

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
24 September 2021**

President Whitaker called to order at 12:01 p.m. She stated that this annual meeting celebrate that not only did AHS survive the pandemic and recession, it is thriving.

Shelley Coriell, AHS Outreach Coordinator, welcomed all members and thanked them for increasing their support when AHS needed it so much. She introduced the theme of the meeting and discussed how it speaks to the mission of the organization.

President's presentation:

Whitaker discussed the successes AHS has seen in a pandemic and recession. She reviewed the board appointment process and welcomed all of the new board members – 14 appointments, 12 currently serving. This is the most diverse board we have ever had, with several 'firsts' in the organization's history. Accreditation was achieved for all four AHS locations across the state in July 2021. The reviewers praised the board and the appointment process. The burn rate was reduced from over \$666,000 per year to approximately \$5,000 per year between the beginning and the ending of the last fiscal year. Eric Gonzales was able to work with ADOA to address nearly a million dollars in deferred maintenance for AHS facilities. AHS membership held steady in the pandemic and has slightly increased, and in fact the overall membership giving rose by 7% due to voluntary increases members made in their giving level.

Whitaker presented the Al Merito award, 2021, to Tom Foster, explaining that a special exception was made this year to give the award to a sitting board member. Tom was very surprised, humble, and grateful to receive the award.

Whitaker called for a vote to approve the minutes of the 2020 annual meeting. That was done using the Zoom polling feature. Downs reported that the minutes were approved unanimously with 54 valid votes to approve the minutes.

Election of Board Officers

Bruce Gwynn, Secretary, presented the slate of Board Officers for the 2021-2022 year: Linda Whitaker, President, Ileen Snoddy, Vice President, Jim Snitzer, Treasurer, and Bruce Gwynn, Secretary. Downs explained the mechanics of the vote. Staff will validate that everyone who voted is eligible to vote and that will be recorded in the minutes. The result of the vote was unanimous with 57 valid votes were verified to approve the slate of officers.

Executive Director's presentation

Burns made a presentation about AAM accreditation. The Path to AAM Reaccreditation was inclusion, education, and unity. It was a three-year long journey. All of our work together since 2018 has been focused on attaining reaccreditation. Why did we seek reaccreditation?

Increased credibility and value with funders, policy makers, local communities, and peer organizations.

Signals that the organization is achieving its stated mission and goals.

Indicates that the organization's performance meets standards and best practices as generally understood in the museum field.

Mark of distinction that only about 3% of all museums in the US have attained.

Prepares us and positions us well for a successful sunset review in 2023 and for launching a capital campaign.

The Result - First Statewide AAM Accreditation of AHS

AHS was first accredited in 1999, and reaccredited in 2006, but both times the distinction was granted only to our flagship Tucson facility, the Arizona History Museum.

In 2021, the museums and sites that AHS both owns and operates are all accredited:

Arizona Heritage Center

Arizona History Museum

Pioneer Museum

Sanguinetti Historic House Museum and Gardens

Stakeholder Reactions

Governor Ducey - "Huge achievement: the Arizona Historical Society has received full national accreditation - an accomplishment only 3 percent of active museums have reached. Congratulations!"

Laura Lott, CEO of AAM - "What a great story!! Thank you for bringing this to my attention – and just in time for our board meeting this week. I will definitely share with the board and the AAM team as an example of the power of accreditation as well as how savvy directors can use the process to advance relevance, culture change, and equity work in their institutions. We're only going to make that connection stronger in the coming years. And congratulations to you, again. Following the harrowing past 16+ months, it is truly heartwarming and inspiring to hear about all that you're doing at AHS. Kudos. I am in awe, and I cannot wait to visit. Please be in touch if I/AAM can do anything to support you."

Coral Evans, Northern Office Director, Office of U.S. Senator Mark Kelly - "I saw this on Facebook and I (seriously) jumped out of my chair in joy. AWESOME JOB! This is amazing and well deserved. I am so happy for AHS! "

What Did the AAM Staff and Peer Reviewers Cite as Exemplary?

AHS' core documents (mission and vision statements, collections management policy, emergency and disaster preparedness plan, code of ethics, and strategic plan).

Demonstrated ability to adapt collecting, preservation, interpretation and dissemination activities to the shifting needs of the audiences that AHS serves.

The Board Appointment Process - "the best we've ever seen for a museum system that is a state agency."

Journal of Arizona History

Diverse exhibitions and public programs that reflect the demographics of the communities that AHS serves across Arizona.

The resiliency of AHS in a pandemic and a recession:

Utilization of multiple approaches to nearly erase the organization's burn rate to avoid permanent closure.

Swiftly refocusing on audience engagement and growth through robust virtual programming.

AHS' efforts to share previously untold / hidden history.

Plans to collect and interpret contemporary history (Marked By COVID exhibition cited in particular - and the Journal of a Plague Year collecting project specifically cited).

Membership engagement:

Maintaining and slightly increasing the membership of AHS while many museums saw 25-45% decreases.

Increase in membership revenue due to the number of members who significantly raised their giving level.

Meetings with groups of stakeholders across Arizona clearly demonstrated that AHS is filling a vital need and playing an essential role in the communities it serves through fulfillment of its mission.

AHS' demonstrated ability to change and remain relevant to contemporary audiences.

AHS' commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion.

Reaccreditation Letter - AAM Accreditation Commission

"The Society is to be commended for recognizing the need to change in order to remain relevant, methodically identifying weak areas, and with incredible skill, working to address them. The staff's efforts to shift the organization's culture and make hard and bold decisions ensure AHS remains well-positioned for the future. We applaud the board and state's strong support of these efforts, especially in the face of constituent pressure to maintain the status quo. We also commend the AHS's commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI), and the work done to ensure diversity is reflected in its exhibits, programs, and staff. DEAI is an area the Accreditation Commission will be giving even closer attention to at the time of all accredited museums' next reviews to ensure they maintain the organizational culture and structures to practice and advance DEAI as part of ongoing operations."

"I'm extending my congratulations upon learning of your well-deserved decision of reaccreditation from the AAM Accreditation Commission. What we saw, is a diverse of team of talented people working collaboratively and very hard on a focused agenda of relevancy and growth for the Historical Society. It's a compliment to you all!" - Timothy Chester, AAM Accreditation Reviewer

"Most important of all, the AAM accreditation commission in its decision has unequivocally said the organization is on the right track." - James Burns

We appreciate your contributions to ensuring AHS' bright and thriving future.

Presentation – Dr. Anthony Pratcher II, Lecturer and Honors Faculty Fellow in Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University: "Diggin' in the Crates: The Role of Community Archives in Suburban History."

Dr. Pratcher made a presentation followed by a question and answer period led by Dr. David Turpie.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:24 p.m.