



The Wild Center Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 17th, 2023 - 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

The Penn Club, New York, NY & Virtual Zoom Meeting

Board of Trustees in Attendance: Karen Thomas, Chair, Ginny Valkenburgh, Secretary, **Virtual:** Linda Rosenstock, Vice Chair, Joseph Beck, Treasurer

Terry Birdsong, George Cigale, Larry Clifford, Ed Forbes, Sally Hart, Nicky Hylton-Patterson, Ben Ireland, Meadow Hackett Rutenbar, Jack Ryder. **Virtual:** Paul Alioto, Lee Bailey, Kathleen Colson, David Fadden, Charles Frenette, Richard Godin, Robin Gosnell, Nancy Howard, Elizabeth Lowe, Paul Maroun, Brooks Reynolds, Charles Svenson, Joel Treisman

Advisory Board in Attendance: Allison Birdsong, MaryBeth Reiss **Virtual:** Martha Bullock, Emily-Hunt Forbes, Lynn Fox, Stan Rumbough

Emeritus Trustees in Attendance: Lynn Birdsong, Nancy Simpkins

Staff in Attendance: Stephanie Ratcliffe, Executive Director, Hillarie Logan-Dechene, Deputy Director, Robert Kronenberger, Director of Finance, Robin Ellis, Sara Paula, **Virtual:** Ruth Burnell

Board absent

Board of Trustees: Michael Bettmann, Michael Hunsinger, Pamela Matt

Emeritus Trustee: G. Thomas Aydelotte, Peter Kindler

Advisory Board: David Jones, Sarah Bogdanovitch, Michael Phinney, Anna Sommer

Trustee Chair, Karen Thomas called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM.

Administration - Karen Thomas and Stephanie Ratcliffe began with **approval of January Minutes**

- K. Thomas asked for a motion to approve the January 30, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes
- Motion moved by C. Svenson and seconded by E. Forbes.
- January 30, 2023 minutes unanimously approved.

In her **Chair's Report**, K. Thomas thanks the Board for their ongoing strategic planning work, and noted that we will begin planning for The Wild Center's upcoming capital campaign. She noted that there continues to be several simultaneous work streams building on the endorsement of the strategic document of the last two board meetings. J. Treisman and M. Rutenbar are helping TWC refine and extend our strategic thinking, and J. Treisman will lead a discussion about appreciative inquiry as a process to inform our Board work. She encouraged board members to attend a Board University

Session on campaigns later this month. Karen noted that at the Summer Board meeting (June 30), the board will have the opportunity to see cost estimates and prioritized projects and that we hope to enter the first phase of community listening and feasibility this year.

Stephanie Ratcliffe offered her **Executive Director's Report**. She noted that:

- TWC received second place in the US Today Top 10 Best Science Museums competition.
- Jen Krester, Director of Climate Initiative is collaborating with Yale and was featured on the Yale Climate NPR Radio show. The story of our program reached a nationwide and international audience.
<https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2023/03/annual-climate-summit-empowers-new-york-students/>
- Jen also participated in a one-hour webinar with Yale on how museums engage audiences on climate change. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=cYESEUqfHC0>
- An 2023 award of distinction was received for design from the Museum Association of New York (MANY) for the Solutions exhibition.
- TWC was recognized by the American Climate Leadership Awards as a Top 10 finalist. It included a \$10,000 prize.
- We have a family of Ravens on Wild Walk. View the nest live at:
<https://www.wildcenter.org/visit/livecams/ravens/>

Strategic Framework - K. Thomas, S. Ratcliffe and H. Logan-Dechene then reviewed the Strategic Framework draft.

Karen and Stephanie reviewed Part One, the Executive Summary which had been circulated prior to the meeting and Hillarie then reviewed the operational aspects of Part Two. This dynamic and internal document can be found on the Board Library at <https://www.wildcenter.org/board/>

Password: [twcboard06](#)

Finance – Joe Beck, Chair of the Finance Committee, Paul Alioto, Chair of the Audit Committee and Bob Kronenberger then offered the Finance Committee report, and presented the audit for approval. B. Kronenberger reviewed audit report highlights and the statements of financial position.

P. Alioto noted that he was pleased to report another flawless presentation of our financial statements and an absolutely perfect audit. There were no difficulties in conducting the audit. The accountants found no misstatements. There were no disagreements with management. All of our books fairly presented the financial position of The Wild Center.

Audit Approval:

- K. Thomas asked for a motion to approve the 2022 Audit.
- L. Fox made the motion, and L. Rosenstock seconded.
- Motion was approved unanimously.

Committee on Trustees - Terry Birdsong, COT Chair reported on her committee's work. She reminded committees of their task to refresh charters in light of our DEIA work and any changing scope. All updated Charters will be posted on the online Boards Library.

T. Birdsong noted that diversity consultant Ellen Bettmann will be continuing her work with the board and offering a special session on updating their charters for all committee chairs and other interested board members on **Wednesday, May 10th, from 1 to 2 pm.**

Stephanie was asked by DEIA Committee Co-chairs to work with John Brown Farm to plan another site visit and program again. She is currently solidifying details. S. Hart endorsed the past programs with John Brown Farm and encouraged participation in this summer's program.

Development - Lee Bailey and Charlie Svenson then offered a report from the Development Committee. Hillarie provided information and requests for assistance with the following initiatives:

- **Take Five Program**- please reach out to Hillarie if you would like to participate or expand your list. She presented a list of stewardship opportunities this season.
- **Membership and Business Partnership** -Membership is trending positively and with assistance from Trustee Brooks Reynolds, we are launching a new business membership and sponsorship opportunities..
- **Business Partnership Kick-Off Event**- Board members are invited to and encouraged to invite local businesses to the launch event of the new Business Partnership, The Forest launch party planned for **Thursday, May 11th from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.**
- **Volunteer Program Reboot** - a reboot of the refocused volunteer program is underway, led by R.Burnell.

L. Bailey and C. Svenson then invited Hillarie to quickly review the elements of a Capital Campaign. A full **Capital Campaign Board University Session** will be held by Zoom on **Thursday, May 25th, from 1:30 to 2:30 PM.** All Trustees and AB members are encouraged to attend.

Programming and Marketing Overview - Hillarie Logan-Dechene, Stephanie Ratcliffe

Hillarie then reviewed programming highlights for the season, including the two new features: Birdly and the movie Backyard Wilderness, both had been postponed due to the pandemic.

Hillarie then presented a video marketing update prepared by Marketing Director Nick Gunn. This report is available on the Board Web Library. In the video report, Nick noted Key Marketing Goals:

- Increase attendance year over year by attracting new and repeat visitors and growing shoulder seasons.
- Solidify overarching creative strategy that allows for segmentation and maximizes effectiveness of customer research.

Additionally, Nick touched on Marketing Objectives, including:

- Creative messaging
- Target Audiences

- Visitor research
- Build upon the growth of Wild Lights
- Develop on-site “tours” that will lead to repeat visitation

Nick's report also included overall marketing learnings from the past year:

- Focused on quality over quantity: reach and impressions slightly down, but engagement up
- Overestimated the appetite for higher quality organic content
- Spent more money, but got fewer impressions
- Marketing Strategies and Tactics
- The strategies and tactics are based on focusing on Digital Marketing, Public Relations, Traditional Marketing, Creative Development and Organic Social Media.

Trail planning status - S. Ratcliffe offered an update on the new trail project, funded by the Kindler's generous gift. She shared a video that shows a model for a new interactive: a wooden ball trail that is planned to be a part of the new trails and offered a trail project update. <https://vimeo.com/803485613/fb17342530>

Karen then invited Trustee Joel Treisman to lead a **Generative Discussion** related to our ongoing strategic planning and work. J. Treisman offered a high level overview of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). The Board was excited about this positive and innovative planning strategy and will keep working on it.

The meeting adjourned at 4:57 PM and Trustees convened an **Executive Session** until 5:30 PM.