

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
THE WILD CENTER
October 4, 2012 – The Wild Center, Tupper Lake
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Board Present:

Paul Alioto, Tom Aydelotte, Michael Bettmann, Lynn Birdsong, Obie Clifford, Amy Elrod, Connie Ferguson, Lynn Fox, Rick Godin, Nancy Howard, Mike Hunsinger, Dave Johnson, Thomas Jorling, Nancy Simpkins, Dan Sullivan, Charles Svenson, and Karen Thomas.

Board Absent:

Joe Beck, Jim Carr, John Colston, Charlie Frenette, Robert Friedman, Bill Hutchens, Kevin Keane, Peter Kindler, Claire Leonardi, Betsy Lowe, Paul Maroun, Chris McFadden, Steve Potter, and Sandra Strader.

Advisory Board Present:

Barbara Grose, Sally Hart, Gary Hartwick, Jack Ryder, and Ross Whaley.

Others:

Matt Cobb (Wings Designee)

Staff/Consultants Present: Marci Bencze, Hillarie Logan-Dechene, Robin Ellis, Howard Fish, Tim Holmes, Jen Kretser, Bob Kronenberger, and Stephanie Ratcliffe.

Welcome

Discussion: Lynn Birdsong called the meeting to order at 1:15 pm. He welcomed all in attendance and thanked Board members who participated in the retreat session preceding the board meeting. He then stated that he would give the governance report first. He said that the Governance committee had met to discuss a number of candidates being considered for election to the Board. He gave Board members a brief biography for each candidate:

- **Lynn Fox** – He stated that she is currently on the Advisory Board. She lives in Canton, NY and has recently retired from the Federal Reserve. She is the wife of the current St. Lawrence University President and is very involved at St. Lawrence. He stated that she is also a member of the Smith College Board.
- **Jim Schoff** – He is a lifetime Adirondacker and has a home on Upper Saranac Lake, he is originally from Lowville, NY and lives in Ohio. He and his wife Anne are very dedicated to The Wild Center and are long-time supporters.

Action: A motion to elect Lynn Fox and Jim Schoff to the Board of Trustees was unanimously approved.

Charles Svenson motion, Michael Bettmann second.

Lynn also reported that with the support of the Governance committee he had asked two people to join the Advisory Board. He stated that the following two people had agreed to come on effective in January:

- Lee Bailey – He is involved in private equity regarding green renewable energy and is very enthusiastic about The Wild Center. He lives in Los Angeles, California and his family has a home on Upper Saranac Lake.
- Linda Rosenstock – She is the Dean of the UCLA School of Public Health and is currently on sabbatical. She lives in Los Angeles, California and her family has a home on Upper Saranac Lake. She is also very enthusiastic about The Wild Center.

There was then much discussion regarding the process of Board elections. Stephanie Ratcliffe stated that The Wild Center has a very active Governance committee. She asked board members to keep in mind anyone they think might be a good fit for the Board and Advisory Board. Lynn Birdsong stated that the job of more clearly defining the role of Advisory Board members was on the plate of the Governance committee. Lynn also stated that the Board is fortunate to have new members and that they have been elected for three year terms. He also mentioned that there is a group of Trustees up for re-election at the end of the year and that he would be in contact with them before the January Board meeting.

I. Approval of Minutes

Discussion: Minutes of the July 9, 2012 meeting were unanimously approved as amended by Tom Jorling.

Dan Sullivan motion, Dave Johnson second.

Action: Revise July 9, 2012 minutes to reflect revision by Tom Jorling.

II. Report from the President

Discussion: Lynn Birdsong stated that he would cut his report short but did state that having been at The Wild Center most of the summer, he was able to observe how well the museum functioned all season. He applauded museum staff on the following:

- Planet Adirondack – Planet Cast
- “Center for” idea
- Youth Climate Summit
- Climaid Event
- Hosting the Regional Economic Development Council meetings
- Fests
- Implementation of the Linda Vaughan Society
- Grants – IMLS Grant for VTS
- Consolidated Funding Application – Potential \$1 million State grant towards the Wild Walk project which was designated a Priority Project by the North Country Council

He stated that he gives all staff, especially Stephanie Ratcliffe a lot of credit for the perseverance it took to make this all happen. He then turned things over to Stephanie Ratcliffe who gave the Executive Director's report.

III. Report from the Executive Director

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe began her report by inviting Board Chairman, Obie Clifford to give a special report on the Klueck property. She stated that she would augment Obie's report with a few slides. Obie began by stating that the discussion should be kept extremely confidential. He then gave Board members a brief overview of the relationship between The Wild Center and the Kluecks. He then stated that after much discussion that he would be going to Florida on October 16, 2012 to meet with Mrs. Klueck to make an offer for the property. He stated that with the help of the people in the room the museum would be able to make a bid of up to \$600,000 for the property. The unanimous consensus in the room was that The Wild Center could use this property to enhance future programming, provide housing for future interns, and enhance the maple project among other things.

There was then much discussion amongst board members regarding whether or not Mrs. Klueck would accept the offer. Lynn Birdsong stated that there had been discussion regarding tapping the board designated endowment to fund the purchase of the property but said that nine board members had stepped up to help put together the money for an offer. Dan Sullivan stated that the purchase of the property was the right thing to do for the museum in the long term.

There was discussion about the possibility of Obie bringing a New York State Real Estate contract with him to the meeting. Tom Jorling suggested that there should be a line in the contract stating that it should close within a specified period of time. Lynn Birdsong stated that if Mrs. Klueck accepts the offer of \$600,000 a special board meeting would be called. A tentative date of 10/22/12 was set to meet via conference call.

The following resolution to authorize Donald "Obie" Clifford to make a bid for the museum to purchase the Klueck property was unanimously approved:

Let it be resolved that the Board of Trustees of The Wild Center authorize Donald "Obie" Clifford to make a bid of up to \$600,000 and obligate the museum to purchase the property owned by Ella Klueck that adjoins The Wild Center's land.

Tom Jorling motion, Karen Thomas second.

Action: N/A

NOTE: In subsequent discussions extending to mid-December, Mrs. Klueck did not accept our offer and decided to "wait to see what the future may bring". We will continue to stay in touch with her until the matter is resolved.

IV. Finland Youth Climate Summit

Discussion: Board member Karen Thomas and Director of Programs Jen Kretser shared the following highlights of their recent trip to Finland to experience their first Finnish Youth Climate Summit. She also gave a brief history of the project from the beginning:

- Why Finland? Fifteen years ago Stephanie Ratcliffe was invited to join the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) and Stephanie was introduced to Mikko Myllykoski. Stephanie then heard about an American Association of Museums (AAM) grant on international exchange. She wanted to learn how other places do what they do. She thought of Mikko because of the similarities between the US and Finland in terms of the natural beauty of the lakes and forests, the fact that both countries need heat all winter long and to make a long story short – we got the grant.
- There were a total of four visits, two to Finland from the United States and two from Finland to the United States. The first group from Finland came to the second Adirondack Youth Climate Summit and were able to experience the grass roots effort and took what they learned here back to Finland.

Karen stated that it was very inspiring to see our model in practice internationally and that Jen Kretser was the magic behind the Youth Climate Summit.

Jen Kretser stated that she is working on a "tool kit" on how to convene students around critical issues. She stated that it took 18 months of planning for the Finland Youth Climate Summit to come to fruition. She also reported that the Finn's have made a commitment to continue the Finnish Youth Climate Summit and that next year it would be held in Lapland. She also stated that the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is a partner of the Summit in Finland and that they are committed to the continuance. Jen reported that a group of students from the International School in Vantaa who were part of the Finnish Summit planned to Skype into the upcoming Adirondack Youth Climate Summit.

V. **Financial Report**

Discussion: Bob Kronenberger went over the highlights of the dashboard that was included in the board packet. He reported that:

- Attendance YTD was 4% below last year.
- Attendance revenue was 4% above last year, but below budget.
- Membership revenue was steady, but 2% below budget and 2% below last year.
- Store revenue per visitor was at \$5.40 which is up from \$4.88 last year.
- Cafe is holding its own, have cut some costs this year (i.e., no manager, using outside caterer for outside events).
- Received two year permanent liquor license which has been profitable.
- August YTD revenue was 10% below budget, but 10% higher than last year at the same time.
- Annual Fund contributions are 20% over budget through August.
- There is a shortage in Board designated endowment fund support.
- Managing expenses well, \$72,000 under budget through August. Cut \$30,000 early, will cut again at end of year if needed.
- Salary and benefits are \$6,000 below budget through August.
- Consulting fees are \$22,000 over budget – largest expense is unexpected IT costs.
- Maintenance is \$70,000 below budget.
- Endowment is at \$4.1 million through August.
- \$200,000 outstanding balance on line of credit.
- Over next 60 days will be working on 2013 budget.

Lynn Birdsong mentioned that he was filling in for Finance Chair, Claire Leonardi who has been very involved in her new job in Connecticut and that it has made it hard for her to be more engaged in The Wild Center.

Board member Tom Aydelotte stated that in terms of the Strategic Plan that the museum needs to begin to develop trend data and make an effort to find out more about who visitors are, etc.

Action: N/A

VI. **Development/Campaign Report**

Discussion: Hillarie Logan-Dechene then gave her Development report.

Hillarie reported on the comprehensive campaign. She stated that all Board members were provided a list and she asked that they make calls to help with Annual Fund, which is a critical component of the campaign and the priority before year-end. She also stated that progress in securing bequest intentions had been made since the July meeting and that the slow rollout of the Linda Vaughan

Society had helped with that. She commented that it was also a result of the hard work of Susan Arnold and Robin Ellis connecting with people that have been friends of the museum for a long time.

Lynn Birdsong thanked all in attendance for their support of the campaign. He stated that while it was still only in the “quiet phase”, \$13.4 million had been raised towards the working goal of \$20 million. Lynn noted that the cabinet has had much discussion about setting a public goal and expects to go public in the next year.

Hillarie stated that during the next three months the real priority is the Annual Fund and that we need to make or exceed budget. She thanked Board members for their early support and asked for their help with the year-end appeal by visiting with donors, making calls or sending notes asking for support.

Hillarie then gave an overview of the New York State Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process:

- Governor Cuomo divided the state into 10 regions
- Two co-chairs chosen for each region
- Volunteer committees wrote strategic plan of regions priorities
- Three month process
- Sub-groups were set up
- Identified priorities
- Applicants had 8 weeks to submit requests
- Projects went through an committee then agency review
- We attended all of the public information sessions
- Last year the North Country region was chosen as one of top regions
- TWC staff went to meeting, hosted two meetings at TWC, met with people, and asked a lot of questions that would help us to understand the process
- Looked at last year’s projects
- We were bold in asking for \$1 million for Wild Walk
- Governor Cuomo will be visiting Plattsburgh next week to talk about last year’s projects as well as this year’s projects

There was then much discussion regarding the importance of getting the grant and the match of funding. Obie Clifford stated that Ron Canestrari as well as former Governor Pataki may be helpful. He also said that securing the grant would give the museum tremendous leverage with other prospective Wild Walk funders.

There was also discussion regarding the next steps should the museum be awarded the grant. Stephanie stated that the structure would come first with exhibits being installed second.

Action: N/A

VII. **Ad Hoc Membership Committee**

Discussion: Membership and Appeals Officer Tim Holmes began by naming the members of the Ad Hoc Membership Committee:

- Barbara Grose
- Sally Hart
- Nancy Howard
- Tim Barnett
- Jane Holder
- Christine Owens
- Hillarie Logan-Dechene

He reported that the committee had met twice over the summer. He said that the ball was in his court to take the committee recommendations to change the Membership program and improve results. He stated that the consistency of our message was important in Membership and that the areas of focus were communication, promotion and the renewal process. He also reported that there are two kinds of members; ones looking for value and ones looking for the impact of The Wild Center's programs. He said that we need both types.

Tim also reported membership numbers typically follow Admissions. He stated that on average, 1/3 of Wild Center members do not renew and that on average we can convert up to 2% of visitors to members. He stated that we need to get in better sync with our members visitation patterns, their family dynamics and expectations.

Barbara Grose then spoke about membership levels and benefits for members. She reported the following committee findings as well as progress made to date:

- Tried to simplify membership levels
- Provide less levels and be more flexible levels
- What could we offer as a membership benefit?
- What level of donor is considered a member?
- If these questions were answered it would be easier to sell memberships and keep people more engaged
- Admissions staff are crucial to membership sales and the more engaged they are with people coming in, and the better they are able to explain all of the membership levels to potential members, the better our results will be
- Need to come up with a good plan and implement it

Hillarie Logan-Dechene then stated that the group discussed how The Wild Center is evolving as an organization when promoting memberships. She said that the museum is an attraction but is important for multiple reasons and that we need to get more people engaged and then work on keeping them engaged.

She said membership must be closely tied to the museum's mission and be representative of The Wild Center experience.

Howard Fish stated that he had met with the head of Marketing of Adirondack Museum. Tim added that we also have a good relationship with their membership person and that it was so important for data and idea sharing.

There was then discussion about ways to promote the relationship between membership and web users as something valuable. Obie Clifford asked if it would be possible to provide a portal on our website for members or some other thing that would make them feel special. Howard said this was possible in the new website.

Action: N/A

VIII. **Executive Session**

IX. **Upcoming 2013 Meeting Dates**

January 7, 2013, 9:00 am – New York, NY – McKinsey & Co. - 55 East 52nd Street,
Room 2104D