

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

October 9, 2015 – The Wild Center

1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Board Present:

Paul Alioto, Joe Beck, Michael Bettmann, Lynn Birdsong, George Cigale, Connie Ferguson, Charles Frenette, Sally Hart, Nancy Howard, Michael Hunsinger, Betsy Lowe, Jack Ryder, Nancy Simpkins, Charles Svenson, and Karen Thomas.

Board/Advisory Board/Staff Present via Web Ex:

Lee Bailey, Amy Elrod, Lynn Fox, Gary Hartwick, Chris McFadden, and Linda Rosenstock.

Advisory Board Present:

Martha Bullock, Barbara Grose and Gene Zeltmann.

Board Absent:

Tom Aydelotte, Obie Clifford, John Colston, Robert Friedman, Rick Godin, John Huwiler, Thomas Jorling, Peter Kindler, Rich Malloch, Paul Maroun, James Schoff, Sandra Strader, and Joel Treisman.

Staff/Consultants Present: Katherine Alexander, Marci Bencze, Hillarie Logan-Dechene, Robin Ellis, Chris Keevil (Wellspring), Bob Kronenberger, Stephanie Ratcliffe, and Malini Sridharan (Wellspring).

Welcome

Discussion:

Lynn Birdsong called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and welcomed all in attendance in the room and on the phone. He also took a moment to recognize Connie Ferguson for her service to the Board stating that this would be her last Board meeting as she was at the end of her term and would not seek re-election. He presented her with a hand-carved wooden Wild Center pen as a token of gratitude for her service stating that she has been a wonderful asset to The Wild Center.

I. Approval of Minutes

Discussion: Minutes of the July 6, 2015 meeting were unanimously approved.
Nancy Simpkins motion, Charles Svenson second.

Action: N/A

II. Executive Director Report

Discussion: Stephanie Ratcliffe took a brief moment to thank staff for all of their hard work and dedication this summer. Lynn Birdsong stated that all had worked hard and everything was magnificently done. Lynn then welcomed Wellspring Consultants Chris Keevil and Malini Sridharan who were in the room to give a presentation to Board members on their work to date. Joe Beck then said a few words stating that there was a great committee full of interactive and thoughtful people as well as excellent consultants who have all been well prepared. Joe stated that they will need all members of the committee to work hard to get to a targeted January conclusion and mentioned that the rest of the meetings of the committee would take place in New York City.

Joe stated that there had been great discussion to date and that the committee had learned a lot and that all committee members as well as some staff had been interviewed. One conclusion that came out of the interviews was that we need to be more focused on The Wild Center brand and who we are as we expand and change direction.

Wellspring Presentation

Discussion: Consultant Chris Keevil of Wellspring stated that there had been a great session yesterday and that they were in the early phase of gathering thoughts and responses saying that as a Board it was helpful for them to see where things are headed. Chris then gave a quick overview of the firm and shared some of their work.

The Firm

- They are a strategy consulting firm and they serve nonprofit organizations exclusively.
- They draw upon strategy disciplines from the corporate sector.
- They have offices in New Haven, Boston and New York.
- They have worked for over 200 clients in the last fifteen years.

Their Work

- They focus on strategic issues of central importance to the organization; with longer consequences; and of top concern to key decision-makers.
- They bring substantial experience with organizations in strategic planning.
- They have a broad range of experience with;
 - High-performance nonprofits
 - Museums

- Educational organizations
- Environmental organizations
- Work with leadership in assessing opportunities in setting direction

Chris then took a few moments to introduce himself and the members of his team.

Chris Keevil

- Partner and Managing Director
- Founded Wellspring Consulting in 2002
- 25 years of experience in consulting
- Previously a partner at the Boston Consulting Group
- Board member of the Woodbridge Land Trust
- BA in Music, Amherst College; MBA , Yale School of Management

Malini Sridharan

- Senior Consultant
- Experience in fundraising, education and research
- Previously a middle school science teacher in New York City
- BS in Botany, University of Michigan, MS in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Michigan, MS in Secondary Education, City College of New York and MBA, MIT Sloan School of Management

Lianne Fisman

- Senior Consultant
- Experience in program strategy, evaluation and management
- Previously an Associate at ABT Associates
- BS in Geography and Environmental Science, McGill University, MS in Environmental Science, Yale School of Forestry, PhD in Urban Studies and Planning, MIT

Chris then shared the purpose of the project:

- To test the feasibility of key aspects of the Meta Strategy through assessment of:
 - What needs TWC will fill
 - How the strategy will make TWC unique
 - How the strategy will position the center for future profitable growth

He stated that the work will set a path going forward to carry out this strategy over the next ten years with a focus on broadening TWC's base of stakeholders and funders and building a sustainable stream of revenue/assets for TWC. Chris

said that they see it as a continuation of work that we have already done and that the goal is to dig deeper into the meta strategy. Our location and relationship to the Adirondacks is important to our future growth.

Chris then shared the following project timeline stating that it is a relatively fast process. He also said that there can be a certain level of planning fatigue and that the timeline was laid out with that in mind.

- Assess the current situation – Sept. to early Oct.
- Investigate analogs (Similar organizations) – Early Oct. to early Nov.
- Outline key sub-components of the TWC Meta Strategy – Mid Oct. to early Nov.
- Test for fundability – Late Oct. to late Dec.
- Identify potential collaborators – Mid Nov. to late Dec.
- Set a roadmap for the TWC Meta Strategy – Early Dec. to early Jan.
- Define the path forward – Early Dec. to late Jan.

The committee will meet once a month through January and would report out again at the January Board meeting in New York City. Chris mentioned that they recognize that Board, etc. have things that they would like to share and that for the purpose of efficiency there may be monthly group interviews. There was then a brief discussion about what a meta strategy is. Joe Beck said to think of it as a draft strategy. Chris then took a moment to share the following observations about The Wild Center:

- It is quite remarkable what TWC has done over the last ten years.
- The vibrancy of Board and Staff is amazing.
- What has been accomplished here so far is stunning.
- Shows a group of people who came together to make this happen and who are interested in where go from here.

Chris then shared the design of the meta strategy:

- In 2014, The Wild Center Board initiated the Sustainability Committee (now Futures Committee) to:
 - Examine the institution’s accomplishments to date
 - Review long-term financial sustainability
 - Determine the institution’s trajectory for growth and viability for additional investment
 - Examine the potential for further participation in the global sustainability
- The committee developed the “TWC Meta Strategy” as a blueprint for potential directions for TWC to pursue. The strategy is designed to:
 - Capitalize on the institution’s enormous achievements over its ten years

- Broaden the reach and mission of the organization to appeal to a wider group of donors and financial constituencies in order to ensure the organization's long-term viability.

Chris stated that fundraising and financial stability are core to the design of the meta strategy and shared a few of the findings of the committee:

- Futures Committee members were concerned with establishing a strong, sustainable financial position for the future when designing the meta strategy.
- Members wanted to reduce TWC's reliance on the annual fund's current donor pool by expanding funding sources.
- Building a substantial endowment has been put forward as a potential strategy to secure financial sustainability for the long-term.

Chris then reported that the meta strategy proposes reorganizing TWC under a new umbrella and expanding the brand. He said that reorganization is intended to create a more scalable organization and to expand the brand to broaden the appeal to a wider set of stakeholders. The reorganization creates four "pillars" of program delivery, with shared governance/leadership; administration and support structures; content, values, mission and relationships; and Adirondack sensibility and experience. Chris stated that the different meta strategy components will be tested and whether reorganization occurs will depend on the decisions made about brand identity and what work to pursue.

There was then some discussion regarding the possibility of reorganization and these are a few of the points that were brought up:

- Michael Bettmann – It seems like the basis of it all is TWC, it is the core/center/anchor of all that we do.
- Charlie Frenette – It would be a dangerous mistake to fragment TWC.
- Karen Thomas – It looks like we are being divided into four pieces, that is not who we are.

Chris then gave an overview of the work to date stating that as the first phase of their work, they interviewed Futures Committee members, staff and volunteers to understand what makes TWC unique, its strengths and challenges, and perspectives on the Meta Strategy. These were their overall takeaways:

- Staff, committee members and volunteers saw much opportunity for TWC to have an even larger impact in its next ten years.
- Committee members were concerned with TWC's financial sustainability, and were interested in setting a strategy that would put TWC on secure footing for the long-term.

- TWC's message on man and nature thriving together, as evidenced by the Adirondacks, was seen as a strength, but many thought TWC's identity could be more defined.
- TWC's entrepreneurial nature was seen as both a source of strength and a potential challenge.
- Most saw the current staff and programming as very strong.

Chris also shared the following takeaways on the Meta Strategy:

- Some questioned the need to reorganize under a new umbrella of an institute, as TWC's brand is strong, and it could pull attention away from the center's physical campus.
- The Meta Strategy was viewed as very ambitious, and likely to require more human resources.
- Pillars of the Meta Strategy:
 - Maintaining the campus and local relationships was seen as critical moving forward.
 - Convenings were viewed as a strength and place for future growth.
 - Many were unclear on what thought leadership might look like for TWC – others focused on peer-reviewed research as a potential avenue. Wellspring will look into that to help clarify what thought leadership actually is.
 - Many thought expanding distance offerings could help TWC stay current.

In addition to conducting interviews, internal programs and organizational and financial data were reviewed.

Once Chris shared Wellsprings findings, there was more discussion regarding those findings and these are some of the comments that were shared:

- Paul Alioto – It struck him that we are pulling things apart to see who we are and he agrees with this.
- Joe Beck – We need to bring TWC outside of the Blue Line to find new people to invest in us and love us.
- Gene Zeltmann – He attended a session recently regarding the demographics of the Blue Line and one of the topics was about it being imperative that we find ways to bring people to the Adirondacks and keeping them here. He also stated that TWC is one of the organizations that is new and puts a face on the Adirondacks and that we should be careful not to diminish our impact here.
- Stephanie Ratcliffe – It is important that we be comfortable with chaos in this process.
- Joe Beck – We need to be reborn and take joy in the mess of it all.

- Lynn Birdsong – Wild Walk was an eight year mess but we were pleasantly surprised with the outcome.
- Michael Bettmann – It is important to figure out what we have and define that it will be hard to move forward.
- Nancy Howard – We need to consider the people. What is the perspective of people after they return home from visiting the Adirondacks.

Chris stated that the Meta Strategy proposes an ambitious set of work that TWC could undertake in the future. He said that in our next phase of work, we will learn from other organizations through research and interviews to inform TWC's future direction. Chris then asked Board members to split up into break-out groups of three to and choose five organizations from whom TWC can learn. Each group should select a representative to present their ideas and then all would come together at the end as a full group to report out and discuss ideas.

Group Report Outs

- Joe Beck – TED talks, Google Science fair
- Karen Thomas – TED talks, Brooklyn Museum of Art – all about building community
- Charlie Frenette – Tesla – carbonless transportation – batteries for homes, taking the magic of physics to do things for the environment. Water – one of the genesis of the Adirondack Park was NYC.
- Betsy Lowe – ASTC – Would be amazing for Board members to attend a meeting. Stewart's – Demographics, visitors to the Park.
- Jack Ryder – Cabela's – Licenses are down but opening stores and thriving. Netflix – How are theaters surviving in the digital age. Libraries/YMCA – Brick and Mortar. Religious Organizations – lots are declining but some doing very well.
- Lynn Birdsong – Bohemian Foundation – Pat Stryker – Focused on community health, music activities, etc. All about sustainable practices.
- George Cigale – Online communities – fan fiction.
- Michael Bettmann – AMNH – Struggling in different ways. The Nature Conservancy – Trying to change their focus to international. Barr Foundation – Focused in Boston. Phillips Collection – Very successful in Washington, DC.

Lynn Birdsong then took a moment to thank Chris and Mali and the committee for all of their hard work to date. He also reported that this would be Connie Ferguson's last meeting and thanked her for her wonderful service to the Board. Stephanie stated that Connie will be helping to connect us with other places to do more Youth Climate Summits. Connie stated that she had never had so much fun with such a great Board and that the Wild Center is an extraordinary place.

IV. Financial Report

Discussion: Bob Kronenberger went over the monthly financial dashboard showing results through August 2015. He also shared current operating data through August, sharing the following information:

- Overall visitors were up 179% through September.
- Overall operating support and revenues for August YTD are 41% (or \$975k) above budget and 80% more than 2014.
- Admission revenues are 125% over budget and 3.5x 2014 admissions. Actual Aug YTD attendance is up 163% from last year (and paid attendance is up 187%)
- Contributions are \$41k over budget and \$61k ahead of last year through Aug. Board Designated Endowment support includes draw of \$142k and campaign support of \$160k.
- Membership revenues are 137% above budget and 148% above last year.
- Store and café revenues are 50% and 104% above budget, respectively. Store operating results are \$84k better than budget and café operating results are \$54k better. The combined results are \$142k better than last year.
- Actual YTD expenses are \$53k over budget and \$453k more than last year. Without special staff recognition payments YTD expenses are actually \$79k under budget. This is primarily deferred maintenance which began in September and unspent marketing budget funds.
- Operating results through August of this year reflect a surplus of \$756k compared to a deficit of \$294k last year.
- Attendance through August is 122k (more than 2.5x last year) resulting in tremendous growth in operating revenues.
- Admissions and membership revenues are up \$1,135k.
- Net store and café revenues are up \$163k.
- At the end of September, Board Designated Endowment funds were \$4,033,000 vs. \$4,529,000 a year ago. The reduction includes funding 2014/2013 deficits of \$461k.

Bob also reported that there were now a little over 6,000 in memberships which is double what we had last year. He also stated that the Wild Walk project was complete and on budget and that the construction loan had been converted to a term loan with interest fixed for five years at 4.01%. Our line of credit was also back to zero with a \$500,000 line of credit. Joe Beck suggested bumping our line of credit to \$600,000 as it doesn't cost anything. Bob was going to look into that.

Bob also reported that we had applied for our \$1 million grant to collect the payment and that it was currently being reviewed in New York City and that we

also had two more grants in process with them. He also reported that we had made the decision to stop the \$20,000 per month draw from Board designated funds for campaign expenses and to fund them out of operations. Lynn Birdsong stated that we had taken all of this out of our own money but we shouldn't assume that we are in great financial shape. If we don't make our Annual Fund contribution budget we will be filling in from somewhere else and that we need to continue to use discipline in our spending. Stephanie Ratcliffe took a moment to thank the Board for the risks that they took and Lynn Birdsong stated that we wouldn't be here without Board support. Joe Beck stated that we needed to switch our attention to find ways to hold onto our increased attendance so that we can get a decent return for the next few years.

VII. Development and Campaign Report

Discussion: Karen Thomas began by stating that at the close of the campaign there are three things that we need to accomplish:

- Raise \$580,000 for Annual Fund this year
- Fully fund Wild Walk
- Have a celebration and hopefully have enough left over to fund the endowment.

Karen stated that the gala in New York City is our opportunity to go outside of the Blue Line and a great way to bring new people on board. Hillarie stated that we have work to do before the end of the year and that her team is reaching out to people and that a personal touch is very important. She said that staff and Board members are making calls and that helps to increase giving. She stated that total commitments to date are at \$1,553,465 and that they are reaching out to all the new members to solicit gifts.

Hillarie also reported on a new program called Animal Champions which is a one time gift to feed an animal for a week. Her department hopes that it will have some social media appeal and that people can give these as a gift, etc.

Charlie Frenette stated that he had heard a lot about TWC's economic impact on the Village of Tupper Lake but expressed surprise at the lack of groundswell support provided by Tupper Lake businesses and residents as a result of our successful summer. He thought it might be a good idea to reach out to the community to help gain support from businesses. Hillarie mentioned that we had never provided a business membership before and that now might be a great time to revisit that. She said that Tim Holmes and Patrick Murphy had been working on a strategy for that. Stephanie stated that we are working on ways to measure our impact on the community. There was also a brief discussion regarding membership renewal and attrition. Hillarie stated that we need to get more people, especially new members to renew another year and also identify who might have the potential to be a higher level donor. Paul Alioto asked how,

if at all, we can use predictive analytics to see who has potential. Hillarie stated that it is done every couple of years and that it takes a lot of time to run through all of the data.

10th Anniversary Gala

Gala Co-chair Nancy Simpkins shared the following facts about the upcoming 10th Anniversary Gala:

- Asked all in attendance if they had received a save the date for the event.
- Hired New Yorker Magazine cover artist, Eric Drooker, to commission a piece of art to commemorate the event. They hope to sell the original the night of the event.
- The committee has reserved a block of 15 rooms at the Metropolitan Club at the rate of \$250/night, if you want a room reserve it now. The block is good for Sunday night and Monday night.
- The committee has been working hard, meeting weekly by phone.
- They have also been working on sponsorship packages.
- The committee could use the help of everyone on the Board to secure sponsorship commitments.

The majority of the work should be done by November and there will be lots of opportunities for Board members to get involved.

Nancy thanked Karen Thomas for taking on the planning of the commemorative book and mentioned that if anyone would like to help with that they should get in touch with Karen directly. She also mentioned that she needed someone to take on decorations and that they should see her about that. When Nancy finished her report Lynn Birdsong took a moment to thank the committee for all of their hard work to date.

Stephanie then took a few minutes to update Board members on a few things:

- Rich Malloch had been in a bicycle accident recently but was recovering nicely.
- Senator Schumer visited The Wild Center.
- Hillarie Logan-Dechene had been chosen by Governor Cuomo to become Chair of the New York State Committee on Community Service.
- Maple gift boxes would be available again this year for sale and people should get their orders in for that.
- Youth Climate Summit is coming soon, Stephanie handed out a flyer with some updates on that. Jen Kretser has been traveling extensively recently in the name of the same visiting Seattle, Paris, Vermont, Houston, Miami, etc. She had also been recognized by The White House. Karen Thomas has generously given to help us continue this great work. There will be a contingency traveling to the COP21 Summit in Paris at the end of November that will include Stephanie Ratcliffe, Jen Kretser, Karen Thomas and Sally Hart among other locals.

XIV. Executive Session

There was a brief executive session and the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.

XV. Upcoming 2015 Meeting Dates

Tuesday, January 26, 2016 (NYC)

Monday, April 11, 2016 (NYC)

Friday, July 1, 2016 (TWC)

Friday, October 7, 2016 (TWC)