

**Minutes of Public Meeting of
the Executive Committee of
the Board of Directors of the
Arizona Historical Society
Monday, June 28, 2021**

1. **Call to Order** – President Linda Whitaker

Meeting called to order at 12:03 p.m.

2. **Roll Call** – Bruce Gwynn

Committee members present: DeNise Bauer, Jim Snitzer, Robert Ballard, Linda Whitaker, Bruce Gwynn, Tom Foster, Colleen Byron, Kelly Corsette

Committee members absent: None

Staff present: Bill Ponder, Kim Bittrich, James Burns

3. **Minutes** - Discussion and action, if any, to approve the draft Minutes of the May 24, 2021 Executive Committee meeting.

Ballard moved that the minutes be approved as submitted; Byron seconded. All present voted in favor of approving the minutes as submitted.

4. **Call to the Public** – Consideration and discussion of comments from the public. Members of the public wishing to address the Committee should identify their interest at this time via the chat box. Those wishing to address an item on the agenda will be called upon when that item is being discussed and given up to five minutes. Those wishing to address an item not on the agenda will be allowed up to three minutes. Such items may not be discussed by the Committee but may be directed to Staff for study and consideration at a later date.

No members of the public present.

5. **Board Appointments** – Whitaker

As discussed at the Board meeting last week, there are no changes at this time as expected.

6. **Sunset review compliance and progress report on contracts with not-for profit organizations that work with AHS** – Whitaker and Burns

Review of draft letters to 501(c)(3) Contents – responsibilities, resources, professional services, facility use, roles.

Arizona History Convention – Morrissey, Tebeau, Rosebrook
Friends of the Arizona Historical Society, Inc. - Gwynn
Friends of Arizona History - Head
Historical League - Nullmeyer
Los Amigos - Schwager

Northern Arizona Pioneers Historical Society - Madden
Pathfinders - Knude
Yuma County Historical Society – Hurt

Discussion ensued about the current memorandums of understanding with the 501(c)(3) organizations. Are the boards and members of these organizations aware of the contents of those agreements? Answer: Probably not.

Discussion ensued about the friends of Arizona history and whether they were the friends of Arizona history or the Southern Arizona Chapter Board Friends of the Arizona Historical Society? Burns responded that the Tucson 501(c)(3) was founded with one name, probably relating to the chapter which was confusing, but that they do business as the friends of Arizona history. Discussion ensued about the differences between the memorandums of understanding and whether the new contracts would look as different? A question was asked about what the different organizations expect? Answer: that is unknown at this time.

Burns noted that there is more continuity than divergence between the current memorandums and he anticipates that will be true for the new contracts. Committee members expressed the need to communicate that we need a contractual agreement, with some degree of specificity. Byron asked if it is necessary that people understand the difference between a memorandum of understanding and a contract or is it important that they just understand their particular agreement? When is the last time these groups have read their 2015 MOU's? Response: No idea.

How would a contract differ from a memorandum of understanding? Answer: The auditor general wants to see more specificity. More conversation ensued about the differences between the relationships. Gwynn noted that these agreements need to be made up-to-date like all agreements. Discussion ensued about the contents of these contracts relative to fundraising, and the conversation focused on Yuma County Historical Society's annual Redondo Day fundraiser. Ponder emphasized that those events can be negotiated into the contracts, but that Redondo Day is successful because both sides buy in and because AHS staff was involved from the beginning in the conversations. That's the difference relative to other fundraisers.

The committee reviewed three different versions of a letter circulated prior to the meeting and discussed tone, tenor, and content. Does the response matter? We have to do this per the sunset review findings. Some organizations will come into the fold; others won't. What if people don't respond? Answer: There needs to be a deadline in a follow-up letter, which should be sent certified, return receipt requested. Do we need to terminate the existing memorandums of understanding? Answer: No; they will become null and void when the new contracts are in place.

Whose name should be on the first letter? Discussion ensued, and it was agreed that the initial letter will go out under the signature of the Board President. There will be a deadline of October 15, 2021 for signed contracts. Byron moved that the Executive Committee empower

the Board President to create a letter regarding compliance with the Auditor General's 2013 sunset review findings relative to AHS' relationship with associated 501(c)(3) organizations to be distributed by staff to all appropriate parties of those 501(c)(3) organizations, including a directive to execute a signed contract with each organization by October 15, 2021; Snitzer seconded. All present voted in favor of approving.

7. **Finance Committee** – Snitzer

- a. Discussion about challenges and opportunities on the horizon

Snitzer: Even though the pandemic is not completely over, it is time to shift gears and be more proactive in looking to the future. This may increase the burn rate, but that will even out as the earned income streams rebound later in the year.

Burns reported good news. Working with the State, he has been able to secure \$500,000 in COVID relief funding. Those funds have been deposited into AHS' account. AHS is extremely grateful to the State for its support. These funds will allow AHS to begin re-staffing so that full reopening of its facilities is possible in this calendar year. Those dollars provide the bridge funding needed to get AHS from now until the time that its earned income streams rebound in the fourth quarter of this year or the first quarter of next year. Staff will meet in July to draft a budget and a restaffing plan. The budget will be reviewed by the Finance Committee. The Executive Committee thanked and congratulated Burns.

8. **Governance Committee** – Review and discussion of recommendations – Corsette

- a. Review and discussion of committee recommendations

The committee met last Friday. A working group is going through the policy manual and bylaws and identify inconsistencies and make recommendations to the Executive Committee for consideration. That may lead us to other changes that are needed. The committee is also going to look at the enabling documents. The committee is also revisiting the topic of roles and responsibilities of chapters pertaining to the Sunset Audit. A redefinition of the chapter boards roles and responsibilities may be proposed to the State Board of Directors for the August meeting. Chapter Boards are a function of the State Board, not the staff; really need to get the staff out of the middle.

9. **Executive Director Update** – Burns

Whitaker thanked Burns for a thorough report for the month of May and asked him to review the highlights. After doing so, he presented a summary of the 2021 employee satisfaction survey as requested.

AHS Employee Satisfaction Survey Results Summary 2021

The 2021 employee engagement survey results reflect scores that are generally similar to the 2020 survey results, notable in a year that we have experienced a pandemic, a recession resulting in the loss of nearly 1/3 of the agency's budget, and social unrest, all of which have impacted staff and their families. In 2021, the agency has an overall satisfaction rate of 75%, down 4 percentage points from 2020, now even with the overall State satisfaction rate. The State rate dropped 1 percentage point from 2020.

Overall job satisfaction dipped from 84% in 2020 to 69% in 2021, below the State average of 75%, which dipped a percentage point from 2020. This is a trend we will address by focusing on feedback from the qualitative data.

The same percent of employees as last year strongly agree that their job is important to supporting the agency's mission to connect people to the power of Arizona's history – 97%, above the State average of 92%.

A decline in the percentage of employees who feel they have the proper tools and equipment to do their job (68% to 47%) is concerning as that puts the agency below the State average of 72%. This is undoubtedly partially due to the austerity measures in place to reduce the agency's burn rate triggered by the pandemic and recession. We plan to survey staff to determine what additional tools and equipment they need at present.

The percentage of employees who strongly agree their job gives them the opportunity to do what they do best every day is at the highest level in four years, the biggest increase in any category at 75% in 2021, up from 68% in 2020. The agency is slightly above the State average of 74%

The percentage of employees who strongly agree they have the opportunity to learn and do new things in their job continues to be high at 86%, down one percentage point from 2020 but well above the State average of 73%.

The percentage of employees who feel their co-workers are committed to providing high quality service fell to 78% in 2021 from 92% in 2020. While not the trend we would like to see, the agency remains above the State average of 76%.

The percentage of employees who feel their supervisor shows care and concern for employees is 78% in 2021, down one percentage point from 2020, and is slightly below the overall State average of 82%.

The percentage of employees who feel the agency supports their participation in education and professional development opportunities is 78% in 2021, down one percentage point from 2020, and remains above the State average of 69%.

The percentage of employees who feel the agency values their ideas on work related problems increased to 78% in 2021, up from 74% in 2020, and well above the State average of 64%.

The percentage of employees who would recommend the agency to other people as a good place to work increased slightly to 58% in 2021, up three percentage points from 2020, but still slightly below the State average of 64%.

The percentage of employees who plan on being employed with the agency two years from now fell to 55% in 2021 from its previous high point in 2020 back to the same level as in 2018 and 2019. That is below the State average of 77%. We do have a number of employees planning on retiring, and the qualitative data demonstrates that the other primary reason for seeking other employment is the below market rate salaries in the agency.

The percentage of employees who understand clearly what is expected of them at work is 82%

in 2021, down one percentage point from 2020 and slightly below the State average of 87%.

The percentage of employees who agree that they receive adequate feedback on their work is 72% in 2021, a decrease from 82% in 2020, slightly below the State average of 75%. We know from the qualitative data that as with many organizations, communication remains a challenge.

The quantitative data only tells part of the story. The way the majority of the questions are written, there is an inability to control for multiple variables. We know that individuals interpret the questions in different ways, which can skew the data. So, we opted again for a mixed methods study, including the same four qualitative questions as in 2020.

When taking the survey, respondents are ensured of confidentiality; no identifying information about survey respondents is provided to the agency. Employee comments are only populated when a certain threshold of responses is met. We had hoped to be able to share aggregated qualitative data with supervisors. However, upon close review of that data, HR has determined that the specific content of some of the feedback received could potentially cause speculation about the probable identities of certain respondents. For this reason, we are unable to share even the aggregated data. Instead, an executive summary of that data follows.

The vast majority of the feedback was constructive, helpful, and generally positive or neutral. There were a handful of less positive comments, roughly 10-15% of respondents. That feedback was generally about agency-wide changes resulting from the reorganization that occurred over three years ago. The ongoing yearning for the AHS of the past is understandable, but not something we are asking you as supervisors to address. The agency has evolved to become more relevant to its audiences, more sustainable, and much more inclusive than ever. That direction is not going to change. We will continue to assess the agency's needs and evolve to suit the changing environment.

We are, however, seeking your feedback about ways to address the constructive comments that were received.

Overall, employees still want more communication. We need your help to determine specifically what information they would like to be receiving that they don't receive at present. Please meet with your teams and report back to your supervisor. That feedback will be used to develop new communication mechanisms.

For those of you who are relatively new to AHS, note that the agency had a very long history of over-communication and inappropriate communication. Our focus will be on sharing information that employees need to know that we are able to share.

We also received some feedback about a desire for greater transparency. We would like your assistance as supervisors in determining what that means. Please meet with your teams and report back to your supervisor. When doing so, explain that the environment in which we work is as rapidly evolving as the world around us. Decisions often have to be made to address quickly changing conditions, making it difficult to announce those changes well in advance.

Additionally, we encourage you to have conversations with your staff about offering more opportunities for them to do what they do best every day, within the context of the jobs we

need them to accomplish. There is a stark contrast in the quantitative and the qualitative data between those who agree they already have these opportunities and the 10-15% who strongly disagree that they have these opportunities. Depending on the feedback, it may or may not be possible to fulfill the request.

We very clearly hear the continued requests for “local” (for lack of a better term) supervision. AHS will not be moving backwards; remote supervision is here to stay. But, some supervisory changes will be made to accommodate the unique nature of some of our teams. Those changes will take place in the next 4-6 weeks. If you or your team is going to be affected, you will be contacted shortly.

Finally, a moderate amount of feedback was received about the roles of one department versus another. That feedback is consistent with what we received last year. Based on those comments, I will be working with the vice presidents to develop business partnership agreements between departments to set expectations regarding such things as dual reporting and shared responsibilities.

Following the report, Whitaker asked if the Board’s new IT task force could assist with the IT issues. Bryon responded that in a non-state-agency there would be role for a committee to assist, but as a State agency it all really needs to be done through the State. Burns responded that once an IT plan is in place, recruitment for the task force could begin, and it is possible that there could be a role for such a group.

Whitaker then asked Ponder about the role of the agency in meeting individually with legislators. Ponder responded that AHS’ history of interacting with the legislature in prior times was one where the agency would identify a legislator or legislators to meet with before and during session to help the agency further its mission for the coming year and into the future. AHS was somewhat successful because it had an accomplished lobbyist. Even in that context AHS was trying to get a legislator to take on the agency’s mission as a project to get legislation passed that moves the agency forward. There was never a lot of power unless AHS could connect with legislators that held key committee positions. AHS was always trying to work with new people every two years to educate them about the value of the agency. This dynamic has changed significantly.

Small agencies and cultural agencies really have very little sway. **1. They are generally not part of the legislature’s agenda. 2. AHS can no longer have any paid lobbyists;** staff can work in that role, but it is not nearly as impactful as having someone who is working down at the legislature all the time. Also, staff members are discounted as holding a biased position. **3. The legislature did away with hearings for small agencies during the budget process.** There is no longer an opportunity to testify about the work of the agency and why we need the current level of funding or more. Most of those hearings now take place before small agencies even know they have happened. Our place and our influence with the legislature are very much reduced. In the past, most times we considered ourselves successful if we didn’t lose money or get defunded. Whitaker asked when did this change? Answer: Around 2017. This topic came up a year ago as a point of sharp criticism even though the rules changed before the current

Executive Director came on board. AHS cannot expect miracles with the legislature. Byron – the Board members all have relationships with various elected officials. Board members should be advocating with their elected officials. Talking points are needed. Gwynn – The talking points all need to be the same. Byron offered to assist by drafting talking points for review by the next Board meeting. Byron asked for Snitzer’s assistance; Snitzer agreed.

10. Executive Director’s Evaluation – Ballard

Working documents will be circulated at the end of the meeting for the evaluation process. The evaluation tool itself will go out to the full Board. Ballard will include a message to be used with that communication. All of the surveys need to be sent back to Ballard by July 16. Ballard requested that the employee satisfaction survey be circulated to the full board.

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

No announcements.

Executive Committee Schedule

July 26, 2021

AHS Board meeting dates and locations: July 12, 2021 (Virtual)

Dated this 30th day of June 2021

Arizona Historical Society



Linda Whitaker, Board President

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