



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD AGENDA
556 W MAPLE
Thursday, July 10, 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/Introduction of Guests

3. Approval of the Minutes

- A. Minutes of June 5, 2024

4. New Business

- A. Kamala Cummings, In The Know Experiences, input for strategic plan

5. Unfinished Business

- A. Museum Board "What's Your Story?" Oral History Project-updates/reports
- B. Strategic Plan
 - Survey development

6. Communication and Reports

- A. Director Report
- B. Member comments
- C. Public comments

7. Next Meeting: August 7, 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.* 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.

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

Members Present: Mike Ableson, Kristy Barrett (Alternate), Alexandra Harris,
Judith Keefer Marty Logue
Members Absent: Pat Hughes, Eva Kirkman
Student Representative: Mercy Wisecup
Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack
Guests: Museum Intern Ryleigh Corcoran

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM by Chairperson Logue. Members introduced themselves and welcomed Museum Intern Ryleigh Corcoran.

**Approval of the Minutes
Minutes of April 3, 2025**

MOTION: by Ableson, seconded by Harris:

To approve the minutes of April 3, 2025.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0

New Business

The function and scheduling of the Museum Board Collections Sub-committee was discussed for the purpose of reaffirming Ms. Keefer's position and appointing members to the open positions. The sub-committee meets on an as needed basis. Museum staff anticipates that deaccessioning will be needed in the near future. Mr. Ableson and Ms. Logue were nominated for the two open positions.

MOTION: by Barrett, seconded by Harris:

To appoint Mike Ableson and Marty Logue to the Birmingham Museum Collections Sub-committee and to affirm Judith Keefer's position on the sub-committee.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0

Unfinished Business

Ms. Harris and Mr. Ableson played excerpts and briefly discussed their interviews. Ms. Harris interviewed a minister who grew up in the 70s and 80s in Birmingham. Mr. Ableson interviewed a neighbor who has lived in Birmingham since the 1950s and who recounted the history of a pet cemetery that used to be in the neighborhood. Both board members

indicated the process was fairly uncomplicated and very interesting. If possible, members should send their signed Deeds of Gift and the interview audio files electronically to Leslie and/or Caitlin at the museum for initial processing.

Having already approved strategic plan Priorities and Goals, members reviewed **the final level of the objectives** under each group separately:

1. *Priority: Observe professional standards, ethics, and best practices for long-term preservation and care of the museum collection in the public trust (approved 3/6/2025).*

Goal: Maintain, preserve, and enhance the museum's collection of artifacts, archives, digital content and buildings to make these resources available to the public in accordance with established professional museum practice.

Objectives:

- **Improve museum collection's organization, storage, 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 the museum buildings, grounds, physical collection and digital materials**
- **Increase access to virtual exhibits, online content, and digital materials**
- **Enhance the inclusivity of the collection**

MOTION: by Keefer, seconded by Harris:

To approve the objectives under Priority 1 for the 2025-2028 Birmingham Museum Strategic Plan as noted.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0

2. *Use the museum and its collection to encourage greater equity and inclusion and to humanize history for the benefit of the community (approved 3/6/2025).*

Goal: Utilize best practices to engage the whole community and encourage empathy and understanding of our diverse cultural and personal experience.

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**
- **Investigate opportunities to enhance and expand virtual reach**

MOTION: by Logue, seconded by Harris:

To approve the objectives under Priority 2 for the 2025-2028 Birmingham Museum Strategic Plan as noted.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0

3. *Establish and strengthen collaborative relationships in the community to implement the museum's mission (approved 3/6/2025).*

Goal: Leverage collaborative relationships to expand the museum's sphere of influence and provide beneficial outcomes for the community.

Objectives:

- **Develop programs and projects that integrate the museum's strategic priorities and support the City's internal and public-focused functions and services**
- **Pursue partnerships with local institutions that are aligned with the museum's mission**
- **Provide leadership and support to area organizations in developing and promoting local history**

MOTION: by Ableson, seconded by Harris:

To approve the objectives under Priority 3 for the 2025-2028 Birmingham Museum Strategic Plan as noted.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0

Museum Director Pielack suggested the board review the best approach to seeking public input on the strategic plan at the next meeting in July, which members agreed to by consensus. She also discussed the various ways that museum activities are tracked and measured. These include metrics collected under social media and visitor/participant counts reported annually. Other measures include online activity, records and data created through PastPerfect museum software, FindAGrave.com memorials, and Ancestry.com genealogical data. Members suggested that staff participation in professional activities such as conferences and committees is also a measure that can be used to gauge progress on strategic plan objectives. Director Pielack and museum staff will be creating a non-intrusive paper-pencil survey for museum visitors to gather additional on-site data.

Communication and Reports

Director Pielack briefly reviewed the updated Director's Report and shared a sample of the carpet runner that will be installed on the main staircase. She also shared the fun

stickers that museum staff, especially Donna, have been creating and distributing to the public. A brief overview of the intersecting roles of the Cemetery Advisory Board, the museum, and the Parks Department in regards to Greenwood Cemetery was discussed. A handout about the fall lecture series, "Museum Staff Hidden Gems" at the Baldwin Public Library was distributed. The 2026 history initiative, "Birmingham-Celebrating Our History-2026" and accompanying logos has just been finalized and was shared with board members. The intent is to celebrate our local history in the context of our national anniversary during 2026. The logo incorporates that theme and highlights the importance of our community's heritage and people, and is applicable to a wide range of activities. The theme and logo will be used citywide to unify the message across various public events during the year.

Member Comments

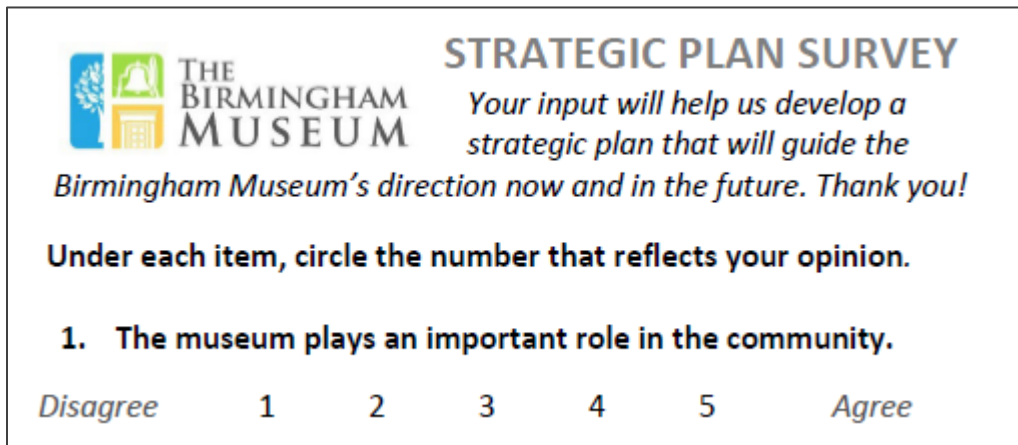
Ms. Logue pointed out that her term as Museum Board Chair is expiring and indicated that she has served the board for several years but would like to step down from the chairperson position. She invited members to consider whether they would be interested in serving in that capacity and reminded them that this would be an action item on the next agenda. She reported that the recent Greenwood Cemetery tour commemorating the 200th anniversary of the cemetery was very well attended, and many participants were younger families.


The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for the second Thursday of the month (due to the proximity of the holiday), July 10, 2025, at 5:00 PM.

Ms. Logue adjourned the meeting at 6:16 PM.

Survey Development:

- 6-10 items, 1/2 page paper/pencil and electronic
- Paper/pencil distributed at City Hall, Library, Museum lobby
- Electronic (Google Forms) link in (August) Around Town, Engage Birmingham, and Facebook
- Press Release, August Around Town, Facebook to promote, include QR to Google Form
- Collect responses August 1 until?
- Survey would sample sentiment and trends reflected in strategic plan, not specific items in the plan
- Survey appearance using a five point scale: (layout used in UGRR survey):



 **THE BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM**

STRATEGIC PLAN SURVEY
Your input will help us develop a strategic plan that will guide the Birmingham Museum's direction now and in the future. Thank you!

Under each item, circle the number that reflects your opinion.

1. The museum plays an important role in the community.

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Agree*

- Possible survey items:

The museum plays an important role in the community.

The museum should utilize best practices to preserve and exhibit historic materials about Birmingham that reflect the whole community.

The museum should offer multiple points of view and encourage empathy and understanding when interpreting Birmingham's story.

The museum should expand its virtual exhibits, online content, and access to digitized materials.

The museum should expand its programs and exhibits in off-site settings.

The museum should collaborate with other cultural organizations to expand its reach and provide leadership in promoting local history.

I/my family has visited the museum in person or online in the past three years.

I/my family has attended the museum's educational programs, listened to the museum's podcast, or watched museum videos.

I/my family has visited or used the John West Hunter Park at the museum in the past three years.

I would like to see the museum explore the following themes or programs:

Approved 2025 Strategic Plan Priorities, Goals, and Objectives

1. *Priority: Observe professional standards, ethics, and best practices for long-term preservation and care of the museum collection in the public trust (approved 3/6/2025).*

Goal: Maintain, preserve, and enhance the museum's collection of artifacts, archives, digital content and buildings to make these resources available to the public in accordance with established professional museum practice.

Objectives:

- Improve museum collection's organization, storage, and environmental controls to protect and preserve the collection
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- Increase access to virtual exhibits, online content, and digital materials
- Enhance the inclusivity of the collection

2. *Priority: Use the museum and its collection to encourage greater equity and inclusion and to humanize history for the benefit of the community (approved 3/6/2025).*

Goal: Utilize best practices to engage the whole community and encourage empathy and understanding of our diverse cultural and personal experience.

Objectives:

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3. *Priority: Establish and strengthen collaborative relationships in the community to implement the museum's mission (approved 3/6/2025).*

Goal: Leverage collaborative relationships to expand the museum's sphere of influence and provide beneficial outcomes for the community.

Objectives:

- Develop programs and projects that integrate the museum's strategic priorities and support the City's internal and public-focused functions and services
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DATE: July 10, 2025
TO: Museum Board
FROM: Leslie Pielack, Museum Director
SUBJECT: Director Report

Museum Board Position Opening—In addition to regular member vacant position opening, the business owner position is also vacant at present. Board member Keefer has applied for re-appointment for her position and will attend the July 28 commission meeting to be considered for re-appointment.

Allen House-Hunter House Repairs/Maintenance—The fence is coming along and has its protective sleeves on the posts, but the main post sleeves have yet to be installed to complete the project. Historic architect Jackie Hoist will be assessing the front porch concrete to determine next steps in doing repairs. A contractor has been found to replace the staff entry concrete steps and the Hunter House steps and handrail. The museum lobby will get fresh paint and some updating this summer. The hallway stair carpet is scheduled for installation on July 9.

2026 Programs-Projects-Presentations—The city has finalized a logo for 2026, refining the museum's concept. Citywide planning is in process for incorporating the 2026 celebration throughout the Parks, the Birmingham Shopping District activities, and the library. Museum staff is planning our 2026 exhibit.

Fall Lecture Series—"Museum Staff Hidden Gems" will include staff picks of some of their favorite stories:

- September 11: **The Famed Rock Critics of Birmingham's CREEM Magazine** (Caitlin Donnelly)
- October 9: **Brooksie: The Story of Henry Ford's Top Pilot** (Chelsea Hunter)
- November 13: **An Indigenous Bounty of Baskets: Celebrating Native American Heritage Month** (Donna Casaceli)

BSD Website Tours—The museum revised its Women's History Walking Tour for the BSD's website and will be working on updating the historic architecture downtown tour as well. You can check out the pretty cool tour with interactive map here: <https://downtownbirmingham.com/visit/tours/womens-history-walking-tour>

Student Intern Projects—Ryleigh Corcoran completed her internship and worked on several important projects for the museum:

- Assisting with and debriefing school tours
- Assisting with annual inventory and cleaning of objects in the Hunter House
- Working with Chelsea to scan and process the Harry Brooks materials and create a finding aid
- Creating a draft of a brochure about native plants along the Rouge River and their historic uses

Collections—We were able to purchase a new document scanner that will be able to do many of the older newspapers in our collection and other larger format items up to about poster size.

Digital Photo Duplication Project—We have a large number of digitized image files that are duplicates and stored under various filenames that have accumulated over the past 15+ years. We have acquired a software program that will search and find duplicate images and permit us to remove unnecessary duplicates with improved storage. We have a new volunteer with a background in digitizing and digital content management who will be working through that material and our vertical files, which have the greatest need for this work right now.