

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

July 5, 2010 – The Wild Center, Tupper Lake, NY

Board Present: Paul Alioto, Tom Aydelotte, Joe Beck, Lynn Birdsong, Jim Carr, Obie Clifford, Charles Frenette, Rick Godin, Nancy Howard, Bill Hutchens, Dave Johnson, Tom Jorling, Kevin Keane, Peter Kindler, Nancy Lamb, Claire Leonardi, Betsy Lowe, Paul Maroun, Nancy Simpkins, Dan Sullivan, Charles Svenson and Karen Thomas.

Board Absent: Michael Bettmann, John Colston, Robert Friedman, Mike Hunsinger, Steve Potter, Sandra Strader and Tony Whaling.

Advisory Board Present: Amy Elrod, Jim Elrod, Chris McFadden, Ross Whaley and Eugene Zeltmann.

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

Board President Lynn Birdsong called the meeting to order and welcomed all to the meeting. He also took a few minutes to introduce our newest Advisory Board member, Chris McFadden. 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board deferred approval of the May 10, 2010 meeting minutes until the upcoming August board meeting in light of the fact that there were changes to be made to the Finance section of the document.

REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND PRESIDENT

Stephanie Ratcliffe began her report by showing a power point which gave information on projects that have recently been completed. She reported that the otter expansion which had been built over a period of two years has been completed. She stated that the museum continued to raise funds while the project was being done and that there were two components, the otter outdoor play area and the actual indoor exhibit expansion. The expansion allows otters to have land space inside the museum in addition to the underwater aspect of the main exhibit. Stephanie gave a description of the new play area to board members and also showed photos. Lynn Birdsong stated that he thought the new expansion was fabulous having witnessed visiting children react so favorably.

Stephanie also reported that the new pellet boiler project was now complete. She stated that it was an extremely difficult process to get the boiler into the basement. She mentioned that someone from the company that we purchased the boiler from came to The Wild Center to do a solar thermal contractor training on how to install these types of systems. This proved

to be a great tool for local contractors who could witness the installation process. She then gave final accounting information for the boiler. The total cost of the project was \$570,850. She said that Chris Rdzanek, Director of Facilities, will be tracking the efficiency of the boiler as well as the fuel usage and will give a savings projection at the end of the season.

Lynn Birdsong commended Chris Rdzanek and Stephanie Ratcliffe as well as all staff who played a part in seeing the project through to completion for their persistence and diligence. He stated that it is a great success story.

Stephanie stated that the topic of biomass was an ongoing conversation. She asked Claire Leonardi to speak briefly about a project that she had been involved in. Claire stated that the pellet market currently has an over-supply of pellets. Many new plants were built in the last couple of years and flooded the market with increased supply. While demand is increasing, its movement has been slow due to the relatively low price of fossil fuels, expense related to conversion in the current economy and government incentives that have tended to favor other alternative energy technologies. She indicated that the pellet plant that The Wild Center is purchasing its pellets from is struggling financially. She and some business partners had been investigating the possibility of opening a pellet mill in Tupper Lake. Given the current state of the market, this project will not be moving forward.

Stephanie then spent a little time briefly discussing weddings as a revenue source for The Wild Center. She stated that it is a huge effort to host a wedding but that this year there were eleven weddings on the calendar. She did report, she was told by someone that the museum is known as being on the expensive side in terms of weddings. She said that perception is not a bad thing for us. She stated that weddings bring in approximately 1700 people a year who may or may not have ever set foot in the museum previously.

Stephanie then gave an overview of a cultural exchange grant that had been awarded to The Wild Center by the American Association of Museums (AAM). She stated that it was a project that would take place over the next year and a half and that it would involve a number of trips between The Wild Center and a similar institution in Finland. Ross Whaley suggested contacting the European Forestry Institute for the visit by the Forestry group to Finland in the summer of 2011.

Stephanie also reported that at this time The Wild Center has 142 active volunteers who have contributed 10,542 hours at a value of approximately \$219,800.

CAMPAIGN FEASIBILITY STUDY DISCUSSION

Lynn Birdsong began by giving a quick overview of the history of the feasibility study to date. He stated that a discussion about a possible new fundraising campaign had started roughly a year ago as a discussion about how to fund the strategic priorities of The Wild Center. He stated that our longtime development consultant, Christine Owens, and her colleague, Mike Brodie, were retained by the museum to conduct a pre-campaign study. A draft case for support was written and interviews with potential supporters were conducted

from February through May 2010. They reported back to the Campaign Planning Committee regularly over the four month period through conference calls. The final report to the committee took place on June 16 followed by a report to the full board on June 17.

Lynn reviewed the conclusions that were gathered:

- The draft case for support needed some rewriting as it needed to be more compelling.
- Endowment is seen as a priority and that our donors are willing as well as prepared to support it.
- The \$30M goal identified in the draft case for support seemed to many as a “a bit of a stretch”.
- The museum needs to expand its reach and develop new friends and donors to help support the institution.
- We seem to have willing workers as some of the people interviewed stepped forward to offer their help.

Lynn Birdsong asked for board approval of the following recommendations, suggested by the Campaign Planning Committee so that the campaign process can continue.

- Approve a comprehensive campaign which would include Endowment, Capital Needs and Annual Support
- Approve a working goal - \$20M – which includes \$9M Endowment, \$4M Capital, \$5M Annual
- Approve a working campaign timeline of three years
- Approve a campaign budget – 5-10% of the working goal

A motion to accept the recommendations was unanimously approved.

Tom Jorling motion, Charlie Frenette second.

Lynn stated that now that the campaign is approved, the next step would be to form a campaign cabinet. The members of the cabinet would be required to give or get at least a six figure campaign commitment, take four to five assignments for soliciting six to seven figure gift commitments, serve at least until 50-60% of the goal is reached, attend cabinet meetings regularly and participate actively in the evaluation, rating and assigning of donor prospects.

There was discussion regarding how the upcoming campaign and strategic plan come together. All were assured that the strategic plan was the basis upon which the campaign priorities are built.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Lynn Birdsong gave a brief summary of the recent activities of the governance committee. He stated that the committee was working on formalizing the process by which board

members are nominated and become board members. He reported that a handbook which would include information such as expectations of board members, current bios, bylaws, conflict of interest statements, etc. was being developed. This will be made available to all when completed. Stephanie Ratcliffe asked that board members who hadn't yet provided a current copy of their bio to take care of that as soon as possible.

Lynn Birdsong stated that there was a need for representation on our boards from other areas of the Adirondack Park. He then gave a tentative timeline for the process of adding a new member to the board and advisory board. He stated that at the annual meeting in December nominations would be provided with a deadline of March 1st for new nominations. By April 1st the governance committee would discuss current candidates. He stated that cultivation and screening meetings with board leadership candidates would take place in the Spring and that by the July meeting new members would join the board and attend that meeting.

FINANCE

Claire Leonardi gave an overview of the finance materials that were provided in the board packet. She stated that for 2010 through May 31st the bottom line was ahead of budget. Revenues and expenses were below budget by approximately \$50,000 and \$100,000 respectively. She reported that management had looked at the nature of the savings and about 40% of the expense savings to date were due to timing. She said that expenses were below budget with savings scattered across the board. She mentioned that salaries, the organization's largest expense category, were 4% below budget but that this particular savings level would not continue due to the 3% salary increase which was effective as of May 1st. She indicated that revenues were behind budget by 7% but were slightly ahead of last year. She stated that contributions were less than 1% below budget and 11% above last year. In addition, she said that funding from grants and foundations were both above budget. She expressed continued concern for membership and admissions. Through June she reported that visitation was down 10% from last year at the same time. She indicated that it was too early to tell whether the marketing programs that Howard Fish had profiled at the last board meeting would be successful in boosting attendance. She also stated that a closer look was being taken at membership and that the museum's new Director of Philanthropy, Hillarie Logan-Dechene, would be doing some research on membership trends.

She then reported that the new online Annual Report went live on Friday. She gave a brief overview and showed a few slides of each section so that board members could get the feel for the contents of the report. She stated that the report included a letter reviewing this year's accomplishments from the Executive Director as well as a letter outlining performance from the Director of Finance and Administration and The Wild Center Treasurer. She reported that it also includes a statement of activities, statement of cash flow and financial position and the current audited financial statement and 990.

Lynn Birdsong commended the team for getting this report done; he stated that it was a huge undertaking.

DEVELOPMENT

Hillarie Logan-Dechene began her report by stating that Development exists to support the mission, operations and new projects of the museum. She showed a Power Point that compared where The Wild Center stands in relation to the national average in a number of areas. She stated that most corporate giving in the Adirondacks comes from having personal connections with someone at a particular organization. She reported that the area of bequests as well as individual contributors were going to be a main focus of the development department moving forward.

Hillarie stated that now that a comprehensive campaign has been approved, plans need to be thought through and made. She also mentioned that some of the 2010 priorities were to build our donor base, achieve the annual fund goal with the goal being \$300,000 more than last year, and to build for the museum's future with a larger endowment. She reported that the budgeted fundraising goal for 2010 was \$1,985,000 and then went over the revenue by giving handout that was provided in the board packet.

She spoke regarding the role of Trustees in Development, stating that they should give generously, introduce new prospects to the organization; take on solicitation assignments when appropriate and steward donor relationships. She reported on the number of gifts received in 2009: There were 3,531 gifts to membership, 1,181 gifts to the annual fund, 8 gifts to endowment, 23 gifts to other capital and 21 gifts to other restricted. She stated that 90% of the income came from 21% of our donors and that 30 people gave 68% of the support in 2009.

She reported on next steps for development for 2010. She stated that they had begun to re-assess to look for efficiencies and to increase effectiveness, develop plans for involvement strategies and to develop campaign plans. She also stated that new memberships for year to date were behind a little from 2009. She reported that it is important to understand the value of our different programs. For example, that memberships are worth more than their face value; and that the monetary value of an individual membership unit was roughly \$90.

Hillarie then discussed the desired involvement of board and staff members stating that they should help identify prospects, invite people to 2010 events, debrief after special events to identify next steps, identify and assign top donor prospects, schedule individual meetings, invite contacts for deeper involvement and steward relationships. She also went over a list of summer events and asked board members to use these events to cultivate new donors and steward friends.

She then went over a list of development committee goals for 2010 including asking board members to make annual fund gifts earlier, help identify prospective donors and help cultivate them and solicit when appropriate.

OTHER BUSINESS

Trustee Tom Aydelotte asked about whether or not there would be a volunteer recognition event this summer to celebrate all that the volunteers do help the museum function. Stephanie Ratcliffe stated that there would be one and encouraged board members to make an appearance to show their support. The event will take place on Saturday, July 31st in the tent.

Lynn Birdsong asked board members to consider volunteering to host this year's staff appreciation picnic which would include approximately 60 people.

Paul Maroun suggested exploring a small stakeholder group of local people who are committed to The Wild Center for consideration to become members of the advisory board.

NEXT MEETINGS

The next 2010 meetings of the Board are scheduled for the following dates:

Friday, August 27, 2010 and Tuesday, December 28, 2010.