



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD MEETING
556 W. Maple
Thursday, November 7, 2024
5:00 PM**

Members Present: Bev Erickson, Alexandra Harris, Marty Logue, Pat Hughes
(left at 6:01 PM), Judith Keefer
Members Absent: Mike Abelson, Kristy Barrett (Alternate), Eva Kirkman,
Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM by Chairperson Logue.

**Approval of the Minutes
Minutes of September 5, 2024**

MOTION: by Keefer, seconded by Logue:

To approve the minutes of September 5, 2024.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0

New Business

Members reviewed the proposed schedule for 2025 with changes in July and October due to holiday conflicts.

MOTION: by Harris, seconded by Hughes:

To approve the Museum Board Meeting Schedule for 2025.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0

Museum Director Pielack gave a brief introduction to the museum's Indigenous exhibit in the lobby, and how the museum is interpreting its Indigenous stone tools and Paleolithic artifacts. Because non-native visitors lack exposure to contemporary Indigenous culture, the display integrates past tradition with present tribal culture as it relates to some of the Anishnaabe-made items in the museum's collection. The museum also has tried to clarify its limitations in interpreting artifacts that were donated without context. Museum Director Pielack will include a brief presentation on a different aspect of the transportation exhibit at the beginning of each meeting to help acquaint the board with some of its uniquely Birmingham stories.

Members reviewed the revised Process and Timeline for the strategic plan and agreed by consensus with the proposed timeline. This would mean that

- in December and January, board members would review the status of existing strategic plan objectives and accomplishments (with data/metrics on audience reach and activity)
- will review City objectives in Sustainability Plan and Aging in Place Action Plan
- will review/modify vision, mission, and direction for the new plan

By February, the Museum Board will be looking at defining audiences and developing feedback process for integration into a final document later in the summer.

The board reviewed the readings in the agenda and raised the following issues:

- The question about greater **diversity on the board** being desirable but the board currently represents the community's demographics fairly well with the exception of age. We have one member who is a millennial, but the average board member age is older than the average age of Birmingham residents (42). Should the Museum Board actively recruit to better balance the board representation? (TBD)
- Discussion about **how the pandemic has changed audiences**; older people seem to still not be fully recovered in terms of their sense of safety, activity, and volunteerism; school-aged children learn differently and can be screen-dependent, making physical tours, contact with museum staff, and focus especially important. Technology is a key to remaining flexible, but Meanwhile, the museum was able to use the pandemic to revise, refresh, and become more dynamic with a committed and creative professional staff. This is not the case for many community museums, which have not adapted or changed their traditional approach. Some under-resourced local history museums have begun to seek ideas, tips, and guidance from the Birmingham Museum, and we have enjoyed collaborating with them. Should the museum have objectives that include collaborating with other museums? (TBD)
- Discussion about the **emerging role of museums as agents of support for community elders** through memory-strengthening programming that connects people with a community's past and engagement with each other, and the possibility of incorporating specific objectives focusing on the particular needs of seniors in addition to school children (TBD)
- Brief discussion of Artificial Intelligence and the City's guidelines. Generative AI is a type of AI like ChatGPT or Bing Pilot that takes a mixture of facts and creates a story or narrative about them, which can contain massive errors called 'hallucinations' that can confuse real facts and history for audiences. Therefore, the City, and especially the museum, will not be using generative AI.
- Other discussion reinforced the positive role and acceptance of the museum and that it is visible and valuable to the community. Successful application for grants and other financial support, awards, and other recognition have helped the museum steadily work toward improvements such as the landscape work. Having a plan and working in steps has been effective. Should the Museum Board use the strategic plan to identify and work toward more active fundraising? (TBD)

Communication and Reports

Museum Director Pielack provided updates to the October and November Director Reports, highlighting the new Museum Assistant, the transportation-related lectures at the Baldwin Public Library. She provided updates about where the museum is in the process of

developing the RFP for the CDBG Phase 3 Landscape Improvements (boardwalk and limestone path along pond). She also shared the cost estimates for Phase 3 and Phase 4 (brick patio, continuation of path, and overlook of the Rouge River). Phase 4 will hopefully also include federal funding but will likely not be planned until FY 2025-2026 or even 2026-2027.

Member Comments

Ms. Logue provided a brief summary of the Friends' recent board meeting and the Friends' interest in seeking a Museum Board member to join them, as they have one board opening.

Public Comments

None.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 5, 2024, at 5:00 PM.

Ms. Logue adjourned the meeting at 6:36 PM.