

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
THE WILD CENTER
October 11, 2019 - The Wild Center, Tupper Lake
1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Board of Trustees Present:

Tom Aydelotte, Joe Beck, George Cigale, Lynn Fox, Rick Godin, Sally Hart, Nancy Howard, Peter Kindler, Betsy Lowe, Paul Maroun, Jack Ryder, Nancy Simpkins, Karen Thomas, and Virginia Valkenburgh.

Board/Advisory Board/Staff Present via GoToMeeting:

Marci Bencze, Terry Birdsong, Larry Clifford, Rich Malloch, Pamela Matt, Charlie Svenson, and Joel Treisman.

Advisory Board Present:

Rob Gillis, Gary Hartwick, Juan Rodriguez and Stan Rumbough.

Board Absent:

Paul Alioto, Michael Bettmann, Charles Frenette, Michael Hunsinger, Thomas Jorling, Brooks Reynolds, Linda Rosenstock, James Schoff, and Sandie Strader.

Staff/Consultants Present:

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

Pre-Meeting:

Curator Leah Valerio provided a brief presentation about bees/beekeeping while Board members were making their way into the room. She shared the following interesting facts:

- We have an exhibit hive in the Naturalist Cabinet as well as a number of standard hives outside.
- There are plans to do more public programming around bees in the near future with the use of a camera that is currently not working.
- Queen Bee
 - Runs the hive
 - 1.5 times larger than other females
 - Tapered abdomens
- Drone
 - Large eyes

- No stingers
- Can't collect pollen or nectar
- Bees need enough honey and pollen to survive the winter
 - 15 lbs.
- Our hives produced 30 lbs of honey this summer - was a very productive summer.
- Fed them sugar water and bee patties to supplement.
- Fascinating insects
- They are the only insect that produces a substance that we eat.
- Two million flowers must be visited to produce one pound of honey.

Welcome

Discussion:

Nancy Simpkins called the meeting to order at 1:07 pm. She thanked all who attended the Thursday evening Board dinner at Amado saying it was a fun event. She asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the July 8, 2019 Board meeting and then turned things over to Stephanie Ratcliffe for the Executive Director's report.

I. **Approval of Minutes**

Discussion: Minutes of the July 8, 2019 meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

Tom Aydelotte motion, Sally Hart second.

II. **Executive Director Report**

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe began her report by sharing that The Wild Center (TWC) was working on providing remote programming to its customers. She stated that animal care had done a test program in the theater using a camera on the outside bee area and that it had gone extremely well. The camera is currently out of order but would be repaired and used again in the near future.

Stephanie then reviewed her 2019 goals :

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

Summer Recap

- Many summer events
 - WOK celebration, Moon landing/Skyfest.
 - Lots of Development events.
 - Steady, solid attendance
- Went through summer with six less full time positions and had to have emergency meetings to readjust.
 - Stand Up Paddleboarding program suspended.
 - No staff committee work.
 - Recalibration was necessary on many levels.

Museum Access

- Two showings in the Summer and three in the Spring.
- 13 sponsors = \$22,500
- Feel good about response and long-term Amazon Prime viewing.

Bill McKibben Climate Change Event

- SOLD OUT
- Streamed live
- Partnered with ADK Explorer Magazine

2019 WOK Public Programs

- WOK Celebration
- Joanne Shenandoah - music
- Free Tribal admission
- Programs for schools and groups
- Continued staff training
- Offsite - Campfire & Legends programs at Six Nations Museum
- Native Earth Camp - Robin Kimmerer & Neil Patterson - an example of our reciprocity

WOK Lifelong Learning - Document on "*Things We Shouldn't Say*":

- Too many chiefs, not enough Indians
- Indian giver
- Circle the wagons

Follow this link for other examples of culturally offensive phrases -

<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/culturally-offensive-phrases-you-should-use-at>

Master Planning Status

Overall, this is a status report. SR shared that projects are not far enough along for a full discussion but wanted to brief the Board on process to date and a few current insights. Sharing part of her thought process, SR noted this process requires the following simultaneous thoughts:

- In exploration phase, suspend “how to pay” concerns
- Yearly “new” offerings a challenge
- Need to slow down churn given staff capacity
- “Pay as you go” is still our MO
- We remain committed to Annual Fund and building the endowment as fundraising priorities.
- As a group we need to answer how fast do we need to go on the Master Planning process?

Status of projects under exploration:

- Pavilion
 - Three season timber frame for program and special event space
 - Chip Reay designer
 - Kitchen annex would allow events to operate independently from main building and daily operations
 - Will attract more rental events, help with Fests, school group overflow
 - Will provide on-site storage for tables, chairs, dishes
 - Firepit and terrace
 - Will get ballpark price and come back to Board with that information.
- Bio-Building Improvements - (SR suggests B Priority)
 - Needs to be done at some point but not now
 - Still might be useful to show options on ways to renovate
 - Will increase back of house capacity
- Wild Walk Enhancements
 - Pursuing climbing structure ideas
 - Working with an experienced exhibit developer to take this idea to the next level
 - Will be a safely dangerous element
 - Scaled so that adults could participate as well
 - Would be chipmunk, squirrel and flying squirrel themed

- Voices - Climate Solutions - IMLS Funding - \$248,549
 - Redesign of Find Out Forest, Youth Climate Summit (YCS) will be prominently featured in 2021
 - Campus-wide content with climate solutions
 - Will help offset annual YCS expenses and other convenings
 - Adult based convening around climate change
 - Tinkering space
 - 10/1/19 - 9/30/22

- Waterfront
 - Remove old structure and add a small boathouse
 - Need price on next phase of design
 - Exploring adding a porch to existing house

There was then discussion about ways to make this project happen while minimizing the cost to the museum. Joe Beck suggested that TWC purchase the building materials and then local contractors donate their time building the boathouse as a way to give back to the museum which is seen by many as a community anchor. He mentioned that there could be a plaque on the building with names of local contractors who participated. Rich Malloch questioned if perhaps there was a different yet to be determined use for the waterfront that should be explored before such work is done. Rich also asked if building on the water might cause an issue with something that we might do down there in the future.

- Boardwalk Renovation - (suggested B Priority)
 - Outlooks are popular with guests, was our first construction project back in 2003.
 - Worked with the Adirondack Park Agency on the design and materials for them.
 - Have seen much use over the years and they are starting to show signs of wear.
 - Height of boardwalk and outlooks were set at 100 year flood elevation. Most of the year out of water but when the river rises, it washes out under the foundations.
 - Existing materials have lasted 15 years. Proposed improvements would last 50 or more years.
 - Because the area is wetland, may only be able to replace structure “as is”.
 - 2016 Estimated total - \$215,000 - \$290,000.

- Temporary Exhibits
 - Short term revenue bump
 - Takes money to maintain rental fees, etc.
 - Showed one option - Stickwork.net
 - TWC in cue to build an installation in 2021
 - TWC has applied for funding
 - Artist enlists community help to build exhibit
 - Lasts about 5 years
 - Costs \$2,000 to guarantee a spot in cue

- Status
 - Bio-building renovation (HOLD - reassess needs)
 - Continue design development phase of riverfront
 - Should we take to next step? Boardwalk next step?
 - Explore APA constraints on bog and riverfront docks
 - Continue conceptualizing TWC online - need thought partners
 - Climate Solutions Exhibit - FUNDED @249k
 - Trail planning scheduled for spring
 - Preliminary Wild Walk climbing structure discussions ongoing
 - Temporary Exhibit - continue to explore options

- Current Priorities for 2020
 - Continue Wild Walk climbing structure preliminary design
 - Master Trail planning
 - Pavilion design and cost estimate
 - Explore temporary exhibit options
 - Execute Climate Solutions program and exhibits

There was then much discussion regarding how to group priorities. Joe Beck stated that our finances were in great shape but some important decisions needed to be made about investment in facilities while still expanding and innovating. He said that we need to come up with ranking criteria to help make decisions regarding what projects are important.

Ginny Valkenburgh noted it was difficult to assess the options without the criteria.

Tom Ayelotte suggested a small group convene to develop what was needed to create priorities. Stephanie replied that she knows she does not have enough information at this juncture to inform a deliberation process.

Rich Malloch asked if there were any filters through which choices will be made in order to rank projects. Joe Beck stated that there needs to be discussion to frame things and then rank them in order of priority. Stephanie stated that her main criteria when ranking projects at this juncture was whether or not it “moved the needle” revenue wise.

George Cigale noted we were in the beginning phases of information gathering.

III. Senior Staff Retreat Report

Discussion: Hillarie Logan-Dechene began her report on the first Senior Staff Retreat by recognizing the following staff who participated:

- Stephanie Ratcliffe
- Hillarie Logan-Dechene
- Bob Kronenberger
- Jen Kretser
- Leah Valerio
- Kerri Ziemann
- David St. Onge

Hillarie then shared the following operating assumptions elicited from the group:

- High quality, innovative Wild Center experience
- On mission - on plan
- No deficit - balanced budget

Major takeaways of the group:

- Strategies to build earned income
- Find operational efficiencies
- Challenge processes and procedures that have evolved organically and make sure we are using staff’s skills
- Don’t be afraid to change things up a bit
- Be ready for budgeting process
- Considering investing in a group sales position and special events

IV. Marketing and Programs

Discussion: Nick Gunn reported on the marketing committees work and shared the following information:

What have we learned?

Nick stated that the committee thought that it might be valuable to look back at 2019 Tactics to figure out what worked, what didn't work and how to implement these findings going forward.

Lesson One

- Connected TV - As a reminder, on OTT channels, content delivered via an internet connection rather than a traditional cable box. Content can be viewed on multiple devices including computers, mobile devices, OTT devices (Roku, Apple TV, Smart TV, etc).
 - Targets
 - Adults 21-39 with children in household
 - Adults 21-39 who are outdoor enthusiasts with children in household
- Connected TV - Takeaways
 - 245,026 ads delivered
 - 2,883 average impressions per day
 - 496 users visited gowildcenter.org vanity URL
 - 0.2% visit rate
 - Native digital ads get around 0.3% click rate
 - \$35 per website visit
 - Campaign amounted to 13% of advertising budget
 - Last years regular cable buy had smaller budget and only ran in August in Albany DMA, this resulted in 874 visits to website.
 - Vendor says TWC's 2019 campaign was an anomaly, their explanation is that target was too narrow and there was a reach issue.
 - There is still a place for traditional television buys
 - Can't miss on big swings

Lesson Two

- Visitation vs. Add-ons
 - Shifted digital marketing dollars from add-ons and events to general visitation mid-July.
 - Strategy at beginning of year was to draw people with add-ons (canoe, SUP, Behind the scenes) and special events.
 - Shifting to what has proven engagement in the past.
- Digital Marketing - Takeaways

- Spike coincides with change in ad strategy and the beginning of Fall foliage.
- How do we shift visitation to early Spring?
 - Ad targeted leaf peepers, we can replicate targeting with new ad copy for summer as well. Need to target the right people at the right time.
 - Even though visitation numbers were large, only 3.34% went to the buy tickets page - still amounts to 1,633 visits. As a reference, our listing on visitadirondacks.com sees 19% of traffic to buy tickets and 3,213 conversions.

Lesson Three

- Canada
 - Physical visitation and web traffic continue to rise.
 - We have shifted digital advertising dollars to Southern Ontario and Quebec.
- Canada - Takeaways
 - Identify more Canadian “tastemakers” like Narcity
 - Targeted campaigns earlier in the calendar year
 - Explore the idea of taking Canadian currency at par
 - While numbers are still small, the market is large and has potential

Lesson Four

- Goals with Break the Ice Media: PR partners
 - Increase brand awareness of TWC and its experiences and packages
 - Get writers on site
 - Drive traffic to website
 - Influence conversions on TWC website
 - Increase number of visitors during shoulder season
- Break the Ice Media - Results
 - Web Traffic ('19 vs '18)
 - Users - Up 11.5%
 - New Users - Up 12.1%
 - Sessions - Up 8.7%
 - Pageviews - Up 14.3%
- Break the Ice Media - Fam Trips - Results
 - Hosted 8 writers in 2019
 - 71 social media posts from hosted writers
 - Secured two more writers for 2020
 - Over 5.6 million media impressions

- Reached over 796,000 people through Facebook (FB) ads
- Over 40,000 clicks to TWC website from FB ads
- We are actively getting people here and teaching them about TWC
- Working with Break the Ice to organize some accessibility FAM tours
- We are a great introduction to nature
- Pam Matt and Nick Gunn have been talking about working with Oneida County tourism

Looking Ahead

- Continue to build on increasing customer satisfaction and service.
- Leverage existing assets for alternate uses.
- We see the diverse population we are serving, it's time to show it.
- Average Google Ratings:
 - 2016 (4.6%)
 - 2017 (4.6%)
 - 2018 (4.7%)
 - 2019 (4.7%)
- Onsite Comment Cards
 - 2018 (60% positive, 40% negative)
 - 2019 (61% positive, 20% negative, 13% mixed)

Alternate Uses & New Ideas to Drive Visitation and Generate Earned Income

- Haunted Forest in iForest - Earned income
 - First year pilot test
 - 10/26, 6 - 9 pm
 - \$5/children, \$10/adult
 - Uplighting, lanterns, fog machine, staff walking around dressed as zombies
 - Advertising on radio, banner on overpass in Saranac Lake
 - Revenue generator
- 2019/2020 "Get Outside" Nick and Hillarie then detailed the new two year programmatic and marketing theme.
- Promote TWC as a Four Season Destination
 - Focus on Fall and Winter
 - Adirondacks are first to experience Autumn - First to Fall
 - Will create season FESTS and programs using our assets
- Film and Temporary Exhibit
 - Invest in rental of NEW film
 - Install a staff curated temporary backyard exhibit

- Winter Wild Walk
 - Will keep Wild Walk open year-round, weather permitting
 - Wild Walk is the MAJOR driver of new visitation
 - Piloting this Fall and funding dependent, we will have it open at least certain hours each day that we are open
- Ice Fishing Shanty and Demos
 - Will take place on Greenleaf Pond

Youth Climate Summit Communications Overhaul

Nick detailed the communications staff's work with Jen, Erin and consultants to improve the digital access to the Youth Climate Program's assets:

- Tons of new content has been developed and about 90% of the work has been completed to launch these new tools and resources.
- People ask about these resources every day, so there is a built in excited audience for this information.
- Content on new website will be the first time that we ever had a public facing, interactive website for the general public to learn about the Youth Climate Summit (YCS) Network.
- Also building a communications system to help manage all of the contacts in the summits network and to better track everyone that downloads the YCS Toolkit.
- Developed a partner summit kit to standardize how all 35 or more of the summit sites and new summit sites acknowledge TWC.
- Nick noted that he, Bob, Hillarie and Jen worked with a lawyer to institute a Terms of Use check box, which has been added to the login information, so we have legal protection for YCS. Copyright protections are also in the works.

To Be Completed by the end of Year

- Automated communication schedule with website login contacts.
- Additional resources, including:
 - Adult mentor how to guide
 - Climate Action Plan Workshop Facilitator Guide
 - How to Run a Green Team Workshop Facilitator Guide
 - Community Building content
 - Working with Local Governments content

Nancy Simpkins took a moment to thank Nick Gunn stating that the fact that Marketing has been so nimble and responsive makes her feel confident in our ability to adjust as needed.

There was then a brief break for a Community Compost Project tour with Dave St. Onge.

V. **Financial Report**

Discussion: Joe Beck began by thanking all members of the Finance Committee for all of their efforts. He reported that the committee had been working with Lynn Birdsong and that investments were in good shape. He then shared the following thoughts:

- To have a successful Annual Fund, all Board Members need to be working to help
- Board and Advisory Board members should reach out to all of their contacts
- Need to focus on areas that are down
- If we can meet our goals we are in good shape
- Need to be robust in fundraising
- Committee trying to initiate earlier budget process
- Finance Committee will meet in December to review draft budget with management. We will present the budget to the Board at the January meeting.
- There are long term challenges, committee will continue to work on those

VI. **Development Report**

Discussion: On behalf of Charlie Svenson, Hillarie Logan-Dechene began her report by stating her main priorities at this time:

- Bequest
- Annual Fund

She then shared the Giving USA infographic on where charitable donations are coming from and going to and provided the following takeaways:

- That we, like EVERYONE, are most dependent upon individuals for gifts during their lifetime and through bequests.
- That major gift fundraising will be even more important moving forward, so developing authentic lasting relationships with donors is vital.
- As always, peer to peer requests for support are the most successful - so we really need Trustees who are willing to help with fundraising.

Bequests and Planned Giving

- HLD offered an update on the Linda Vaughan Society. Thanks in large part to the work of Robin Ellis:
 - All bequest intentions
 - \$6,040,016
 - 51 Known

- Bequest Activity
 - New intentions - 5 = > \$168,500
 - Realized - 4 = \$443,162
 - In probate - 4 = \$?
- Bequest Society
 - Current LVS Members - 51 total
 - Trustee Members - 13
 - Advisory Board Members - 3
 - Staff - 1
 - Members - 24
 - Non-members - 2
 - Volunteers/Members - 8
- Trustee Bequest Intentions
 - \$3,010,004 - 13 out of 29 Trustees or 45%
- Advisory Board Bequest Intentions
 - \$105,001 - 3 out of 25 AB Members or 12%

2019 Membership Summary

- Income - 2019 - \$306,390, 2018 - \$308,785 = Change - -1%
- Total Members - 2019 - 3,822, 2018 - 3,554 = Change - 8%
- New Members - 2019 - 796, 2018 - 762 = Change - 4%
- Renewals - 2019 - 1,893, 2018 - 1,810 = Change - 5%
- Renewal Rate - 2019 - 54%, 2018 - 40% = Change - 35%

2019 Annual Fund - Trustee Appeal

- Event Attendees: Personal Contact & 1 of 11 AF Letter Segments
 - 14 Development events this summer
 - 1,013 people attending
 - Total attendance by Board members - 55
 - Museum Access - 203 people attended the 4 screenings
- Annual Fund
 - Goal Total - \$1,089,800
 - To date (9/30) - \$471,316

2019 Fall Schedule Appeal

- 10/15 - Appeal Letter #1 - Mailing
- 10/21 - Start of weekly AF email updates
- 11/15 - Holiday "Thankful" Cards - mailing
- 11/22 - Otter Newsletter - mailing

- 11/25 - Appeal Letter #2 - mailing
- 12/3 - Giving Tuesday emails
- 12/7 - Start of weekly e-appeals

Take Five Update

- Had success in having some of summer event invites accepted and hope for continued success in this relationship building.
- As noted prior - if Trustees have made contact with their take 5 assignments, a personal ask would be the most effective, next would be a phone call, and third most effective would be including personal notes with the AF appeal letters.
- HLD thanks all of the Board members for this help in giving and getting annual fund gifts.

Nancy Simpkins then called for an Executive Session.

VII. Upcoming 2019/2020 Meeting Dates

Monday, January 27, 2020 (NYC) - Nancy Simpkins' Family Office - Chelsea

Monday, April 20, 2020 - (NYC)

Friday, July 10, 2020 - (TWC)

Friday, October 9, 2020 - (TWC)

Monday, January 25, 2021 - (NYC)