



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM  
MUSEUM BOARD AGENDA  
556 W MAPLE  
Thursday, February 6, 2025  
5:00 PM**

**Mission Statement:** The Birmingham Museum will explore meaningful connections with our past, in order to enrich our community and enhance its character and sustainability. Our mission is to promote understanding of Birmingham's historical and cultural legacy through preservation and interpretation of its ongoing story.

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Roll Call**

**3. Approval of the Minutes**

A. Minutes of January 2, 2024

**4. New Business**

A. Guest Round Table/Input: Museum Strategic Plan-Library, Next, Parks, Planning

**5. Unfinished Business**

A. Museum Board "What's Your Story?" Oral History Project-Proposed Guidelines

B. Strategic Plan

- Worksheet, strategic plan final priorities
- Brief review-working goals and objectives

**6. Communication and Reports**

A. Director Report

B. Member comments

C. Public comments

**7. Next Meeting: March 6, 2025**

**8. Adjournment**

NOTICE: Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodations for effective participation in this meeting should contact the city clerk's office at (248) 530-1880 (voice), or (248) 644-3405 (TDD) at least one day in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance. *APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MUSEUM BOARD MEETINGS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE CITY CLERK'S OFFICE AND ON THE CITY WEBSITE AT [www.bhamgov.org](http://www.bhamgov.org).* City of Birmingham, 151 Martin, Birmingham, MI 48009; 248.530.1800. Persons with disabilities that may require assistance for effective participation in this public meeting should contact the City Clerk's Office at the number (248) 530-1880, or (248) 644-5115 (for the hearing impaired) at least one day before the meeting to request help in mobility, visual, hearing, or other assistance.

*Las personas con incapacidad que requieren algún tipo de ayuda para la participación en esta sesión pública deben ponerse en contacto con la oficina del escribano de la ciudad en el número (248) 530-1800 o al (248) 644-5115 (para las personas con incapacidad auditiva) por lo menos un día antes de la reunión para solicitar ayuda a la movilidad, visual, auditiva, o de otras asistencias. (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).*



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM  
MUSEUM BOARD MEETING  
556 W. Maple  
Thursday, January 2, 2025  
5:00 PM**

Members Present: Mike Abelson, Kristy Barrett (Alternate) Alexandra Harris,  
Marty Logue, Judith Keefer  
Members Absent: Bev Erickson, Pat Hughes Eva Kirkman  
Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack  
Museum Assistant Chelsea Hunter

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

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

**MOTION:** by Keefer, seconded by Abelson:

To approve the minutes of December 5, 2024.

**VOTE:** Yeas, 5  
Nays, 0

**New Business**

Members all confirmed that they would like to pursue the idea of a board-led oral history project. Details will be determined at an upcoming meeting. "What's Your Story?" is the proposed title for the project.

Members also agreed that bringing in City department heads from Planning and the Library, and Next Director Cris Braun at the February meeting would be valuable in the museum's strategic planning process.

Members reviewed the strategic planning materials and whether to develop a values statement for the museum. Board consensus was to skip the values statement, and in reviewing the existing mission statement, members decided it continues to represent the museum's mission very well and needed no revision.

**MOTION:** by Logue, seconded by Barrett:

To continue to use the current mission statement for the Birmingham Museum.

**VOTE:** Yeas, 5  
Nays, 0

Members also reviewed proposed priorities to the goals of the museum's strategic plan. Three priority concepts emerged from the discussion by consensus agreement, to be further refined at the February meeting:

1. Maintain and enhance professional standards, ethics, and best practices to preserve and maintain information and the collection in the public trust
2. Use the museum to achieve greater equity and inclusion through humanizing history and its interpretation to benefit the community
3. Establish and strengthen relationships within and outside the community to build collaborative approaches to enhance the museum's collection and influence

The museum's current budget, data on visitation (physical and virtual), and social media reach was reviewed and discussed. Questions about how the museum budget is planned and detail about personnel and projections were addressed. This provides context for the interaction between the museum's strategic plan and the City's municipal goals and related objectives for the museum.

### **Communication and Reports**

Museum Director Pielack provided a verbal Director's report with updates on the ceiling project and City's Long Range Planning.

### **Member Comments**

Ms. Harris commented that she thought a lot was accomplished in the meeting today. Ms. Logue corrected the dates of our next meeting which were inaccurate on the agenda.

### **Public Comments**

None.

**The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 6, 2025, at 5:00 PM.**

Ms. Logue adjourned the meeting at 6:25 PM.

## Guidelines for Museum Board Oral History/Memory Conversation Project "What's Your Story?"

**Purpose of project:** enhance the museum's oral history collection with additional material gathered informally through contact with Museum Board members' friends and neighbors in Birmingham. Informal oral history conversational recordings are a way to capture memories, experiences, and the subject person's communication style in a free-flowing manner. Guidelines will help maintain consistency and keep the conversation as natural as possible. This project is designed as an audio-only oral history project.

**Suggested length and setting:** up to about an hour of conversation in a quiet, comfortable environment.

**Project timeframe:** TBD; can be coordinated with America's 250th

**Participants:** Anyone with a personal story to share about Birmingham or its history. They do not have to be a senior, but seniors would be ideal participants.

### **Requirements:**

- Cell phone (audio only) on speakerphone. For best audio, place horizontally on a smooth solid surface (could be a book) equidistant between you and the subject person. Use the audio settings you already use for your phone on speaker.
- Consent form/s-signed before you begin. One copy for the participant, one for you to return to the museum.
- Comfortable and quiet setting for conversation-preferably at home
- Keep the interview under an hour. You can always go back for more.
- If you like, the Movie Maker app on your phone or computer can be used to clean up the recording before sending it to the museum.

### **Advance preparation:**

- Discuss in advance and schedule a mutually agreeable meeting time in a quiet, comfortable place.
- Invite the participant to bring any special photos or memorabilia that they may want to discuss.
- Explain why the Museum Board created the project and how the information will be used.
- Explain in advance that a signed informed consent form with the Birmingham Museum will be required.

### **Procedure when recording:**

- Before beginning, review the consent form and ask them to sign. If they brought any photos or memorabilia, use your phone to snap pictures of the items for reference. If the participant agrees, take a photo of them for the record.
- When you begin recording, state your name, the date, time and place, the person you are speaking with, and that it is for the Birmingham Museum Board 'What's Your Story?' oral history project.

### **Dos—**

- Let the person talk; give them time. Silent moments are fine while they are thinking.
- Use 'how' 'who' 'what' 'when' 'where' questions to help open up the discussion. **Avoid 'why' questions** because they tend to put the person on the spot or interrupt the flow of conversation. They can come across as judgmental.
- Use active listening (repeating back a version of what they just said), if you are unclear about a point they are trying to make

### **Don'ts—**

- Interrupt or hurry the participant. (Edits, silences, etc. can always be edited out later if need be)
- Converse, and share some personal things if you want, but don't dominate the discussion.
- Avoid getting into a 'question and answer' rhythm. Use phrases like, 'say more about that,' or make a statement like, 'that must have been so interesting/scary/fun/exciting...' etc.



ORAL HISTORY DEED OF GIFT and INFORMED CONSENT  
**"What's Your Story?" Oral History Project**

- You will be participating in an audio-recorded interview as part of an oral history project called **"What's Your Story?"** Your participation is voluntary. The purpose of the project is to create audio recordings of informal conversations about your past experiences in and around Birmingham.
- To preserve your story, you will be audio recorded via cell phone. The recording will include your name, the interviewer's name, the date, and your general location for documentary purposes. A photograph snapshot of you at the beginning of the recording is optional.
- Any written transcript of this audio recording will also include this information, but personal data such as your address, phone number, and/or email address will not be made public. You will not receive payment for participation in this oral history project, but you will receive a copy of the digital recording if you wish.
- Upon signing the **Deed of Gift** (see below) and completion of the interview, the digital recording and content of the interview will belong to the Birmingham Museum, and can be used by the Birmingham Museum in any manner, including, but not limited to, use by researchers in presentations and publications.
- At the conclusion of this project, the digital recording/s and any transcriptions thereof will be deposited in the digital archives collection of the Birmingham Museum.

**In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this oral history project. I will be provided a copy of this informed consent for my records.**

Participant signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**DEED of GIFT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give to the Birmingham Museum the audio recordings of interview/s conducted with me on \_\_\_\_\_ (date), and I grant to the Birmingham Museum all the rights I possess in those recordings, including all intellectual property rights. I give, transfer and assign to the Birmingham Museum all right, title and interests, including all copyright, trademark and related interests, in, to and associated with the oral history recordings described above. I understand that at my request, the Birmingham Museum will make a digital copy of those recordings available to me for my nonexclusive use.

Accepted by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Representative, Birmingham Museum

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

## Proposed Priorities/Goals Worksheet for 2025 Strategic Plan

DEFINITIONS: The following definitions are used in this document:

Priorities: incorporate the values and general direction in the plan for the use of the museum's resources.

Goals: state where the museum will focus its energies over a particular timeframe and can be viewed objectively. They can be short or long term in nature and are not necessarily directly measurable, but are derived from the museum's priorities.

Objectives: Objectives are shorter-term milestones that support individual goals. Each goal has several tangible objectives that will move the museum toward reaching that goal. Objectives are concrete, measurable and focused on results.

Tasks/Strategies: Specific actions or steps that lead to the accomplishment of the objectives. They are action-oriented, short-term, and include specific "what, by when and by whom," components.

### **Museum Strategic Plan Priorities for 2025 Strategic Plan**

#### **1. Maintain professional standards, ethics, and best practices for long-term preservation and care of the museum collection in the public trust.**

*Working Goal: Maintain, preserve, and enhance the museum's collection of artifacts, archives, digital content and buildings to provide greater public access in accordance with established professional museum practice.*

*Possible Alternative Goal:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Working Objectives:

- Improve museum collection's storage organization and environmental controls to protect and preserve the collection
- Improve efficiency, accuracy, and accessibility of collection object records and documentation
- Implement collections-related policies and procedures for collections management for its buildings, grounds, physical and digital materials
- Provide increased access through virtual exhibits, online materials, and digital access
- Seek opportunities to enhance inclusivity of the collection
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Use the museum and its collection to achieve greater equity and inclusion and to humanize history for the benefit of the community.**

*Working Goal: Utilize approaches that engage a broad community and encourage empathy and understanding of our diverse cultural and personal experience*

*Possible Alternative Goal:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Working Objectives:

- Develop exhibits and interpretive materials that facilitate engagement, relevance, and inclusion and offer multiple perspectives
- Utilize specialized outreach programs and presentations in off-site settings
- Explore opportunities to enhance and expand virtual reach
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Establish and strengthen collaborative relationships in the community to implement the museum’s mission.**

*Working Goal: Increase the museum’s sphere of influence and provide mutually beneficial outcomes for community partnerships*

Objectives:

- Develop programs and projects that integrate the museum’s strategic priorities within the City’s internal and public-focused functions and services
- Seek partnerships with local institutions that are aligned with the museum’s mission
- Provide leadership to area organizations in developing and promoting public history content
- \_\_\_\_\_



## Director Report

---

**DATE:** February 6, 2024  
**TO:** Museum Board  
**FROM:** Leslie Pielack, Museum Director  
**SUBJECT:** Director Report

---

Long Range Planning and Budget 2025-2026—The LRP public hearing took place on 1/25. Museum priorities for the year are implementation of Phase 3 and 4 of the landscape master plan (pond area) and interdepartmental planning for America’s 250<sup>th</sup>. Budget review with city manager-update.

Allen House Ceiling Repair—Has been completed and will be painted in mid-February. The contractors did a good job and the project came in under budget. Our visiting patrons were very understanding about the museum being unavailable

Allen House and Hunter House Fence Replacement—The picket fence running along the front of the Allen and Hunter Houses will be replaced with a longer-lived vinyl and composite wood combined fencing this spring.

A wood picket fence has been in place along the front of the property since 2001, when the museum was established. It helps divide the property from the public sidewalk as well as project a historic appearance and connect the two buildings with the plaza. However, a wood picket fence is expensive to maintain, and its shabby appearance is difficult to avoid. A new vinyl picket fence will accomplish all the goals of the wood fence at a lower initial cost and with annual cleaning should look good for a dozen years or more before possibly needing upgrading.

CDBG-funded Pond Phase 3—Awaiting final engineering specifications for the permit submittal to EGLE. We can’t go out to bid on Phase 3 (boardwalk, retaining wall, and path to south end of pond) until we know if EGLE will approve. This is because we are working in a wetlands area. Funds are in the budget to complete during FY 2024-25, but will be carried over into the next budget year if need be.

Programs and presentations—Our lecture series at the Baldwin Library will continue in February and March before our summer hiatus. In February, Museum Assistant Chelsea Hunter will join Museum Director Leslie Pielack in a presentation about the history of Birmingham’s neighborhoods, and in March, Caitlin Donnelly will be presenting a talk about the long history of racing on Woodward—including the period before automobiles. We are also providing ongoing presentations on local Underground Railroad history in various settings.

America’s 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary—the museum will be working with other city departments as well as within our own mission to take advantage of the American Association of State and Local History’s nationwide semiquincentennial initiative. The initiative is designed to support and encourage community-based activities that connect with the theme of American history. The content is not limited to the Revolutionary War period, but relates to our American story over the past 2½ centuries.

Friends of the Birmingham Museum—the Friends was awarded a grant for \$1,830 from the Historical Society of Michigan’s History Alliance of Michigan grant program. The Friends requested the funds to cover the cost of printing a second set of six panels for the Underground Railroad in Oakland County traveling exhibit being led by the museum. The original set has already been seen by over 60,000 people around Oakland County.