidential Volunteer Service Award during Hope Week at Yankee Stadium.
- A plaque will be installed on Tower 4 of Wild Walk as a thank you to Howard Fish for all of his work over the years.

#### IV. Financial Report

Discussion: Chris McFadden began by making a few brief introductory comments:

- It is exciting to see how well Admissions has been doing to date.
- Expense management across the organization is going well.
- Recognized Bob Kronenberger for making improvements on loan terms as he has helped reduce the amount of fixed charges as well as interest expense.
- Endowment:
  - Currently at \$4.7 million and performing well.
  - Investment Committee had made slight modifications to our portfolio to increase equity.
  - Thanked members of the Finance Committee for all of their hard work.

Chris McFadden then turned it over to Bob Kronenberger to present the current financial dashboard and he shared the following information:

- Report had been modified to include new information such as website analytics, Social Channel Growth, etc.
- Overall revenues for May YTD are 6% above budget and 13% below 2015.
- Admission and program revenues are up \$53,000 over last year and \$53,000 over budget. Actual May YTD attendance is up 23% from last year and paid attendance is up 45%.
- Contributions are \$4,000 over or 1% over budget but \$71,000 less than last year. YTD Wild Walk contributions received are \$431,000 vs. \$809,000 last year.
- Membership revenues are 5% above budget and last year. The number of active members at the end of May 2016 were 6,337; in May 2015 they were 3,322.
- Combined store, café and facility rental revenues are on budget and similar to last year.
- Actual YTD expenses are \$18,000 under budget.
- Salaries and benefits are 2% below budget and 11% over last year.
- Consulting fees are \$60,000 more than budget and \$26,000 more than last year.
- Maintenance and supplies are \$40,000 below budget and \$119,000 more than last year.
  - Major expenditures – Spider web repair - \$36,000 and Chiller replacement - \$26,000.
- Utilities are \$10,000 under budget and \$12,000 less than last year.

- As expected through May of this year we are running at a deficit. This is consistent with our budget and historical operations. The actual YTD operating deficit is \$65,000 less than budget but \$374,000 more than last year.

## V. Development Report

Discussion: Hillarie Logan-Dechene then presented the 2016/2017 Development Plan and shared the following information:

- Post Campaign: Fundraising Model
  - Stewardship
  - Engagement
  - Relationship Building
  - Strengthening Community
  - Developing Leadership
  - Building Base
- Revenue Goals
  - Realize 100% of the \$596,377 in campaign pledges.
  - Meet or exceed the \$1.3m Annual Fund goal.
  - Conduct a special fundraising initiative to raise \$180,000/year to support the proposed 5-year \$900,000 building maintenance and capital expenditure plan.
  - Increase foundation funding by to support expanding the Youth Climate Initiative – a goal of \$201,000 for 2016. There was brief discussion regarding whether or not YCS would continue if not funded.
- Department Priorities
  - Recruit a Development Committee Chair and Committee Members.
  - Review our current staffing and needs with Development Committee.
  - Work with the Governance Committee to build Board capacity.
  - Campaign preparation.
  - Draft full three year “Endowment campaign” plan.
  - Case Statement for Support development.
  - Enhance the Linda Vaughan Society membership program.
- Stewardship
  - Thank you tour in donor dense regions.
  - Washington, DC – May
  - Adirondacks (Lake Placid, Upper Saranac Lake, Tupper Lake)
  - Cleveland - TBD
  - Philadelphia – TBD
  - Florida – Winter
  - Hillarie asked Board members to consider hosting other events, she will circulate dates for events to get suggestions for invitees.

- Membership
  - Special activities planned to encourage renewal.
  - Need to continue to engage members, let them know they are connected, a personal touch is important.
- Grantsmanship
  - All Grants
    - Applying for between 36 and 50 grants.
    - Overall \$977,448 in the pipeline.
    - Nine grants awarded in 6/30/16 - \$119,221.
  - Youth Climate Initiative
    - Applying for +/- 30 grants with potential of \$900,000.
    - \$610,266 is in the pipeline from four submitted including \$449,000 for NOAA.
    - 2 grants awarded in 6/30/16 - \$55,000.
  - Engage Volunteer leadership in access and endorsement activities.
  - Any Board connection to foundations is helpful.
- Legacy Giving
  - Market the Linda Vaughan Society.
  - Integrate identification and qualification activities.
  - Ways to Give promotions.
- Jim Schoff Direct Charitable Contribution
  - From an IRA counts toward the RMD.
  - 70.5 years of age.
  - Up to \$100,000 per year.
  - Can satisfy a pledge.
  - Jim Schoff explained the tax on contributions. He also stated that we should have a real endowment at some point rather than a Board Designated Endowment.

## VI. Developing New Markets

Discussion: Hillarie Logan-Dechene then reported on some recent events that had taken place here at The Wild Center all on the same day, June 10.

- The State Dept. hosted a community open house for a group that consisted of people from 24 different countries (China, Japan, Madagascar, Russia, Indonesia, etc.). They visited Wild Walk and learned about TWC as well as our programs including AYCS (Adirondack Youth Climate Summit).
- We hosted a NCRDEC (North Country Regional Economic Development Council) meeting.

- We were the site of a retirement party for outgoing APA (Adirondack Park Agency) Chairwoman Lani Ulrich and it was the first time many of the attendees had visited TWC.
- Eight school groups were also visiting that same day.

Hillarie also shared a story regarding a recent visit by an affluent Chinese businessman and his family who had requested a very private Wild Walk tour as well as a private rental of The Wild Center with dinner for their family of four and guests. Before their arrival we knew that the man was a member of the Nature Conservancy of China Board, and subsequently discovered that he is a substantial prospect and a business partner of another key Chinese prospect. She stated that it had gone well and that staff did a phenomenal job accommodating them. There was then much discussion regarding the possibility of doing this in the future as a way of generating revenue. Some wondered what other non-profits would do in this situation. The consensus was that we showed that we are capable of providing a quality experience to this niche market.

Hillarie then gave a brief presentation on a new resource that we developed with Trampoline Design called *“The Adirondacks & the Next Generation”* which is a guide for marketing the Adirondacks to Millennials on social media based on the research study done by Schireson Associates. This was developed with grant money from NY State to improve our millennial marketing and also to provide a resource for our many partners in the region. She stated that it was available online for anyone who was interested in reading more.

## **VII. Future’s Committee Update**

### Discussion:

Joe Beck began by thanking committee members for all of their hard work to date and stated that their work would come to a conclusion at their August meeting with a draft plan in place by October. He reported that the group had debated heavily on Wellspring’s report and that they had finally settled on Option B+ (or C-) which they considered a more incremental approach moving forward. He said that with a rolling 4-5 year forecast it would help us make a better assessment of what Wild Walk’s impact would be.

He stated that another goal of the committee was to work on how to move Beyond the Blue Line (BBL) as we need to find a way to maintain and expand on what we do here. Building our reputation BBL is very important. At the core, we have a great museum and wonderful relationships with our donors which we need to preserve but we also expect to be able to expand on our Youth Climate Summit as well as our convening role. He said that we should be opportunistic and test new programs and models (i.e. “pay as you go”).

He reported that the impact planning framework was in the process of being drafted by the sub-committee and that a major focus was on restating our value in terms of connecting people with nature as well as fostering an understanding of sustainability - the framework will guide and filter new programming initiatives and be translated into fundraising materials and a case statement. The new statement will have flexibility and appeal to different audiences. Another outcome of the work is to focus on raising endowment as a top priority. Board committees will be reconstituted to complete the planning at a more detailed level.

The following are specific tasks of the Development and Marketing committees:

- Estimate goals/costs of the endowment campaign, capital expenses, annual fund and initiatives/Youth Climate Summit.
- Hire a professional writer to craft the impact/case statement who would also help to flesh it out.
- Was the consensus of the committee to hire a major gifts officer who would be based in New York City.

At the conclusion of his report, Joe Beck took a moment to thank Charlie Frenette for all of his hard work as well as Lynn Fox who has played a major role in the committees work to date. Charlie then stated that he looked forward to the committee sunseting in October.

#### **VIII. Executive Session**

#### **IX. Upcoming 2016/2017 Meeting Dates**

Friday, October 7, 2016 (TWC)

Monday, January 23, 2017 (NYC)