

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES RETREAT AND MEETING MINUTES
THE WILD CENTER**

**October 10, 2014 – The Wild Center, Tupper Lake
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM**

Board Present:

Paul Alioto, Tom Aydelotte, Joe Beck, Lynn Birdsong, Obie Clifford, Connie Ferguson, Lynn Fox, Charles Frenette, Rick Godin, Sally Hart, Mike Hunsinger, Thomas Jorling, Peter Kindler, Betsy Lowe, Rich Malloch, Chris McFadden, Jack Ryder, Nancy Simpkins, Karen Thomas and Joel Treisman.

Advisory Board Present:

Martha Bullock, David McAlpin, Ross Whaley and Eugene Zeltmann.

Board Absent: Michael Bettmann, John Colston, Amy Elrod, Robert Friedman, Nancy Howard, John Huwiler, Dave Johnson, Claire Leonardi, Paul Maroun, James Schoff, Sandra Strader and Charles Svenson.

Staff/Consultants Present: Katherine Alexander, Marci Bencze, Hillarie Logan-Dechene, Bob Kronenberger and Stephanie Ratcliffe.

Welcome

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe began the retreat by telling all in attendance about a drone that was recently purchased for \$2,000 that is being used by Rick Godin. He wanted it to capture footage of the construction of Wild Walk and has also been using it to get footage around the Adirondacks. Rick stated that the film is higher than high definition. The drone was purchased with our first online crowdfunding campaign on Adirondack Gives and has been a wonderful asset. He said it shows things with amazing perspective. He then took a few minutes to show some of the footage that he had shot recently.

Stephanie thanked Chris McFadden and Lynn Fox for their commitment to the sustainability process and for being here. Lynn Fox welcomed all and stated that she would spend time reporting on the recent work of the Sustainability Committee. She then thanked committee members Chris McFadden, Joe Beck, Lynn Birdsong, Charlie Frenette, Bob Kronenberger, Hillarie Logan-Dechene and Stephanie Ratcliffe for all they have done to get the committee where it is. She began by providing those in attendance with a list of all Ad Hoc Committee members:

Museum Pricing

- John Colston

- John Huwiler
- Nancy Howard
- Betsy Lowe
- Bob Kronenberger
- Martha Bullock

Gala/Advancement Events

- Nancy Simpkins
- Amy Elrod
- Michael Bettmann
- Obie Clifford
- Joe Beck
- Hillarie Logan-Dechene

Revenue Committee (Pending)

Human Resources (Pending)

Building and Grounds

- Mike Hunsinger
- Dave St. Onge
- Claire Leonardi
- Fred Gates
- Gary Hartwick
- Rick Godin
- Susan Nolde
- Bob Holder
- Karen Thomas
- Jim Cronn
- Bob Kronenberger
- David Gross

Wild Walk Marketing

- G. Thomas Aydelotte
- Richard Malloch
- Jack Ryder
- Howard Fish

Lynn Fox then shared the committee roadmap which was being completed in three phases:

Phase I – Diagnose

Objectives

- Current state assessment
- Fact finding

Tasks

- Develop LT Financial Model
- Environmental Scanning
- Review 2009 Strategic Plan

Delivery Date

- October 2014 Board Meeting

Phase 2 - Evaluate**Objectives**

- Update TWC's strategic blueprint
- Develop board recommendations

Tasks

- Consider potential new revenue sources
- Conduct marketing and brand assessment
- Evaluate development requirements

Delivery Date

- January 2015 Board Meeting

Phase 3 – Implement**Objectives**

- Board review and approval

Tasks

- Review Committee recommendations
- Create implementation plan
- Evaluate staffing requirements

Delivery Date

- Summer 2015

Lynn then took a few minutes to share the meeting objectives for the day:

- Review the activities of the Sustainability Committee.
- Share the results from the Committee's fact-finding.
- Enroll the entire Board in an evaluation of potential strategies to ensure the Center's financial stability.

- Address any questions or concerns regarding our current reality.
- Survey the Board's opinions regarding the Center's strategic direction.

She then introduced Chris McFadden who began by adding thanks and appreciation to staff members and the committee stating that the process had been interesting and a lot of fun. He then stated that he would give a little background on how the committee got where they were:

- Responding to concerns raised by several Board members and framed by Charlie Frenette, the Sustainability Committee was chartered one year ago.
- During the past year, the Committee has met more than ten times and received outstanding support from the Board and Staff.
- In addition to the Committee, a number of ad hoc committees were formed to address key issues.
- A detailed financial model was created to forecast the Center's financial needs for the next ten years and help inform the Board's decision making.
- The model is comprehensive and reflects the Centers accounts, admissions forecast and the expected costs to maintain the Tupper Lake campus.
- Because of the prudent actions taken to develop a Board Designated endowment fund, the Board is in full control of the Center's near-term financial direction.
- The model predicts significant operating losses over the next ten years.
- This process is intended to ensure the Board can secure the Center's long-term financial sustainability.

Chris stated that although some conclusions may be alarming, The Wild Center has the talent and resources for long-term sustainability. He then took a minute to share the goals of the Committee:

- Review the status of the Center's 2009 Strategic Plan and suggest modifications as appropriate. – DONE
- Build a long-term financial model to include all known fiscal obligations, including Wild Walk. – DONE
- Consider the long-term infrastructure needs of the Tupper Lake campus. – DONE
- Reconcile the Center's Mission with its long-term strategic objectives.
- Identify new potential sources of revenue and development support.

Chris then invited Joe Beck and Bob Kronenberger to share their conclusions from the Wild Center financial analysis that they had recently completed. Joe began by stating that he does non-profit financial analysis for many clients and what we see for The Wild Center is not unusual. He said that a lot of great things happened to bring The Wild Center into existence and that we have the time and resources to figure things out. He said that as a result of this analysis, we have a tool that we can use as a part of our everyday planning. He then introduced Bob Kronenberger who shared the model background and purpose:

- The Sustainability Committee’s charter includes evaluating the Center’s long term financial stability.
- This exercise includes both operations results and the capital investments needed to maintain the Tupper Lake campus.
- A comprehensive analysis was done to reflect a wide range of inputs including admission trends, pricing, grants, labor costs, capital improvements, development programs, Wild Walk and the new property.
- The Committee analyzed what funding would be required based on forecasted operating results to maintain the minimum balance in investments funds to comply with the bank loan covenants.
- Contingency scenarios were run to estimate future funding requirements to maintain solvency.
- Note: this is a modeling exercise not a financial report to the Board.

Bob Kronenberger then stated that the committee looked at The Wild Center as it exists now, then took a long term horizon and have made some detailed assumptions. He stated that the results present some challenges as we look ahead. What we are presenting today is the base case forecast for the next ten years. One of the most significant points that we see in the forecast is that in order to remain in compliance with our bank loan which requires that we maintain \$2.5 million in Board Designated investment funds, we will need \$2.2 million of additional funds or improved operating results. We refer to this as financial imperative. He then took some time to share some key assumptions (base case):

- **Attendance/Membership**
 - Based on the ConsultEcon Study, 20% year 1 increase in Center attendance then normalizes over the next 5 years.
 - No ticket price increases other than the planned 2015 increase.
 - Memberships – plus 1% per year with no rate increases.
 -
- **Development**
 - Annual Fund – 6% growth every 3 years (current base ~ \$1.4 mm).
 - Wild Walk – Assumes Campaign meets \$4.0 million target. (Which is still short of total project cost)
 - Current Comprehensive Campaign achieves \$20 million target.
 - Future Campaign (2017-2024) – Additional \$6 million in contributions.
 - Bequests – Realized when donor turns 88 (Only \$420K of income included in 10 year model).
 - Grants – No salary or overhead recovery anticipated.
- **Investment Income**
 - Forecast 6% overall return (2% realized, 4% unrealized).
- **Operating Expenses**
 - Assume 3.5 additional FTEs.
 - Salaries, benefits, and consultants – rise 2% per year.

- o Repairs, maintenance, supplies, utilities, insurance – rise 3% per year.
- o Other expenses (travel, dues, training) – no increases.
- o Marketing – includes special Wild Walk marketing costs of \$375,000.
- **Capital Expenditures**
 - o Based on an analysis completed by Building and Grounds Committee.
 - o Model differentiates between capital and operating items.
 - o Cash burn reflects \$2.2 million in capital improvement spending.

Tom Jorling asked if the Building and Grounds Committee estimate includes emergency expenditures. Joe Beck replied that the estimate may be low but emergencies were figured in. Bob Kronenberger then went over a forecasted revenue by source bar chart which showed where TWC’s income is likely to come from in the next ten years. He also shared an annual cash burn bar chart for the same ten year period showing where that income will be used. Based on a liquidity analysis that he also shared, on the path that it is on, The Wild Center will be out of cash by 2024. Chris McFadden stated that we need more money and between now and mid 2017 we can control our own destiny. Joe Beck said that museums don’t typically make money and that we need to focus more on total cash flow. He said that some places operate mainly on endowment income. Bob Kronenberger then shared some financial model observations:

- \$14.8 million of (gross) cash burn forecasted in the base case through 2024 (including repaying the bank loan for Wild Walk),
- The Wild Center could be in default under its bank loan covenants by 2018, unless we meet the financial imperative presented.
- The Board has the time and talent to make the necessary adjustments to strategy and operations.
- Our sensitivity analysis suggests that minor changes to current operating assumptions (attendance, pricing, staffing) will only have a modest impact on operating losses.
- Our Base Case model assumes a normal development cycle, including a future campaign.
- Wild Walk construction costs play a minor role in the Center’s overall financial profile.

There was then much discussion about the financial model observations. Tom Jorling stated that even with meeting the financial imperative and solving the solvency problem during the forecast period we still up in a position that would not sustain the business. Gene Zeltmann said that he listened and didn’t see anything that talks about programming needs and making changes to that. Bob Kronenberger said that they would talk about options later in the day. Chris McFadden stated that they were coming to the group with unbiased, accurate information and now they were looking for suggestions and proposals to make the right next steps to sustain The Wild Center’s future. Lynn Birdsong stated that it visually creates the picture of what the possibilities might be if things don’t change. He also said that debt was a risk and that we are an endowment dependent enterprise stating that we need to:

- Pay off the Wild Walk debt – imperative.
- Work like the devil to increase the Board Designated Endowment.

Chris McFadden then thanked Joe Beck and Bob Kronenberger for providing the foundation for the conversations to follow and then welcomed Stephanie Ratcliffe who he said would go back in time to refresh everyone’s memory on the 2009 Strategic Plan.

Stephanie Ratcliffe began by asking Board members in attendance who was here for the last strategic planning process. She stated that they had experimented a lot, took a lot of programmatic risks and then Tom Aydelotte asked for a strategic plan to be developed. She said it took some time and they identified the following three central strategic questions:

- How can we create a sustainable business model given our highly seasonal nature?
- How do we secure a national audience of donors for a museum that is regional in its primary focus?
- How do we communicate to others our impact and move perceptions from being a nice addition to the Adirondack community to a necessary and essential part of the region’s future?

She stated that from the process, eight strategic priorities were created. She identified those priorities and broke it down further by sharing all of the ways that The Wild Center is fulfilling those priorities and how well:

1. Keep the core museum experience strong. (8.5/10)
 - a. Emphasize excellent customer service
 - b. Maintain our facilities in world class condition
 - c. Expand our program offerings
 - d. Insure programs are refreshed and accurate
 - e. Expand the live animal collection
 - f. Expand the Otter exhibit
 - g. Create a consistent image
 - h. Use technology to enhance customer service
 - i. Operate world class ancillary services
2. Be a leader in a place where science and society intersect. (9/10)
 - a. Lead the ADKCAP and Climate Change efforts and continue to develop related programming
 - b. Numerous Community Climate convenes
 - c. Building a Greener Adirondacks Conferences
 - d. Wintergreen – Convening on winter economy and climate
 - e. Convening Municipal Leaders after Hurricane Irene
 - f. Non-climate – Year of Monarch Conservation
3. Focus on the next generation. (9/10)
 - a. Develop and implement *No Child Left Inside* series of programs

- i. After installation of *The Pines playground* no other specific projects were developed
 - b. Connect with schools in multiple ways and explore new methods to facilitate learning
 - i. Regional school programs (over 10,000 students per year)
 - ii. Visual Thinking Strategies
 - iii. Exploring Distance Learning options
 - iv. Maple and L.P. Quinn
 - c. Youth Climate Program
 - i. Six Summits and counting, replicated for two years in Finland, interest by ASTC in national replication, year-round focus
- 4. Spread the word about the Adirondack model. (4/10)
 - a. Museums Connect
 - i. Finland Exchange professional exchanges from Heureka
 - b. International professional exchanges
- 5. Move the Center's perception from 'nice' to 'necessary'. (9/10)
 - a. Develop the "Belong" campaign and integrate into all communication language
 - i. Fully implemented
 - b. Build the Wild Center's convening role within the community
 - i. YCS, BAGA, Municipal Leaders and Climate Change, SENCER, outside meetings
 - c. Demonstrate and publicize our contributions to the local and regional economies
 - i. Completed study and published Wild Center report
 - ii. Participated in ANN reports for Adirondacks
- 6. Broaden and deepen our donor base. (8/10)
 - a. Goal setting based on prospects and past appeal performance
 - b. Completed campaign feasibility study
 - c. Planned and launched \$20 million campaign
 - d. Enhanced staff/government relations efforts (NCREDC)
 - e. Launched systematic database analysis to identify prospects
 - f. Established culture and protocols to ensure long-term organizational relationships
 - g. Created and grew Linda Vaughan Society
- 7. Build a Wild Center community online. (8/10)
 - a. Build the internal capacity to develop new communications modalities
 - i. Completed re-design of TWC website
 - ii. Maximized Google grant opportunity, featured as a NYS example
 - b. Provide interactive content on Wild Center website
 - i. New videos and archived programs
 - ii. Increased Facebook and other social media exposure
- 8. Operate with fiscal responsibility and operational effectiveness to optimize the use of our resources. (7/10)
 - a. Recruit and retain the best people

- i. Low turnover for permanent staff, increased professional development, excellent intern program
- ii. Provide employees with the tools to maximize effectiveness
- b. New phone system, computer leases, cloud servers
- c. Build development department infrastructure
- d. Formalize partnerships relationships
- e. Increase bottom-line contribution of ancillary operations/services
- f. Improved staff management of café and store and special events

BREAK

Environmental Scans

State of the Park

Stephanie Ratcliffe began by sharing Ross Whaley's bio and stated that Ross has been with The Wild Center from the beginning and had headed up the science committee. He was also instrumental in helping to identify what content people we needed to help develop exhibits. Ross then presented a document that he had written titled "Adirondack Scan" which highlights trends that might impact the sustainability of The Wild Center in the future. It focuses on the following topics:

- Demographics – and how it might influence attendance, donor base and programming.
- State of the Economy – and how that might impact income available for leisure time activities such as visiting The Wild Center.
- Tourism – and how it and outdoor recreation trends and preference might impact the number and character of visitors to The Wild Center.
- State of the Environment – and how it could potentially influence exhibits.
- Changes in Technology – and how that might affect in person visits to the museum.
- Future State of the Park – and the implication for a museum located in and teaching about a unique and protected landscape.

There was then discussion regarding Ross' presentation. Joe Beck asked what was the single greatest obstacle to tourism in the Adirondacks. Ross stated that the Adirondacks are more subtle an attraction than places like the Grand Canyon or Yosemite which more people seem to gravitate to. Tom Jorling then asked Ross to elaborate on the notion of the restorative power of nature. Ross stated that when The Wild Center was being designed, the idea of the pond and windows overlooking it was explored and that the pond was an example of the restorative power of nature. Karen Thomas mentioned that "I Love New York" was actively promoting the Adirondacks and using the subway to do so.

Gene Zeltmann stated that as a Board, they needed to be thinking strongly about where we will go to get support for fundraising. He asked if we needed to go outside of the area and where we need to focus. There was then a brief discussion about a document called *The Adirondack Park: The Next Twenty-Five Years*” written by Dave Mason and James Herman which calls for healthy communities and ecosystems thriving together in a protected and unique landscape.

Museums & Education

Stephanie Ratcliffe then took some time to report on the state of museums and education stating that based on a study of visitor trends, in the early years annual attendance at US Science Centers was on the rise but in recent years the number of people who come to museums on a daily basis is declining, She then shared the following information on traditional education roles:

- Formal Education
 - Degree Granting
 - Large Established Systems
- Informal Learning
 - Lifelong learning
 - Individual and Asynchronous

Stephanie also shared what the current reality is for museums:

- Museums struggling to find relevance in society.
- Museum content competing with YouTube/Vimeo (Khan Academy) – TWC archives its content on YouTube.
- Young viewers demand a voice in content creation, they also have issues with authority and their acceptance of authority is not as strong as it used to be.
- Shifting economic models – IMAX, etc. is not as important as it used to be.
- Intergenerational friction: donors vs. visitors vs. millennial – Trying to serve them but program designs might not please all.
- The physical world has enduring importance.

She also stated that:

- The Wild Center is small, nimble and responsive.
- Larger museums will continue to struggle to figure out what they could or should be.
- TWC needs to take more of its content and make it available to the outside world.
- Important for students to understand where to get good information.

Stephanie then talked about The Wild Center’s Sweet Spot:

- Self-directed, life-long learning.

- Interpreting current science for lay audiences – that is what we do, we are science journalists. Three dimensional, human interface in between.
- A science-focused community convener – what our climate work is about, need to be done in a top down way.
- Being an incubator site for innovative new programs – we love to do this here, bubbling up of ideas, staff very creative, come up with innovative program ideas.
- Enabling risk taking and collaboration – we love partnerships and are very risk taking.

Much discussion then ensued with Joel Treisman asking if the museum has sought out millennials for input from students on our Youth Climate Summit. Stephanie Ratcliffe said yes and that Jen Kretser is just the facilitator/organizer. Joel said that it is important to know what they think, etc. He then asked if we have asked the next generation what they want. Lynn Fox then asked about Wings and Hillarie stated that it has been hard in terms of members' time, lifestyles, etc. and they are re-evaluating what is important to them at this time.

There was then discussion about the possibility of the Youth Climate Summit becoming a live event. Rich Malloch stated that if you look at television (i.e., the Grammy's, sporting events, etc.) live experiential events are driving millennials. Charlie Frenette said that there is a low threshold for being manipulated, it is real.

Fundraising

Hillarie Logan-Dechene provided Board members with a Development overview. She began by stating that Obie Clifford and Betsy Lowe were willing to leverage all of their connections to make the dream of The Wild Center a reality. She mentioned that face to face fundraising has been the way that has gotten TWC off the ground and that it has been a great success. The Center has been in a "capital campaign" style fundraising mode for over a decade and that can also result in donor fatigue. She then shared some facts:

- Wild Center development has benefited from unprecedented Founder support.
- Industry statistics suggest only 41% of Board members nationally participate in face-to-face development meetings.
- The Center has been in a campaign mode for over 14 years.
- The Center has an enviable track record of securing grants.

Hillarie then reported on the geographic reach of The Wild Center stating that the majority of its financial support comes from individuals who live more than five hours away and have a part-time home in the Adirondacks.

Hillarie then shared the following 2013 Development results:

- 75% of Annual Fund gifts came from 63 donors (need to broaden donor base).
- 25% of Annual Fund gifts came from 1012 donors.

- Total 2013 Annual Fund contributions: \$1.5 million (down 10%) from 1286 contributors (+2%).
- Total 2013 development income was up at \$3.25 million (vs. \$2.5 million in 2012).
- To date, total endowment commitments have been \$9.1 million, including bequest intentions.
- The current investment account value is \$4.5 million.

BREAK FOR LUNCH/TOUR OF KLUECK PROPERTY AND WILD WALK

Lynn Birdsong welcomed all back at 2:12 pm and called the meeting to order. He then took a moment to thank staff members for leading tours of the Klueck and Wild Walk properties. He also thanked ad hoc committee members for all of their work to help build the next Strategic Plan. Lynn then stated that Board member Joel Treisman would facilitate the afternoon session.

Lynn Fox took a few minutes to provide a recap of the morning session and shared the following points:

- While the museum has important financial challenges, it has a ~3 year runway to make adjustments that will prevent bank default or need to scale back operations in an unplanned manner.
- Its mission is more and more relevant to stakeholders in and outside of the Adk. Park.
- Changes in educational methods and consumer preference are forcing most museums to adjust course.
- The Board should consider changes in strategy that leverage the Center's distinct competencies and institutional knowledge to ensure it retains its position as a national thought leader and regional attraction.
- The Board should consider ways to diversify its development participation.
- Phase I (now complete) was diagnostic. Phase II (through early 2015) seeks to consider new strategies that enhance our reach as well as our ability to attract the investment capital needed to ensure fiscal sustainability.

Lynn also took some time to share these observations about the financial model:

- Surprise by the forecasted shortfall on Wild Walk funding (\$4 million vs. \$5 million).
- Concern that the additional \$6 million in donations (above annual fund) in the model will need to be spent on operations rather than used to build endowment.
- All Board members should know loss history for the prior 5 years of spending and should be concerned that there seems to have been a doubling of deficit spending.

- The \$2.5 million funding gap is in addition to spending down the Board designated endowment. Operating losses of about \$1 million per year are not sustainable.
 - \$2.5 million solves the default problem but not the operating problem.
 - There are options for managing/refinancing the bank loan although more challenging once endowment declines.
 - The next steps in the review should include consideration of cost reductions.
 - The model shows what we have felt. We are an endowment model organization without sufficient endowment and debt is a risk.
 - It is a wakeup call that by 2022 the endowment will be gone if nothing changes.
 - We will need a programming roadmap to take TWC to the next chapters.
 - The pressure on the Board and large donors to fund operations annually is unsustainable.

Chris McFadden then took a moment to introduce Joel Treisman stating that it was hard to get his bio on one page as there are a series of remarkable accomplishments making him well suited to serve in a facilitator role. Joel began by stating that he has served on a number of Boards and that this one is amazing. He then asked everyone to take a few minutes to jot down their emotional reaction to any of the information that was presented during the morning session as well as the tours of Wild Walk and the Klueck property. Some of the emotions expressed by Board members were:

- Cold sweat regarding the financial challenge.
- Excitement and emotion about the promise of Wild Walk.
- Cautious but hopeful because there are good thinkers who can help.
- We do realize our potential as demonstrated by the new property and Wild Walk, and we can address this situation also.
- Excitement about the challenge and learning opportunity.
- Fear about the financial challenge and, even more, failing to capitalize on the opportunity we have to solve it.
- Certainty, we can tackle this – it's not too big.
- Pride in the good, professional work being done.
- We need discipline and realism, even to the point of postponing Wild Walk opening to do more fundraising.
- Relief in being able to analyze the problem and invigorated by Wild Walk.
- Motivated because we are nimble.
- Worry about managing the short term decisions needed.
- Worry about managing the workload and concerned about the need to prune in the short term.
- Fear about knowing enough to serve the younger generation.
- Optimistic because we looked worse in 2006.
- Focus needs to be on our vision. Too much focus on the current reality hinders the larger vision.

- Fear and pragmatism leads to determination.
- Responsibility – Are you personally doing everything you can to succeed?
- Emotion is good – people give to institutions that save lives or change lives.

Charlie Frenette stated that if you spend too much time focused on current reality, nothing will ever get done. He also said that focusing too much on the current reality will not help you realize the vision. Joel stated that as a group, they needed to realize what the current environment is and get away from fear getting to what makes you feel good.

There was then a discussion of the Committee findings and the importance of the analysis. Some of the points that were made are:

- This is the first time in the institutions history that we have facts.
- The amount of private support is an endorsement and freeing to the mission but carries risk.
- It shows our reach – we have come a long way.
- Shows success with grants (we are competitive nationally).

Some of the critical challenges short term were identified as:

- Use this period for more aggressive focus on Wild Walk to reach full funding.
- Make Wild Walk a success – we have nine months.
- Review drivers of the operating deficit and address with urgency and discipline.
- Determine how to manage the opening of Wild Walk and these issues with current resources.
- Take action soon – four years until we have cash flow problem.
- Develop a prospectus for potential investors by early 2015.
- Sharpen our program focus. Create good description for our choices.
- Know who we compete with and determine to do it better.

Some of the critical challenges longer term were:

- How to address the needs of the aging population in the ADKs.
- How to deal with the geography of the donor population.
- Declining ADK population and a struggling town complicate the effort (though improvement in some aspects is evident).
- Course correction to reduce the reliance on public funding, now at 57% of operating budget and going to 65%.
- Substantial increase in endowment needed.
 - \$25-30 million to cover gap.
 - Larger to ensure our aspirations.
- We need investment for the leap to the next level and we may need to take risks.
- Analyze opportunities to distribute our products.
 - Consider in person vs. virtual engagement opportunities.

- o There is a paradox in appeal of live and virtual experience – both seem desired.
- Consider whether partnerships could be of benefit and to whom.

There was then discussion about the importance of developing The Wild Center’s story:

- How do we become more prominent in the national discussion?
- We have an incredible story in the natural history of the Adirondacks and our role in the current chapter.
- The Adirondack model has 100 years of legitimacy.
- We need a more compelling vision and elevator speech because we are not currently articulating our value.
- The same issue appears in the assessment of the 2009-2014 strategic plan.
- We have not distilled the essence of who we are – we are still so eclectic although at a point of maturity where we need to become more crisp.
- It is good to develop stories –one is about our success in the Adirondacks (i.e., world wildlife diminishing but moose numbers are up in the Park).
- We need to tell the story of the recuperative power of nature (the Adirondacks was clear cut 100 years ago) and the restorative impact of visiting.
- Do we tell the Adirondack story or do we use the Adirondacks as a laboratory to tell the bigger story of the natural world?

Chris McFadden then stated that they would be distributing a ballot which he described as a non-binding survey to measure Board sentiment. He said that no action would be taken on the basis of the results of the survey. He asked all to rank the scenarios from most preferred (1) to least preferred (3). He said that the data would be used to help shape the committees planning process and that they would present the results at the January Board meeting. Chris then went on to describe each scenario:

Scenario A – Contraction

- Directs the staff of TWC to reduce programming and operating expenses to the Center’s demonstrated level of financial resources.
- Would seek to maintain all current museum-based programming, including Wild Walk.
- Center would likely reduce non-core programming.
- Changes would result in expense reductions in all departments, including personnel reductions.
- Option A would still require achieving planned Annual Fund, Campaign and Wild Walk development objectives.
- We could ensure the Center meets its “sustainability” objectives.

Scenario B – Status Quo

- Directs the staff of The Wild Center to maintain current programming levels, including Wild Walk and non-museum activities.

- Would require meeting planned Annual Fund, Campaign and Wild Walk development objectives.
- Underscored the utility of an endowment fund (~\$25 million) capable of producing enough income to fund operating losses.
- It may be prudent to consider some near term cost reductions to stabilize the annual funding gap at a target level.
- Without an endowment, would not allow the Center to achieve its “sustainability” objectives.

Scenario C – Expansion

- Directs the staff of The Wild Center to increase current programming to include a greater focus on users outside of the Adirondack Park, including virtual users.
- Anticipates that the Center will expand non-core activities around a core set of thematic focal points (e.g. climate change)
- Would require that the Center achieves planned Annual Fund, Campaigns and Wild Walk development objectives.
- Would seek to integrate the new property into the Center’s expanded strategic framework (e.g. conferences, dorms, meeting facilities).
- Would require the Center to develop new sources of revenue and development support to achieve its “sustainability” objectives.

After a very robust discussion about the pros and cons of each of the proposed scenarios, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The best approach might be combining pieces of each scenario.
- Reasons to oppose Scenario A – attendance will go down and fundraising will be at risk.
- Fundamental issue to address is avoiding default; if we can’t get to B we will have to go to A.
- An aspirational approach would be to select B as an interim goal with the real destination being C.
- Do we need to get to B in 24 months? There are options with the bank loan.
- We clearly need to do more fundraising and people will sign up if we are playing Scenario C.
- Changing lives aligns more with Scenario C.
- We need to reach new donors – the benefit of Scenario C. People in the pool now have been exhausted.
- C is a big step up with new buildings, staff, etc. B gets us to 2024 with shock absorbers but doesn’t get us to the ultimate destination.
- B can be for “better” – a hybrid with a little of the others included.
- It will be more feasible to stretch if we develop really clear vision and messaging – we need to be able to energize an audience.
- The role of a governance group is to modulate the risk profile when more is at stake.
- A key takeaway from the polling is to determine how ambitious we want to be in the next strategic plan.

“Trail Head” for Ideas

- Look for models like Green Bay Wisconsin for funding.
- Move from “museum” concept to “center” concept.
- Create outdoor recreation center on the new property to offset the “rainy day” image.
- Board could create a cash reserve for the loan and plan from there.
- Open a storefront in NYC or elsewhere for marketing (an aside from Joe).

Joel Treisman stated that the changing lives story aligns more with The Wild Center but the financial imperative is where we need to be. Chris McFadden said that the committee will use the feedback provided and will come back to the Board in January to advance the conversation. He then thanked all for digging deep. Chris asked for the synthesis of the conversation to be condensed into a two page reference document that could be used right away. Nancy Simpkins thanked all for everything that they did and for making it easy to understand.

Regular Board Business

I. Approval of Minutes

Discussion: Minutes of the July 7, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved.
Rich Malloch motion, Connie Ferguson second.

Action: N/A

II. MWBE Policy Resolution

Discussion: Hillarie Logan-Dechene stated that New York State has a grants gateway that helps to streamline the grants process for nonprofits doing business with the state. She stated that to be eligible for New York State grants, The Wild Center needs to have a Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise policy in place. She said that this would help to highlight the museums commitment to hiring Women and Minority owned businesses. She then presented the following resolution to be adopted:

WHEREAS, The Wild Center has an unwavering commitment to adhering to ethical, unbiased and legal standards in all of its activities;

WHEREAS, The Board of Trustees and Staff of The Wild Center strongly value the opportunity of working with minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE) in their external business contracting;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that this Board hereby endorses a policy on MWBE as follows:

The Wild Center will take good faith actions to work with MWBE in external contracting as appropriate and practicable.

Action: The resolution was unanimously approved.
Connie Ferguson motion, Nancy Simpkins second.

III. **Report from the Director**

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe began the discussion by sharing the following things that had taken place since the July Board meeting:

- The Wild Center was awarded three significant grants.
 - A Hearst Foundation grant of \$75,000 for educational programs.
 - An IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) leadership grant which is a nationally competitive grant, and one of the largest of 14 given this year (\$391,000). We will invite four other institutions to learn more about what The Wild Center is doing with VTS. Kerri and Jen are the thought leaders and will travel all over the country. It is a three year project.
 - An IMLS grant for exhibits on Wild Walk. This is part of Campaign goal and will provide evaluation dollars. The amount is \$144,736 over two years.

IV. **Membership Goal Update**

Discussion: Hillarie Logan-Dechene took a few minutes to provide a brief update on membership sales:

- Last year new and renewed membership goal was 500.
- Set a goal of 800 for this year, that goal was reached this week.
- Customer service training was provided and the bar was raised, members are regularly thanked during programs for their support.
- A new goal of 900 was set to be reached before the end of the year.

VII. **Other Business**

Discussion: Nancy Simpkins took a few minutes to talk about the work of the Gala Committee. She began by giving a brief overview:

- Last July the committee was given the go ahead to begin planning a ten year anniversary gala.
- They have met 3-4 times by phone, all members have contributed by providing names of venues, etc. Katherine Alexander put together a spreadsheet with all of the information gathered to date.
- A survey was sent out asking who would buy a table, etc. There were only five responses.

- She asked if people are interested, does the Board want to commit their money, time and effort?
- There is a stretch goal of \$1 million for the gala.

The committee is looking for affirmation about whether or not the Board wants to support it. Joe Beck stated the point of the gala is to re-announce who The Wild Center is and to raise a little money. There was then discussion about all of the reasons that the gala would be a good investment. The consensus was that the gala was a go. Joe Beck stated that a venue would need to be confirmed in the near future as well as a date. Lynn Birdsong asked how the Board could help to confirm their commitment. Joe Beck stated that someone on staff should reach out to the Board and find out their level of commitment as soon as possible.

XI. Executive Session

XII. Upcoming 2015 Meeting Dates

Monday, January 12, 2015 (NYC)

Monday, April 20, 2015 (NYC)

Monday, July 6, 2015 (TWC)

Friday, October 9, 2015 (TWC)