

BOARD OF TRUSTEES ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
THE WILD CENTER
July 8, 2019 - The Wild Center, Tupper Lake
1:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Board of Trustees Present:

Paul Alioto, Tom Aydelotte, Michael Bettmann, Terry Birdsong, Larry Clifford, Lynn Fox, Charles Frenette, Rick Godin, Sally Hart, Nancy Howard, Thomas Jorling, Peter Kindler, Betsy Lowe, Paul Maroun, Pamela Matt, Brooks Reynolds, Linda Rosenstock, Jack Ryder, James Schoff, Nancy Simpkins, Sandra Strader, Charlie Svenson, Karen Thomas, and Virginia Valkenburgh.

Board/Advisory Board/Staff Present via GoToMeeting:

Rich Malloch, Juan Rodriguez, and Stanley Rumbough.

Advisory Board Present:

Rob Gillis, Lynn Birdsong, and Gary Hartwick.

Board Absent:

Joe Beck, George Cigale, Michael Hunsinger, and Joel Treisman.

Staff/Consultants Present:

Marci Bencze, Hillarie Logan-Dechene, Robin Ellis, Nick Gunn, Jen Kretser, Bob Kronenberger, Stephanie Ratcliffe, Kerri Ziemann, Leah Valerio and David St. Onge.

Welcome

Discussion:

Nancy Simpkins and Stephanie Ratcliffe began by taking a few moments to mention two Advisory Board members who had recently passed away. Kevin Keane and Carter Bales both came on the Board of Trustees in August of 1999. Carter moved to the Advisory Board in 2008 while Kevin moved in 2013. They were both an important part of the history of The Wild Center. Stephanie mentioned that Carter was integral in the creation of the first climate conference hosted by the TWC, he sent the conference position paper to former President Obama and his Climate Advisor, John Holdren, presented at the conference.

Kevin Keane and his family have been long time friends and wonderful supporters of The Wild Center as well. Kevin and his wife Betty were some of the first people to staff the Plan your Visit table. As an experienced Board member for non-profits Kevin was a wise voice on the Board and extremely helpful with our fundraising strategies during early campaigns.

Nancy then called the meeting to order at 1:40 pm.

I. Approval of Minutes

Discussion: Minutes of the April 15, 2019 meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

Lee Bailey motion, Larry Clifford second.

II. Executive Director Report

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe began her report by sharing that The Wild Center (TWC) had been featured recently in two publications, Mission Matters which is about mission and impact statements and International Practice for Museums. She stated that she would send a follow up packet with links as well as more information on both.

Stephanie then shared her 2019 goals :

- Overhaul way we approach, staff and execute program offerings
- Develop new **targeted marketing** approach to aggressively to stabilize admission and membership trends (3 segments: **repeat, tourist, members**)
- Continue Master planning process, detail costs and specifics of next projects.
- Ways of Knowing Project Year 2

Multiple tasks needed for Master Plan:

- Seek funding, still working with a pay as you go strategy as set by Futures Committee
- Trail planning - not in budget this year, need funds to continue planning.
- Exploring preliminary climbing structure design for Wild Walk.
- Continue design development phase of river front (pending funding).
- Explore Adirondack Park Agency (APA) constraints on bog area and riverfront docks.
- Need thinking partners to move Wild Center online forward.

What's New?

- Storytelling in iForest
- More free flight programs
- More animal program daily
- We Are All Related and Art Studio
- Spooky iForest during Halloween

2020 focus - Getting People Outdoors/Backyard Wilderness film

2021 focus - Climate change exhibition and programming - we are already receiving IMLS budget questions.

Ways of Knowing - Why This Project?

- We are a place-based institution this is a missing part of our interpretation.
- Introduces traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) to our audiences and invites us to contemplate TEK strengths alongside western science.
- Allows us to share voice and authority, practice co-created programming and exhibit development (a shift in museums).
- Demonstrates our commitment to diversity and inclusive perspectives.

Summer 2019

- Trainings
 - In-house diversity, equity and inclusion working group
- Exhibit replication off-site
 - Akwesasne Cultural Center
 - Six Nations Indian Museum
- 2019 Public Programs
 - Ways of Knowing Celebration
 - Joanne Shenandoah Concert
 - Tribal Admission
 - Programs for schools and groups
- Offsite
 - Campfire & Legends programs at Six Nations Indian Museum
 - Native Earth Camp

Youth Climate Program Update

Stephanie began this portion of her report by speaking about a young Swedish student named Greta Thunberg. At the age of 15, Greta began skipping school and protesting outside the Swedish parliament about the immediate need for action to combat climate change. She has since become a well known climate activist and global influencer around the world on the need to take action on climate change.

She also shared the following:

- The Wild Center is a leader and influencer at a local, regional and national level on climate education.

- Through our NOAA partnership with the NYS Office of Climate Change, youth climate leaders and advisory board members met with Commissioner Basil Seggos and Jared Snyder to:
 - Provide an update on our work.
 - Discuss the role of youth in influencing decision makers in communities.
 - Planning on deepening our partnership through NY Climate Week and a collaborative video project.
 - Made a presentation to the APA on the partnership between TWC, Towns/Villages and the NYS Climate Smart Communities Program.
 - TL Village Board voted unanimously to adopt the NYS Climate Smart Communities Pledge - led by the Tupper Lake Green Team.
 - YCS travel and speak at other summits - terrific experience.

Stephanie also stated that The Wild Center's Youth Climate Summits and work in NYC have made an impact. To date we have hosted and coordinated five NYC summits including two in Brooklyn at the Kurt Hahn School, two at Columbia University organized by Alum and Advisory Board member Silas Swanson, and one in partnership with the NYC Department of Education Office of Sustainability.

Youth Climate Summits Spring 2019

- Raleigh, North Carolina
- Columbia University
- Eastern Shore Maryland
- Flagstaff, Arizona
- Brooklyn, NY
- Western NY/Buffalo
- Garrison, NY
- Cincinnati, OH

Over 70 summits in 35 communities

The following summits and initiatives are also being planned:

- Pennsylvania
- New Mexico (thanks to Gary Hartwick)
- Massachusetts
- Tennessee
- A zoo and aquarium summit with NOAA's Office of Education

In the works:

- Toolkit 2.0
- Four-day Teacher Climate Institute in July
- Three-day Youth Climate Leadership Retreat in August
- Multiple community/park-wide events including Common Ground Alliance
- Supporting Community Climate Task Force
- Collaborating with the Native Earth Camp
- Journal of Museum Education - article 2020
- Climate Change Education - Book Chapter

Stephanie also reported that Jen had recently spoken on a Mountain Lake PBS forum on climate change on the role of education in supporting Community Climate Action - TWC is looked to as an expert not only on climate change education but also on climate solutions and community climate resilience. She also mentioned the “Youth Action to Prevent Climate Change” handout that was in the Board packet and said that it is not meant to be a stand alone piece but should be part of the conversation to approach someone for funding. She promised to send everyone in attendance a copy of the document electronically so that they could share with others.

High Volume Compost Project

Stephanie shared the following information regarding a new high volume composter:

- Will be arriving on campus soon
- Funding provided by NYSERDA through North Country School and Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA).
- Will be partnering with the Tupper Lake School System
- Estimated \$40,000 value
- Will process 150 - 200 lbs a day - all foods including meat and dairy products.
- Will be a valuable addition to our New Path and interpretive programming.
- Will sit in lowest tier of parking lot.
- Is a 3 year commitment to start
- No cost to us except staff time

Two New Otters

Stephanie reported that we had recently received a pair of male river otters. A group of children from the Akwesasne Boys and Girls Club chose their names, Rohsno:re (low-SNOW-lay) meaning “he’s fast” and Tawi:ne (da-WEE-nay) meaning “Otter” in the Mohawk language. She also reported the following:

- Passed USDA inspection with flying colors - the inspection is performed by a licensed veterinarian who looks at several things including expiration dates on

medication, how we store food, what enclosures look like, how we keep data, etc. The inspector was very impressed by our detailed record keeping methods and how dedicated we are to the health and well being of the animal collection.

- For the past few years we had been participating in a St. Lawrence University study looking at stress levels of wild and captive North American porcupines. Students collected fecal, fur and quill samples and looked at cortisol levels, cortisol is the main stress hormone in most mammals. Results show that captive porcupines appear to be experiencing significantly less stress than their wild counterparts.
- Jen Kretser has recently been awarded an Environmental Excellence Award from her alma mater, Antioch University.

Museum Access

Stephanie shared the following information regarding The Wild Center's episode of the PBS show, Museum Access:

- Sponsors - 13 for a total of \$22,500
- Viewing events:
 - 5/15 at Bill Grabe's in Connecticut
 - 5/23 Sally Hart organized in Saratoga Springs
 - 6/5 at The Wild Center
 - 7/2 at The Wild Center
 - 8/13 at The Wild Center
- WNYE Air Times
 - Monday, 5/20 - 2:00 am
 - Friday, 8/31 - 12:00 am

Nancy Simpkins then briefly introduced Maria Leonardi who was in attendance. Her parents Tom and Claire have both previously been members of the Board of Trustees and Claire currently sits on the Advisory Board. Maria is very interested in The Wild Center and what we do. (Enter more about her education, etc.) Nancy stated that we are trying to reach out to the younger generation and that this is a great way to engage younger people.

Summer 2019 Staff

Stephanie then took a few minutes and invited Kerri Ziemann, Director of Programs to introduce the following staff and interns representing different areas of the museum:

- Allison Rust - Cafe/Admissions Staff - 5th summer at TWC - SUNY Potsdam
- Laura Lano - Museum Fellow - Education - Penn State University Graduate
- Bret Ladrie - Animal Care Fellow/Intern - Western Carolina University Graduate

- Elyssa Connolly - Summer Education Intern - St. Lawrence University Senior
- Mitch Jensen - Store Staff - SUNY Potsdam Junior
- Marli Conners - Ways of Knowing Museum Trainee - North Country Community College
- Hannah Katz - Climate Intern - Hamilton College Junior
- Logan Dominie - Teen Educator - Tupper Lake High School Senior

III. **2019 Marketing Update**

Discussion: Nick Gunn began his report by giving an update about where we are now in terms of attendance and shared the following:

- Attendance was down 8% in June - 1400 people
- The drop in visitors was in the comp area
 - January - June - less than 20% of attendance
 - July - August will make or break us but we are flexiband still have time to change tactics if necessary.

Nick then stated that the three areas of focus for his report would be:

- Strategy Updates
- I Love NY
- Break the Ice Media

Strategy Updates

- Digital Marketing
 - Shifted digital marketing dollars from add-ons and events to general visitation.
- Canada
 - Physical visitation and web traffic are on rise.
 - Increase in pre-purchase of tickets from Canada.
 - Much of this bump in traffic can be attributed to a recent Narcity article.
- Canada - Television
 - Now running test ads on Mountain Lake PBS.

I Love NY

- Commercial Shoot
 - A crew of 75 or 80 people came to shoot a commercial.
 - The fact that we could accommodate that is a testament to staff, etc. that we were able to make this work.
 - Shoot budget was \$4-5 million

- TWC has a 10 second part in commercial but I Love New York is repackaging footage and using in social media ads, etc. Asked for footage without Screen Actors Guild actors to use for TWC advertising purposes.
- Brand Ambassador Familiarization Trip
 - Allows I Love NY to bring travel writers to tour NYS attractions - they came to tour TWC the day after the commercial shoot.

Break the Ice Media

- Goals
 - Increase brand awareness of TWC and its experiences and packages
 - Seek third party endorsements of TWC through proactive PR
 - Drive traffic to the tickets page on TWC website
 - Influence conversations on TWC website
 - Increase number of visitors during shoulder season
- Proactive PR
 - Local and Regional Pitch Topics
 - Events (Summer Climate Institute, Otter Birthday, AYCS)
 - Forest Bathing (iForest)
 - Fall Foliage
 - Economic Impact of TWC
 - Regional/National/International Pitch Topics
 - Family Travel/Educational Experiences
 - Hands-On Learning
 - iForest
 - Sustainability
 - Sugar Shack/Maple Season
- FAM Trips
 - Danielle Benjamin - *Wanderlust on a Budget* - 7/20
 - Jen Ruiz - *Jen on a Jet Plane* - 7/22-23
 - Dan Donovan - *Ottawa Times* - TBD
 - Teresa St. John - *Saratoga Today* - TBD
 - Other prospects:
 - Long Lead (*585 Mag, Buffalo Magazine, etc.*)
 - Short Lead (*Post-Standard, Rochester City Newspaper, Curious Trekker, Life in the Finger Lakes, etc.*)
- Website Traffic
 - This weekend - highest traffic two days in a row than we have ever had.

- Questions?
 - Brooks Reynolds - When visitors come to the front desk do we ask them questions about how they heard about us or where they are coming from?
 - Tom Jorling - Do we get any uptick in visitation from Americade?
 - Nick Gunn - We get a good amount of business from motorcycle groups, etc.
 - Ginny Valkenburgh - You mentioned shoulder seasons, do we do any kind of programming around things like maple season, etc?
 - This is one of the reasons that we brought Break the Ice Media on, to promote visitation during Fall Foliage season, etc.
 - Charlie Frenette - Should host more events focused around fall foliage, maple, etc.
 - Karen Thomas - We should connect with Tupper Lake Arts.

IV. **Committee on Trustees**

Discussion: Lynn Fox reported that there were two items that she would report on:

- Board Committees
 - Committee chairs are in the process of updating committee descriptions.
 - Need to approve committee structures.
- Board Size
 - We are currently over the limit of 25, not a hard problem to fix. We can file a Petition For Amendment of Charter to change the size of our Board for \$60.00.
 - Will also require a Board resolution

Action: A motion to accept the following *“Resolution of a Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees”* per Board Secretary Nancy Howard, was unanimously approved.

Michael Bettmann motion, Linda Rosenstock second

“I, Nancy S. Howard, Secretary of the Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks (DBA The Wild Center), a corporation organized and existing pursuant to an absolute charter granted by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, hereby certify that the following is a true and complete copy of a resolution duly adopted by the affirmative vote of not less than three-fourths of the whole number of trustees at a meeting held on the 8th day of July 2019, and that such resolution remains in full force and effect.

RESOLVED: That the Board of Trustees of the Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks hereby requests that the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York amend the charter of such corporation be amended to permit a change in the number of the trustees from “not more than twenty-five nor less than five” to “not more than forty nor less than five”; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Chair and Vice Chair of the corporation, on behalf of the Board of Trustees be and hereby are authorized to execute a petition to be addressed “To the Regents of the University of the State of New York” for such purpose.

Action: A motion to submit the following “*Petition for Amendment of Charter*” to the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York was unanimously approved. *Nancy Simpkins motion, Michael Bettmann second.*

“We the undersigned, being the chair and vice chair Nancy K. Simpkins and Jack Ryder do hereby apply to the Regents of the University of the State of New York for an amendment to the charter of The Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks (DBA The Wild Center) and do make, sign and acknowledge the following statements:

- 1. The name of the corporation is Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks.*
- 2. A provisional charter was granted to this corporation on February 3, 1999 which absolute charter was given on May 20, 2013.*
- 3. The trustees hereby request that the charter be amended to permit a change in the number of trustees from “not more than twenty-five nor less than five” to “not more than forty nor less than five”.*

V. Financial Report

Discussion: Charlie Svenson invited Bob Kronenberger to present the Finance Committee Report. Bob then shared the following observations of the Committee regarding the financial report:

Attendance

- YTD total attendance through June 2019 is down 12% from 2018 (difference of 3300 visitors).
- YTD paid attendance down 8% from 2018 (difference of 1400 visitors)
- 2019 total attendance budget is 104,000 (down 5% from 2018).

Admission Revenue

- YTD 2019 admission revenues through June down 8% from 2018 (about \$24,000).

- 2019 admissions budget is \$1,153k which is \$60k less than 2018 actual.

Earned Revenues

- May YTD Admissions about \$10k under budget.
- 2019 YTD Membership revenues are 8% above last year and 6% above budget.

Support Revenues

- 2019 Operating Support revenues 2% over budget YTD.
- Annual Fund \$16k over budget.
- 2019 Support includes \$196k draw from BDE.

Functional Operating Expenses

- Total 2019 YTD operating expenses are \$247k under last year and \$217k under budget.
- 2019 operating notes:
 - No general staff salary increases this year.
 - Overall salaries and benefits down \$134k from last year.
 - Marketing expenses \$67k under budget YTD.

Income Statement - May YTD

- 2019 earned income \$20k under budget.
- 2019 operating expenses \$217k under budget.
- 2019 operating support \$16k ahead of budget.
- Overall 2019 results \$214k favorable to plan and \$420k better than last year.

Balance Sheet Highlights (as of 5/31)

- Bank line of credit \$750k (renewed through next June). As of June 30 amount drawn was \$150k.
- Wild Walk term loan balance \$800k with next \$100k principal payment due 12/2019.
- Additional term loans of \$181k used to finance parking meadow and purchase of Bobcat utility vehicle for facilities. Loans are payable monthly over 60 months.
- Including the outstanding Wild Walk pledges and Gala commitments, term loan balance ~\$61k.

Endowment Performance

- Current portfolio weighting is 62% stocks, 38% cash and bonds.
- Portfolio widely diversified via mutual fund holdings and Treasury Notes.
- S & P gained 17% June 2019 YTD.

- Market value increase of \$653k in first six months of 2019.

Conclusions

- 2019 attendance down 12% June YTD compared to last year (about 8% or 1400 less paid visitors). We will continue to monitor attendance closely over the next couple weeks.
- YTD Earned Income even with last year, but \$20k below budget.
- Unrestricted contributions on budget and ahead of last year.
- YTD Operating Expenses 12% under budget, and \$246k below last year.
- Total Board Designated Funds at \$7.0mm, including \$1.6mm in Obie Clifford Fund and \$50k in Permanent Endowment funds.
- YTD unrealized market gains of \$650k continue to grow BD funds.
- \$750k line of credit renewed with bank for another year.
- Overall still on plan for 2019 with significant expense reductions vs. last year.

Obie Clifford Fund

Larry Clifford took a few moments to speak about the Obie Clifford Fund. As a special fundraising initiative to memorialize founder, Donald “Obie”, the Board of The Wild Center, spent 18 months raising \$1.6 million, a sum roughly equal to the private/donated portion of the annual operating budget over the past several years. The goal is \$2 million. The Fund creates financial strength for TWC and would be invested/managed in accordance with the Board Investment Policy but would not be subject to the 4% draw.

Larry used the Target bullseye as a way to describe how he saw the OC Fund, the red center circle he sees as the conceptual beginning of our long term endowment and the white circle around that the Obie Clifford fund which would help to preserve the endowment funds. He stated that his original thought was that the Obie Clifford Fund was like the “moat around the castle”.The castle being the core Board Designated Endowment Fund.

Action: A motion to authorize the use of \$460,000 of the Board Designated Funds to fund 2018 operating deficit (\$560,000), net of 2017 operating fund surplus (\$100,000) was unanimously approved.

Nancy Simpkins motion, Jim Schoff second.

VI. Development Report

Discussion: Hillarie Logan-Dechene thanked the Board for their role in engaging new supporters and began her report by providing a Take Five progress report and shared the following:

- 14 Board members are participating.
- 4 are hosting events this summer.
- One \$5,000 gift
- Spurring visits, people are getting in touch, people are coming to visit and bringing friends.

Summer Development Opportunities

- Member Early Mornings on Wild Walk - Fridays in July & August
- Linda Vaughan Society Dinner - 7/11
- Upper Saranac Lake Picnic - 7/15
- Adirondack Sky Festival - 7/21
 - The next day there will be an event to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the lunar landing.
- Evening Member Reception - 7/24
- Lake Placid Sinfonietta - 8/1
- Lake Placid Reception - 8/8
- PBS Museum Access Screening - 8/13
- Patrons Circle Reception - 8/15
- Wanakena Reception - 8/21

Bequests and Endowment Giving

Building on Bob's report that we have a minimum of \$6.5 million of unrealized bequest intentions, Hillarie emphasized the importance of continued planned giving fundraising through our Linda Vaughan Society. Hillarie shared a video of Linda Vaughan Society donors Michael Tardif and Harvey Cohen explaining why they felt compelled to include The Wild Center in their estate plan. They felt that it would be part of their legacy to preserve TWC for future generations and that our time on this planet is short and we all have a stewardship responsibility.

VII. Other

Stephanie Ratcliffe spoke briefly about the possibility of a new hotel on the horizon for Tupper Lake and stated that it could be a game changer. She shared that there would be a public meeting on the subject on 7/23 at 4:30 pm at the adult center.

Stephanie then asked if any Board members had any questions on any subject and opened up the floor to discussion. The following questions/comments were made:

- Terry Birdsong asked if there had been any more progress made on the Youth Climate Summit trademark front.
 - Bob Kronenberger stated that he, along with Hillarie and Jen had spoken with a trademark attorney and that they are helping us position ourselves, our website, etc. to help protect copyright. He said that he will follow up again and keep things moving ahead so that it gets resolved in a timely fashion.
- Ginny Valkenburgh - Take Five book is fabulous, YCS seems to perk people's interest and seems to be one of the reasons that people decide to give to TWC. Is there a one pager available to share with potential donors to YCS?
 - Stephanie stated that someone would put together a one pager on the program for this purpose.
- Charlie Frenette - We should protect YCS as an asset. It is worth finding a specific strategy to leverage it. It could add to our mission.
- Stephanie Ratcliffe stated that we had strategically decided to do some concentrated NYC climate work two years ago to move the program along and that was the last strategic move to date but that we need to keep it going for the future. NY is a leader on climate nationally and it was deliberate to work within NY to align interest.
- Paul Alioto - Are we limiting ourselves by calling it a "youth" climate summit? Why just youth and not adult, etc.?
- Michael Bettmann - We have a niche as youth turn into adults.
- Stephanie Ratcliffe - We are now positioned as a leader in the country thanks to Jen Kretser's NOAA connection, Frank Niepold.

Nancy Simpkins then called for an Executive Session.

Nancy Simpkins adjourned the meeting at 4:35 pm.

IV. Upcoming 2019 Meeting Dates

Friday, October 11, 2019 (TWC)

Monday, January 27, 2020 (NYC)