

Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting, January 21, 2023

Attendees: President of the Board Steve Rotella, Vice President of the Board Tom Dyja, Executive Director Alison Ventura, Trustees Michael Simon, Andrea Meislin, EJ Camp, Donna Richardson, Katie Sonnenborn, Tina Silvestri, Leslie Cohen, Lydia Irving, Jennifer Valentino, Howie Shinker, Leslie Cohen, Catherine Chermayeff, Suzanne Gluck, Charles Dean, Lindsay Pollack, Ted Harris and Honorary Trustee John Holzapfel

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:01 am.

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting of November 19, 2022 was duly made by Charles Dean; the motion was seconded by Catherine Chermayeff and unanimously approved.

3. Executive Director's Report

•Executive Director Alison Ventura commented on the very good turnout for the holiday tree lighting and caroling evening in December. She thanked those who helped make this event a success and in particular Mike Johnson, who was responsible for decorating the tree with festive lights. She also thanked Scott Robbins for his work on this event.

•Alison noted that the Preservation League of New York State awarded the OHS a \$4,000 grant to undertake a building condition survey of Vail House. This is a necessary step in the adaptive reuse of Vail House to store a portion of the OHS collection. She noted that various grants may be available to apply for in connection with this project. Alison encouraged anyone with grant-writing experience who would be interested in assisting with the applications for such grants to let her know. Planning for the upcoming summer programs is well underway. Among other activities, there will be a historic house walking tour.

•A donation was received in the fall in connection with an oral history of the gay community in Oysterponds. Anyone on the Board interested in helping with that project should let Alison know. Maria McBride will again be helping organize the Summer Benefit, which is being co-chaired this year by Mike Ventura and Carl Valentino. Catherine Chermayeff and Katie Sonnenborn will be overseeing the art auction component of the Summer Benefit.

•A bingo night in Poquatuck Hall is planned for March, with Cliff Cohen as caller.

•President Steve Rotella thanked Alison for her hard work in getting the OHS off to a great start this year.

4. Financial Report

Treasurer Michael Simon reported the following: The Society's income for last year was healthy, though the investment accounts have been negatively impacted by current market conditions. Based on the proposed budget, a \$15,000 operating profit is conservatively projected for the upcoming year. While membership fees for last year were less than had been anticipated in last year's budget, the contributions to the Annual Fund exceeded what was projected in the budget. Similarly, due to strong participation at the end of last year, Griffin Giving Circle contributions exceeded what had been budgeted. For the current year, salary and benefits expenditures are expected to be higher than last year in part due to the Society's not having had an Executive Director for the first half of last year.

4. Financial Report (con't.)

President Steve Rotella noted that the proposed budget for the upcoming year reflects projections in line (or less than) actual performance last year. He also noted that while no draw from the Tupper bequest has been budgeted for the upcoming year, it is anticipated that a portion of that gift will be used in connection with the Vail House project. Currently, the Tupper bequest monies are being held in investment vehicles such as short-term Treasury bills.

•A motion was made to approve the proposed budget for 2023. This motion was duly seconded and approved unanimously.

•Steve noted that the Finance Committee will be considering consolidating the Society's accounts at Wells Fargo for logistical reasons and will update the Board as to the Finance Committee's determination in this regard.

5. Development

•Steve Rotella reported that fundraising for 2022 was very successful—likely the best year ever in the history of the Society. The Griffin Giving Circle has been a great success. Going forward, consideration should be given as to how to increase the number of Society members in general and in particular Griffin Giving Circle members. Another area to focus on in the future is planned giving and encouraging members to consider the Society in their estate plans.

•EJ Camp asked about ensuring that new Griffin members were aware that as Griffin Giving Circle members they would be entitled to an engraved brick in the walkway at Poquatuck Park. Alison said that an email to new Griffin members was planned asking what they wanted to be inscribed on their respective bricks. She also noted that the design for the original bricks used for the walkway had been discontinued; efforts are underway to find a new brick design that would work with the existing walkway. It is anticipated that this issue will be resolved this spring.

6. Society Goals for the Year

President Steve Rotella reviewed high-level goals for the year including the following: (i) meet or exceed the projections contained in the financial plan; (ii) establish and execute plans to move forward with the collections center at Vail House, including forming a committee to oversee the project and developing a strategy as to funding the project, as well as communication with the community as to the project; (iii) get a head start on planning for next year's 80th anniversary of the Society; (iv) plan for future leadership of the Board and leadership for the committees. Let Steve or Suzanne Gluck know any ideas in this regard and in particular talent appropriate to lead the various Board committees; and (v) Alison noted the importance of undertaking a refresh of the Society's website and heightening social media engagement. There was discussion as to the use of summer interns to assist with this. Steve also mentioned additional goals such as digitization of the collections; offering donors the opportunity to purchase benches for Poquatuck Park; planned giving efforts; and developing a retail strategy to help promote the Society and raise additional funds.

7. Adjournment

The meeting of the Board ended at 9:45am.