



**Minutes of the
Executive Committee of the
Board of Directors of the Arizona Historical Society
22 July 2020
1300 N. College Ave. Tempe, AZ**

Mission: Connecting people through the power of Arizona's history.

1. Call to Order – Linda Whitaker, Committee Chair and Board President

Meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. at the Arizona Heritage Center, 1300 N. College Ave. Tempe

2. Roll call (There was a quorum) –

Present in person: Linda Whitaker

Present via phone: Robert Ballard, Tom Foster, Bruce Gwynn, Kelly Corsette, Jim Snitzer

Note: Voie Coy was present virtually for a portion of the meeting. When absent during a vote that is noted.

Absent – Jeff Horwitz

Staff present in person: James Burns

Staff present virtually: Bill Ponder, Kim Bittrich

3. Discussion and action, if any, to approve the draft Minutes of the June 30, 2020, Board of Directors meeting. Gwynn moved that the minutes be approved as presented; Ballard seconded; all voted in favor. (Coy not yet present).

4. Call to the Public – Consideration and discussion of comments from the public. Those wishing to address the Board need not request permission in advance. Presentations will be limited to five minutes. Action taken as a result of public comment will be limited to directing staff to study the rescheduling of the matter for further consideration and decision at a later date.

No members of the public were present.

5. Executive Committee – Discussion and action, if any, regarding meeting schedule, membership of the committee, focus, proposed priorities for the coming year. State Board Goals for FY20-21 – Discussion, and action, if any, regarding state board goals for the coming year.

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Group prefers midday meeting time, and settled on 11:30 a.m. Discussion followed about board priorities for the next year: (sunset review/performance audit, reaccreditation by the American Alliance of Museums, evolving to a post-COVID-19 environment, measuring and reporting digital participation and adjusting AHS' business model as necessary). Whitaker will provide a draft for discussion and approval at the next board meeting.

6. State Board Health – Discussion and action, if any, regarding the status of current board members, status of board appointments, and possible board committee assignments

One reappointment was made by the Governor's office. More appointments and reappointments are working their way through the system. We need members for the finance committee. Snitzer was oriented by Bittrich, Ponder, and Burns. Committee members do not have to be board members. Snitzer and staff will work on recruitment of individuals with financial expertise. AHS' financial health was discussed. Like many cultural organizations during the pandemic, AHS' revenues have declined substantially. Committee expressed that they want to avoid layoffs or furloughs, and that preserving positions is important as AHS is already short-staffed. Snitzer talked about the need to address contingencies in the budget as there are so many unknowns at this time. Ballard reported that since their local museum reopened attendance has been very low and funds are dwindling.

7. State Board Health – Discussion and action, if any, regarding review of election statistics, election processes, nomination process, recommendations

A summary of the analytics from the election at the virtual annual meeting was circulated. Allegations of a "hijacked" election were discussed. Quantitative data (number of participants, number of participants eligible to vote, geographic distribution, and affiliation with support groups) was reviewed. Data trends: many people who participated are not "affiliated" with any particular region; fewer Tucson members participated. Overall, more people participated than in the past several years. The digital interface was imperfect; lessons were learned for the future (tutorials, don't hold the meeting on a high-volume day such as the end of a fiscal year). Board member John Lacy reviewed the analytics and the bylaws as revised in 2019; he concluded that the bylaws were followed. Snitzer suggested a nominating committee of not less than three people, and a new chair.

Nominating process was discussed. Whitaker contacted board members, who would like to see the process be more transparent (make the committee larger, invest more time, consider reaching out further to spread the word, maybe having a contested slate for the health of the organization, circulating position statements, making the process more robust). Foster, Ballard, and Corsette will work on a task force and provide recommendations to the executive committee. Coy expressed that he is not in favor of members electing the officers per AHS' revised enabling legislation (2015) because the members don't know the candidates and don't know which way to vote. He recommends altering the legislation so that the board elects its own officers.

8. Executive Director Update – Review of goals, initiatives, opportunities, communications with the public, and staff updates, if any.

Task Forces and Committees

Statewide collaboration during COVID-19 pandemic has increased dramatically. Currently, staff work in cross-disciplinary teams across multiple locations on the following task forces and committees: Outreach Task Force, Reaccreditation Task Force, COVID-19 Task Force, Reopening Task Force, Volunteer Task Force, Point of Sale Task Force, Social Media Task Force, IT Task Force, Collections Remediation Task Force, Advocacy Task Force, National History Day Task Force, Facilities Task Force, Digital Initiative Task Force, Experience Ideas Committee (standing), Collections Review Committee (standing), Content Team (standing).

There are several new exhibitions in Tucson, and the planned refresh of the permanent exhibitions has begun. New rotating exhibitions include Keepin' Cool, Treasures, Your Voice, and Arizona 101. Next up is an exhibition about 19th century Arizona.

Friends of AHS Inc.

Meetings have been held with fundraising consultants. The capital campaign chair will make a presentation at the next Friends meeting.

Public Service -

AHS staff is serving as a resource to other museums across the state regarding reopening, as we were one of just a handful of cultural institutions in AZ that opened (and then had to reclose). Colleagues have been connecting virtually and in person to seek out lessons learned.

Facilities

AHS' annual CIP meeting took place in mid-July. There are 30+ items on the list; per the request, staff presented the top 10. Some of the classifications for longstanding have changed due to new definitions.

Ongoing Monitoring:

A recently recorded/aired History Channel program featured a former staff member representing the agency. Fact finding is under way to determine how the misrepresentation occurred and to seek a resolution to the issue. Appropriate action will be taken.

Staff faces continuing pressure to accept a collection of 12 large boxes of archival material that has been turned down twice by the Collections Review Committee. Conflict of interest was cited as one of the reasons the collection was declined.

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Staff faces continuing queries about its collection of saddles. AHS presently has more than 80 saddles in its permanent collection with more in Yuma and Flagstaff that have not been processed. The agency also still has in its possession 13 saddles deaccessioned in October 2019 that are awaiting final disposition. Saddles are robustly represented in the collection, and available for research and loans to qualified institutions.

Staff is receiving an increasing volume of communication from the general public calling for the removal of Confederate monuments, memorials, and symbols. No such monuments or memorials are on AHS properties, but AHS' name is on plaques of monuments and memorials located on the property of other agencies. AHS is cooperating with other agencies as requested. The topics of monuments and memorials in a broader context will be addressed in an issue of the Journal of Arizona History (planned over a year ago).

In a related matter, staff has received mixed feedback about a reproduction Confederate flag long displayed above the lobby of the AHM in Tucson, along with reproductions of four other flags - the flag of Spain, the flag of Mexico, the US flag and the Arizona flag. Each of these flags has flown over all or portions of Arizona throughout history. Exposed to direct sunlight for close to seven decades, some of the flags are brittle and faded. But they represent the institution's history, which should be interpreted in a gallery with context rather than in an often-overlooked space. Work continues to interpret all of the flags that have flown over Arizona in the past (including those of the 22 sovereign nations within the state's borders) in conjunction with planned changes to AHM permanent exhibitions. The planned display will feature historical artifacts related to 19th century Arizona, none of which are currently on display at AHM.

Staff received concerns about the lack of any exhibition or programming about the Buffalo Soldiers. A grant has been submitted in partnership with the U of A to develop some digital programming utilizing objects and archival materials from AHS' collections and archives.

In preparation of AHS' upcoming sunset review, staff is monitoring the recent sunsetting of the Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records.

Staff is closely monitoring changes in philanthropic giving. Foundations are adding criteria, including inclusion and diversity measures. This evolution will affect the planned capital campaign as well as requests for annual giving. To receive funding in the future, AHS will need to evaluate and adapt its professional practices to be eligible for philanthropic giving from many sources.

A new fieldwide campaign on social media is being watched closely. The campaign was focused on large art museum initially, but spread very quickly to all types of museums, sparking conversations across the nation. The campaign shares anonymous testimonies of racism, homophobia, discrimination, and misogyny in museums. Museums nationwide are monitoring the account.

Whitaker noted that some of the issues monitored by staff are not so much about AHS or staff, but about something much bigger. She thanked the staff for their work and observed that this is an opportunity for AHS

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to be a part of a nationwide conversation about these matters. This remains a fluid and evolving situation, one that positions AHS as relevant, responsive, and responsible to the communities it serves.

9. Treasurer's Report and FY2020-2021 Budget – Report and summary of latest state communications, and discussion, and action, if any. Discussion, and action, if any, regarding proposed AHS budget to be presented for approval at the August 2020 state board meeting.

Over the past 20 years, the state allocation has declined. The organization used to be able to provide more funds to its regional museums, but those funds are no longer available. There is a sense of urgency to shore up the organization's budget in this time of crisis. Decisions need to be made more expeditiously than in the past. AHS will be fundamentally different when it emerges from the pandemic and recession. The organization can no longer do everything it did in the past; that is unsustainable.

10. Old Business -

- a) Chapter Relationships and 1107 Funds - Discussion and action, if any, regarding summary of where we are at following discussions over the past year, review of relevant documents, and proposals for moving forward.

Committee members discussed a compilation of historical documents and 2014-2020 documents relating to its 'chapter' and associated '1107' funds. Some of these documents had not been previously presented, providing the committee with new knowledge to process. Whitaker asked that committee members study the documents carefully and to identify options. No immediate solutions were requested; the conversation was an alert. Whitaker will follow up with the Auditor General's Office to see if they have any ongoing concerns, as this was a finding addressed in the agency's 2013 sunset review. Related to this discussion, Whitaker announced the resignation of board member, Len Marcisz.

- b) Sunset Review and American Alliance of Museums Reaccreditation Status and Components – Report and discussion, and action if any, about outstanding items.

Committee members discussed a staff and volunteer Code of Ethics, one of the items missing for reaccreditation by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). The Code of Ethics addresses topics not covered in the existing AHS Board of Directors Policy Manual or the State Employees Policies/Handbook. Without this document, approved by the Board of Directors, AHS will not be eligible for reaccreditation. A Code of Ethics is one of the five foundational documents for any museum per AAM. Gwynn moved to accept the staff and volunteer Code of Ethics as presented and forwarded to the full board for approval.

- c) AHS Financial Health 2000-2020 - Discussion, and action, if any, on presentation given at the June 19, 2020 State Board meeting. This presentation covered budget trends, fundraising

efforts, staffing levels and costs, the impacts of financial atrophy over the years, facilities, risk management, and strategies to achieve sustainability.

No additional discussion at this time.

- d) Review, discussion, and action, if any, on AHS Memorandum's of Understanding for non-AHS owned properties.

Committee members discussed financial data and associated documents circulated to them prior to the meeting regarding Historic Fort Lowell, the Downtown History Museum (Tucson), and Riordan Mansion State Park. All three are non-AHS-owned properties operated via various agreements. Discussion points: some of these facilities operate on earned income, which has dwindled to almost nothing. The reopening of these facilities is unknown as they are small with tightly confined spaces that do not allow for social distancing. AHS funds are being spent at present to support all three facilities. The situation is serious and unsustainable. Each month, AHS expends nearly \$17,000 of its funds on Riordan Mansion State Park, for example. In the last recession, AHS stepped up to save Riordan Mansion State Park from closure. A group called the Riordan Action Network was formed to raise operating funds to assist AHS in operating the site (to supplement earned income). That group was not a 501(c)3, and over time it merged with the Northern Arizona Pioneers Historical Society, at which point the agreement changed. Funds were no longer provided to operate the mansion – only for special projects, and staff had to apply for those funds.

Snitzer made a motion to recommend to the Board of Directors the dissolution of the relationships with the City of Tucson, Wells Fargo, and AZ State Parks and Trails and to direct staff to act in a timely manner to extract AHS from operational aspects in existing MOU's for Riordan Mansion State Park, the Downtown History Museum and Historic Fort Lowell. Gwynn seconded. Whitaker, Ballard, Foster, Gwynn, and Snitzer voted in favor. Corsette voted against. Coy was not present for the vote.

11. Announcements and other matters for consideration in future board or committee meetings

Executive Committee Schedule is as follows:

Monday, August 17, 2020

Monday, September 21, 2020

Monday, October 19, 2020

Monday, November 16, 2020

Monday, December 21, 2020

Monday, January 18, 2021

Monday, February 15, 2021

Monday, March 15, 2021

Monday, April 19, 2021

Monday, May 17, 2021

Monday, June 21, 2021

2020 and 2021 AHS Board meeting dates and locations:

August 14, 2020 – Arizona Heritage Center, Tempe (and virtual)

October 23, 2020 – Arizona Heritage Center, Tempe (and virtual)

December 18, 2020 – Location to be determined

February 19, 2021 – Location to be determined

April 16, 2021 – Location to be determined

June 18, 2021 – Location to be determined

August 20, 2021 – Location to be determined

October 15, 2021 – Location to be determined

December 17, 2021 – Location to be determined

Meeting adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

Dated this 24th day of July 2020

Arizona Historical Society

Linda Whitaker / W. James Burns

Linda Whitaker, Board President / James Burns, Executive Director

ADDENDUM

To: AHS Executive Committee

From: Jay Van Orden

Date: 8 August 2020

Re: 22 July 2020 Executive Committee Minutes

The minutes should be amended and re-stated as they incorrectly indicate that the five flags in the lobby have been exposed to direct sunlight for close to 70 years. In fact, this display has been up for 46 years. In addition, the minutes incorrectly state that they have been exposed to direct sunlight for that length of time (70). This is untrue. In 1976, I was appointed as the first AHS employee on the State payroll in a new position, titled: "Conservator of Historical Artifacts." As such, I had those (north-facing, no direct sun light) windows covered with UV filtering film to reduce, potentially-damaging indirect sunlight to an acceptable level, thus ensuring the long-term preservation of all artifacts displayed in the museum lobby as well. I also replaced each of the original 5 flags over the years on an "as needed" basis, based on testing and my professional assessment of their condition.

Please advise regarding these matters.

Respectfully Yours,

Jay Van Orden
Retired, Field Services Director
Arizona Historical Society