



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD AGENDA
556 W MAPLE
Thursday, March 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 February 6, 2024

4. New Business

5. Unfinished Business

A. Museum Board "What's Your Story?" Oral History Project-Demonstration/Practice

B. Strategic Plan

- Working goals and objectives

6. Communication and Reports

A. Director Report

B. Member comments

C. Public comments

7. Next Meeting: April 3, 2025

8. Adjournment

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**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD MEETING
556 W. Maple
Thursday, February 6, 2025
5:00 PM**

Members Present: Mike Abelson, Kristy Barrett (Alternate) Bev Erickson (left at 6:06 PM), Pat Hughes, Eva Kirkman Marty Logue
Members Absent: Alexandra Harris, Judith Keefer
Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack
Guests: Rebekah Craft, Library Director; Nick Dupuis, Planning Director (left at 5:45 PM); Jenny Roush, Historic District Study Committee

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 PM by Chairperson Logue.

**Approval of the Minutes
Minutes of January 2, 2025**

MOTION: by Abelson, seconded by Logue:

To approve the minutes of January 2, 2025.

VOTE: Yeas, 6
Nays, 0

New Business

Mr. Dupuis and Ms. Craft each shared some of the initiatives within their departments that would potentially benefit from a collaborative approach with the museum and could be considered in discussions about the museum's strategic plan going forward.

- Mr. Dupuis emphasized the City's Historic Preservation Master Plan, which is in process and will be presented to the public for feedback in the next few months. The museum will be included in stakeholder meetings for specific feedback.
- He stated that the museum has a role to play in the education component and in reviews and research on historic resources that are part of the HPMP.
- He also mentioned the Sustainability Plan in regards to museum facilities sustainability and balance with efficient use of resources.
- Finally, he mentioned the City's 2040 Plan and its focus on preserving neighborhood character and the support the museum can give those efforts.

Library Director Craft mentioned that now that their building renovations are complete, they are turning their attention to programming and outreach, and she suggested several ways the museum can work with the library to accomplish mutual goals:

- She mentioned a special event tour of Wallace Frost homes ending at the library's new atrium would potentially raise funds and awareness of the historic preservation plan, local historic resources, and the museum

- She would like to see the museum’s lecture series go from 6 per year to monthly (except December)
- Reinstating the BCTV video recording of the lectures rather than Zoom recordings
- Working with the museum on programming for younger children, especially underrepresented populations, such as Story Time in the Hunter House and coordinated programs of hands on activities with museum objects and/or specialty tours behind the scenes
- The Library building will be turning 100 in 2027 and the library would like to work with the museum to help with the history and celebration of the anniversary
- A project to digitize the Eccentric and make it available online (perhaps at the museum’s website) would be of great interest to Baldwin patrons and the community in general. The project is very labor intensive and contract costs to have it done are extremely expensive. The library is purchasing a special scanner and would like to collaborate with the museum to work through available Eccentric issues on a prioritized basis to digitize and make them searchable and then provide public access.

Parks Manager Carrie Laird was unable to be present but sent her remarks via email (see attached). In general, she commented on the intersection of the Parks plan for the Rouge Trail system and the benefits of working with the museum to coordinate those projects. She also is supportive of plans to use QR codes and non-intrusive interpretation to help visitors learn about and enjoy the Rouge Trail and parks history.

Members commented on the advantages of collaborating with other City departments and learning more about their projects and objectives, and as it is one of our stated Strategic Plan priorities, these efforts coincide with our anticipated direction. Digitization is a key way that the museum can help tell Birmingham’s story, especially with regard to the Eccentric newspaper and our community’s high level of interest in its content. The Aging in Place Action Plan is important for our community in many ways and would be important for future collaboration projects and programs.

Unfinished Business

Board members reviewed the proposed guidelines for the ‘What’s Your Story?’ Oral History Project. The consensus was that the intent was not to try to direct the narrative of the person being recorded, but to help them tell the story they want to tell so it can be recorded and preserved. Suggestions about active listening and conversation starters were discussed. The board agreed that a more in-depth discussion would be important and that it should be revisited on the March agenda.

Members reviewed the strategic planning priorities for final wording and agreed on the following:

- 1. Observe professional standards, ethics, and best practices for long-term preservation and care of the museum collection in the public trust.**
- 2. Use the museum and its collection to encourage greater equity and inclusion and to humanize history for the benefit of the community.**

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

MOTION: by Hughes, seconded by Barrett:

To approve the strategic plan priorities for the museum as stated.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0

Members will continue the discussion of working goals, objectives and tasks for the strategic plan at the March meeting.

Communication and Reports

Director's report: Ms. Logue commented that she appreciated that a new fence is planned in the next few weeks. Mr. Ableson expressed his regret that a wood fence cannot be effectively maintained at our site, but indicated the proposed vinyl fence is a necessary compromise.

Member Comments

Ms. Barrett expressed her interest in having guests from various city departments at Museum Board meetings to discuss what is happening in their departments.

Public Comments

Ms. Roush enjoyed participating in the meeting and mentioned that another way to collaborate might be through volunteer programs.

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

Ms. Logue adjourned the meeting at 6:32 PM.

Practice/Tips Museum Board Oral History/Memory Conversation Project, "What's Your Story?"

Conversation starters

We were recently talking about _____. I find that fascinating. Could you tell me more about it?

There are so many interesting things that you remember about Birmingham/about your life.

- What is one of your favorite stories? Or
- What is one that stands out for you? Or
- What is one that you wish other people knew?

Or

- What can you tell me about _____
- How do you feel about _____
- I'd like to hear more about _____

Other conversation starters?

Active listening

The idea is to be a conversation, not a question and answer session. You're a part of it but because it is about them, there are some key ways to keep the focus on what they are talking about.

Active listening is just repeating back to the person what they have been saying to let them know you understand them or to clarify something. You can reflect feelings or events, but try to stick to the person's experience and avoid commentary or judgmental statements, such as "you did the right thing," or "people nowadays____," or "So-and-so shouldn't have done that," etc.

- So, when you first moved to the neighborhood, you were (excited/nervous/shy/etc.) about your first day of school because you didn't know any of the kids yet?
- It sounds like your Dad was handy and could fix anything, and you loved to watch him working in his shop
- You really miss your mom's cooking. She made some of the most amazing pies.
- Are you saying that _____?
- I'm not sure what you mean, could you explain that?

Silences

- Take your time, there's no rush.
- Sometimes it's hard to put things into words.
- I understand.

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: March 6, 2024
TO: Museum Board
FROM: Leslie Pielack, Museum Director
SUBJECT: Director Report

Museum Board Position Opening—There is an opening on the Museum Board for a regular member to serve through June of 2027. The City will accept applications until 12 noon on March 19 (Clerk’s office), with interviews/potential appointment at the March 24 commission meeting at 7:30 PM.

Budget 2025-2026—The City’s budget for 2025-2026 is in review during March. The Manager’s recommended budget will be presented at a public hearing at the end of April.

Allen House Repairs/Maintenance—plaster and painting work have been completed. Installation of Point-of-use hot water is in process. This will make water heating and use more efficient and sustainable, in accordance with the city’s sustainability goals. Repair/maintenance of the small roofs on the north side and balcony are planned for this spring. New carpeting for the central stairway is expected by June. The fence replacement should be complete by the end of March.

CDBG-funded Pond Phase 3—EGLE permit application still in process.

Programs-Projects-Presentations—February’s lecture on Birmingham’s neighborhoods was virtual only due to weather issues, but the recording has been popular on YouTube. Chelsea’s debut covering the topic of Eco City was terrific. Museum Director Pielack participated in a panel discussion coordinated by the Royal Oak Historical Society to discuss some of the UGRR stories that connect Oakland County to Canada. The two-year Michigan Humanities grant is now complete, but the UGRR research in Oakland County project will continue. Planning for America’s 250th will be underway for the next few months with the museum coordinating the city’s plans and looking for opportunities to collaborate.

The podcast is back!—“Birmingham Uncovered” begins its next season the second week of March and will produce six monthly episodes. March’s program features the story of a 1916 murder that was never solved, entitled, “Edward Crawford and the Black Hand.” Download at our website or find us through your usual podcast app.

School history curriculum-specific classroom materials—museum staff has completed a set of materials for the 2nd grade local history curriculum that include slides with photos and primary source materials and objects from our collection. The museum will work with the schools’ curriculum coordinator to provide an orientation for the 2nd grade teachers in advance of our annual school tours in May.

Volunteer Fairs—In April, the library and Next each will have community fairs that we are going to participate in to offer specific volunteer opportunities to support the museum’s programs and collections efforts.

Collections—The museum has completed the scans of all the Quarton family materials. In addition, volunteer Jessie Torok has been working to inventory and organize a set of documents from the Clizbe family (Marion Allen’s family). Both these projects will be ongoing and will be of great value to local history research. We are also preparing to receive a set of original architectural drawings of the 1929 Grand Trunk Railroad depot from a private donor.