

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
THE WILD CENTER
July 9, 2018 - The Wild Center
2:00 PM - 5:30 PM

Board of Trustees Present:

Paul Alioto, Tom Aydelotte, Joe Beck, Michael Bettmann, Terry Birdsong, George Cigale, Charles Frenette, Rick Godin, Sally Hart, Nancy Howard, Michael Hunsinger, Thomas Jorling, Peter Kindler, Betsy Lowe, Linda Rosenstock, Jack Ryder, Nancy Simpkins, Sandra Strader, Charlie Svenson, and Karen Thomas.

Board/Advisory Board/Staff Present via GoToMeeting:

Martha Bullock, Gary Hartwick, Rich Malloch, Paul Maroun, John McHugh, and Joel Treisman.

Advisory Board Present:

Lee Bailey, Lynn Birdsong, Rob Gillis, Barbara Grose, Brooks Reynolds, and Carl Shedd.

Board Absent:

Lynn Fox, Chris McFadden, and James Schoff.

Staff/Consultants Present:

Marci Bencze, Hillarie Logan-Dechene, Robin Ellis, Nick Gunn, Jen Kretser, Bob Kronenberger, Stephanie Ratcliffe, and Will Maitland-Weiss.

Introduction of New Staff, Summer Interns and Fellows

Stephanie Ratcliffe and Jen Kretser took a few minutes at the beginning of the meeting to present many of the new summer interns, teen educators, and fellows as well as new Marketing Manager, Nick Gunn. They each introduced themselves and gave a brief summary about where they were from and what their job here at The Wild Center would be.

Welcome

Discussion:

Nancy Simpkins called the meeting to order at 2:10 pm. She mentioned that she had tried her hand at volunteering recently and recommended that all Board members try it at some point stating that it was a great way to get a different perspective of The Wild Center. She also reported the following:

- Want to structure Advisory Board in a way that encourages more participation by members.
 - Lee Bailey and Barbara Grose will co-chair the the Advisory Board
- Reminded Board members that the fall meeting would take place on 10/5/18.
 - Columbus Day weekend
- Prior to meeting, 5 members went on a canoe trip.
 - Was well led
 - Had a wonderful time
 - She also went on one the Saturday prior to Board meeting which was very informative.

I. Approval of Minutes

Discussion: Minutes of the May 7, 2018 meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

Joe Beck motion, Karen Thomas second.

II. Executive Director Report

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe began her report by sharing photos from a canoe trip on Saturday. She said that the original idea behind the trip was for interns to train staff on Native American knowledge for canoe trip programming.

Stephanie mentioned that Neil Patterson and Robin Kimmerer, WOK Advisory Committee members, would be attending the Patron’s Circle reception immediately following the Board meeting. Robin is the featured speaker.

She also reported on the following:

- Thanked Board members for being wonderful Ambassadors
 - Lynn Birdsong spoke of The Wild Center during a recent presentation at St. Lawrence University.
 - Paul Alioto mentioned TWC during the presentation of an award to a student in his school district.
- Back of House Tours
 - Great way to introduce guests to TWC
 - Show depth of our work
 - Exclusive interaction with animals and staff
 - Tours are 5 days a week - Tues - Sat at 3:00 pm
 - A one hour experience
 - Tour groups should be small, 12 or less

- Reserve space through Ruth or Natalie

Mission Statement Discussion

Stephanie began the discussion by presenting the statement which had been current since 2009 as well as the suggested revision and the final stating that there had been much discussion amongst the committee. She mentioned that we try to frame our content to wrap around bigger content to deepen people's connection with nature.

After much discussion a motion to accept the following revised mission statement was unanimously approved:

“Ignite an enduring passion for the Adirondacks where people and nature thrive together and offer an example for the world.”

Joe Beck motion, Paul Alioto second.

Attendance

Stephanie also reported regarding the current decline in attendance stating that although it was still early in the season, it was being monitored closely and adjustments will be made as necessary making the following points:

- No TV plan currently in place but there is a cash reserve in the budget should we decide on that.
- Wild Walk is no longer “new”.
- This may be the beginning of a natural attendance decline, think of Wild Walk as a new “attraction” now leveling out.
- I Love New York bumps were a gift.

Rick Godin mentioned that the holiday being on a Wednesday this year may have made a difference and said that we may better be able to measure that within the next few days.

2018 Marketing Summary Report

Hillarie Logan-Dechene then handed out a printed marketing summary report which shared the following:

- Tactics Update
 - Digital Marketing - will represent our largest marketing strategy in 2018
 - Social media

- Google adwords
 - Regional advertising
 - Email marketing
 - Digital tactics
 - Programmatic media
 - Native advertising
 - New - geofencing
- Digital Marketing
 - A look at our high BDI Markets across New York State - the primary geographic targets for our 2018 media campaign:
 - Plattsburgh - 1.5 hours
 - Albany - 2.5 hours
 - Syracuse - 3 hours
 - Rochester - 4 hours
- Summary - Digital Campaign launched Monday, May 28
 - So far the campaign has driven:
 - 5267 Website sessions
 - 0:54 average time on wildcenter.org
- Summary
 - The Marketing Team has refined and reallocated tactics on a regular basis due to attendance and other metrics, including creating and posting new video on social media. This video has reached over 54,000 people and had over 31,200 engagements.
- Tactics Update
 - Ways of Knowing - had a successful soft opening on May 25th with media coverage and more to come.
 - Results - Two television pieces, two print articles and two digital articles focused on the Indigenous community.
 - I Love NY
 - We continue to have a robust relationship with I LOVE NY who promote us on their social media channels, include us in traveling exhibits and send media and press trips throughout the year.
 - Referrals from I LOVE NY increased over 260% from 2017.
 - International
 - The International Director of I LOVE NY joined a FAM trip of international travel trade over the Memorial Day weekend.
 - Group Sales

- Attendance at national travel trade shows and partnerships with local hotels are steadily building this growth area. We are hosting FAM tours for receptive operators for inclusion in their products.
 - Website
 - The second phase of redesign of the website (both the structure and content) is progressing, including the addition of a calendar listing all of our daily events.

There was then a brief discussion regarding marketing and Charlie Frenette suggested the idea of having a marketing creative review done by someone inside the organization. He asked if we need to make adjustments to the marketing message. Joe Beck suggested that we should have a plan in place to follow should attendance continue to decline. Charlie Svenson stated that attendance at Adirondack Experience was also down to date.

III. **Financial Report**

Discussion: Joe Beck began by sharing the following objectives of the Finance Committee:

- Develop and monitor annual budget and spending trends
- Advise Board President and Executive Director on financial conditions
- Monitor loans and other financial obligations
- Coordinate with Audit and Investment Committees

Joe then invited Bob Kronenberger to share the following observations of the committee regarding the financial report:

Attendance

- YTD total attendance through June 2018 down 17% from 2017 (difference of 5,700 visitors).
- YTD paid attendance is down 16.7% from 2017.
- 2018 total attendance budget is \$139,500 (4% less than in 2017).

Admission Revenue

- YTD 2018 admission revenues through June are down 9% from 2017 (about \$24,000).
- 2018 admissions budget is \$1.55mm which is \$100,000 more than 2017 (summer ticket price increase).

Earned Revenues

- 2018 YTD Membership revenues are 5% below last year and 14% below budget.
- YTD Store revenues are up 6% over 2017, while cafe revenues are down 12%.

Support Revenues

- 2018 Operating Support revenues 4% under budget YTD.
- Annual Fund \$12,000 over budget YTD.
- 2018 Support includes \$186,000 draw from endowment.

May YTD Revenues as part of 2017 Budget

- YTD revenues accounts for only 20% of our annual revenue budget.
- Only 8% of budgeted 2018 earned revenues realized YTD.
- Only 36% of budgeted 2018 support revenues realized YTD.

Functional Operating Expenses

- Total 2018 YTD operating expenses are \$83,000 over last year, but \$226,000 under budget.
- 2018 operating notes:
 - 2 open staff positions recently filled (facilities and marketing);
 - Staff salary increases effective March 1;
 - New indoor exhibit and traveling exhibit Roots of Wisdom opened in May;
 - Marketing expenses \$116,000 under budget YTD.

Income Statement

- 2018 earned income \$30,000 under budget.
- 2018 operating expenses \$226,000 under budget.
- 2018 operating support \$34,000 below budget.
- Overall 2018 YTD results \$160,000 favorable to plan, but \$68,000 behind last year.

Balance Sheet Highlights

- Bank line of credit \$750,000. As of June 30 amount drawn was \$350,000.
- Wild Walk term loan balance \$900,000 with next \$100,000 principal payment due December 2018.
- Additional term loans of \$243,000 to finance new parking meadow and purchase of Bobcat utility vehicle for Facilities. Loans are payable over 60 months.
- Including the outstanding Wild Walk pledges and Gala commitments, term loan balance ~\$62,000.

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 1.7% June 2018 YTD.
- Market value decrease of \$30,000 in first six months of 2018.

Conclusions

- 2018 attendance down 17% June YTD compared to last year.
- YTD Earned Income down 9% y/y and \$40,000 below budget.
- Unrestricted contributions slightly ahead of budget and last year.
- YTD Operating Expenses 5% over last year, but \$226,000 below budget.
- Endowment providing tangible support to operating funds, but market performance has slowed from 2017 results.
- Line of credit balance at seasonal peak.
- Overall still on plan for 2018, but need to watch early attendance figures in July. if attendance remains below plan may have to look at budget modifications.

There was then a brief discussion regarding the impact of the decline in Admissions as well as the related decline in converting visitors to members. Charlie Frenette stated that getting the right set of metrics in place to track conversion rates was very important. Joe Beck commented that we need to spend more time figuring out who we are to different groups of people. Joe then stated that the recommendation of the Finance Committee was to continue to monitor things closely in the next few weeks.

IV. Development Committee Report

Discussion: Charlie Svenson began by stating that the committee had been hard at work. Nancy Simpkins then shared the voting results regarding the naming of the fund and a recommendation from the Development Committee. The following were the results:

- **37% The Obie Clifford Fund**
- 25% The Obie Clifford Fund for a Sustainable Future
- 12.5% The Obie Clifford Sustainability Fund

Nancy gave an update on the Obie Clifford Fund and President's \$150,000 Challenge Match reporting the following results to date:

- \$768,233 - Obie's Bequest
- \$87,600 in gifts and pledges from the Board
 - \$42,700 cash gifts
 - \$44,900 pledged

- \$60,000 non-Board pledges
- \$150,000 President's Match (anticipated)
- \$232,500 anticipated value of donated property
- **\$1,298,333** Total as of 7/5/18

Nancy offered to extend the Match for any Board Members who hadn't yet pledged to the fund. Hillarie then reported on the 2018 Annual Fund which we are currently working to fund:

2018 Annual Fund Gifts

- 28 gifts and pledges from the Board
- \$242,350 committed; \$75,400 pledged
- 472 non Board gifts
- \$151,842 in non Board gifts
- 20 foundation-grant-corporation
- \$325,977 in foundation-grant-corporation gifts

2019/2020 Annual Fund Commitments

- 3 gifts and pledges from the Board
- \$116,200 committed

Charlie Svenson also took a moment to thank Board members for their help with events stating that they were a great way to attract new donors. Hillarie shared the following list of upcoming summer events:

- Upper Saranac Lake Picnic - Monday, July 16 - 5-7:30 pm
 - Annual BBQ picnic for residents of Upper Saranac Lake
- Lake Placid Reception - Thursday, July 19 - 5-7:30 pm
 - At the home of Brooks and Steve Reynolds
- Wild Pops on Wild Walk for Members - Thursday, July 26 - 6-8 pm
 - Popcorn, popsicles, soda pop and live pop music on Wild Walk
- Lake Placid Sinfonietta Concert (and optional dinner) - Thursday, August 2 - 7:30-9:30 pm - \$
- Linda Vaughan Society Luncheon - Tuesday, August 14 - 11 am-2 pm
 - Honoring people who have included TWC in their estate plans

She also shared some of the ways that Board members could help:

- Host a local event
- Identify people to invite

- Before events, call people
- Attend special pre-event gatherings
- Bring people to visit TWC and meet with Stephanie

Charlie noted that that the best way to build our endowment is through bequests and Hillarie reported that just prior to the Board meeting, we received word that we had received a residual bequest of \$30,000 from the estate of a long-time member who had passed away in 2015.

Tom Jorling then gave a report on the progress of the formation of the Science Advisory Committee. The committee is now active and currently soliciting potential members. Tom and Stephanie will come up with a list of names and send out letters with the first meeting to take place sometime in September. The committee is working to continue to develop a network of scientists who are doing work in the Adirondacks.

At the end of his report, Tom stated that he was looking for consensus from the Board to send the letter and get the first meeting scheduled which he received.

V. **Programs Report**

Discussion: Jen Kretser began her report by introducing Silas Swanson, a Youth Climate intern who has been involved in the program for the last five years. He is a graduate of Columbia University and was instrumental in the creation of the first youth climate summit at Columbia University which involved over 70 high school students and their teachers.

Jen then gave a presentation regarding the current status of the Youth Climate program and shared the following information regarding it:

- NOAA awarded TWC a grant for the program to help fund a partnership between TWC/the Catskills/Kurt Hahn School which includes:
 - Four teacher climate institutes
 - NYS Climate Smart Communities program (Saranac Lake and Lake Placid)
 - Youth Climate advisory board (comprised of 10 college students)
 - Youth Climate Summit leadership retreats (2 in Lake Placid)

Jen also shared information on youth climate summits:

- Globally, 30 sites have hosted or will host summits
- Zoe Bettmann (granddaughter of Board member Michael Bettman) initiated one in North Carolina.

- Global Climate Action Summit - San Francisco, CA - 9/11 - 9/14/18 - we were invited to be a satellite site.
- 11/7 - 11/8/18 is the next Adirondack Youth Climate Summit - will be the ten year anniversary.

Ways of Knowing Project

There was a brief presentation regarding our new Ways of Knowing exhibit, as well as the following:

- Understanding Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)
- Native History in the region
- Cultural Awareness

Dave Fadden gave a brief overview of his museum, the Six Nations Indian Museum, in Onchiota, NY and the history behind it. He also spoke about how they became involved in the partnership with TWC stating that it has been one of the best experiences he has ever had.

Amanda Tarbell of the Native North American Travelling College (NNATC) also spoke about her personal history as well as the history of NNATC and stated that NNATC had loaned the new "*Sacred Foods*" exhibit.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm and a Patron's Circle reception followed which included a conversation between Robin Wall Kimmerer, "*Braiding Sweetgrass*" author, Center for Native Peoples and the Environment Director, and, Ways of Knowing Advisory Board member and North Country Public Radio Station Manager, Ellen Rocco.

VI. Upcoming 2018 Meeting Dates

Friday, October 5, 2018 (TWC)