

Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting, May 20, 2023

Attendees: President of the Board Steve Rotella, Vice President of the Board Tom Dyja, Executive Director Alison Ventura, Trustees EJ Camp, Jerie Newman, Donna Richardson, Andrea Meislen, Jennifer Valentino, Tina Silvestri, Catherine Chermayeff, Suzanne Gluck, Charles Dean, Ted Harris, and Leslie Koch

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Steve Rotella at approximately 9:02 am.

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting of March 18, 2023 was duly made, seconded and unanimously approved.

3. President's Introduction

President Steve Rotella noted that there is a lot going on at the Society currently, with planning in full swing for the upcoming summer events, planning for the Collections project, and the first full audit of the organization (rather than the review audit the Society has previously done). Steve expressed his gratitude to the staff and in particular to Executive Director Alison Ventura, who will be completing her first year as ED in early July. He noted in particular her organizational skills and demonstrated passion for the job at this particularly busy time.

4. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Alison Ventura reported that the OCA approached her about re-landscaping the area around the obelisk monument at the head of Village Lane. The OCA had been contacted by a New York City landscape architect with a proposal for this work. The OCA is interested in moving ahead with this proposal and request that the OHS share the cost--approximately One Thousand Dollars. Alison went on to report that the Village House exhibitions are ready to open and encouraged all members of the Board to visit these. She noted that one of our goals this summer is to get more local residents to see the exhibits. The OHS has applied for a Gardiner Foundation young scholar grant, like we had last year. The grant is for \$1,500 and would fund an intern for the summer. Alison asked that Board members encourage potential candidates for the internship to apply. The staff celebrated Amy Folk's 20th anniversary at OHS with a lunch. Alison reported that the Society is coordinating with the State regarding installation of a water filtration system for the campus buildings due to contaminants found in wells in the area.

Alison also updated the Board regarding Community Engagement activities. She noted that a sponsor has been secured for the historic house tour on June 10, which will offset some of the event's costs. Board member EJ Camp advised that volunteers and in particular readers for the upcoming Moby Dick reading weekend in July are needed. A

baseball cap designed for the event will be offered for sale. EJ asked that Board members help get the word out to the community to ensure the success of this event. Sarah Olmstead and Catherine Smith are again co-chairing Heritage Day, scheduled for July 3. Sarah has asked that each Board member consider volunteering as a docent this summer, even if for only one or two shifts. Alison noted that Maria McBride has been hired again to help with organizing the Summer Benefit. Catherine Chermayoff and the art committee have been busy soliciting items for the live and silent auctions.

President Steve Rotella opened a discussion regarding the OCA's request, mentioned above, that the OHS share the cost of re-landscaping the area around the obelisk monument on Village Lane. Steve suggested getting more information about the proposal from the OCA and then reaching out to the Society's membership to give them the opportunity to contribute to the cost. Steve commented that there are ways the OHS can assist the OCA in raising the money for this project without OHS making a direct donation.

5. Financial Report

In Treasurer Michael Simon's absence, President Steve Rotella reported the following: Expenses this year are running ahead of where they were at this time last year. This in part due to the fact that for the first half of last year, the Society did not have an Executive Director, so salary and benefits expenditures were therefore lower. Also, the Buildings and Grounds Committee has been working hard on various necessary campus maintenance projects, resulting in expenditures exceeding what had been budgeted. Some of these expenditures are related to Webb House, for which there are separate funds available that can be drawn upon to offset these expenses. Provided that revenues from the summer events are in line with expectations, the Society's finances for this year are expected to be consistent with the projected budget. The Society's funds designated for Webb House will be drawn up this year for painting and other expenses relating to Webb House. Steven noted that last year there was no draw on Webb House funds, which are currently held in accounts at Vanguard, so more may be available this year for specific Webb House expenses via a retroactive draw.

In order to streamline the Society's management of its accounts, the Finance Committee has recommended moving the Society's Vanguard accounts to Wells Fargo, where the Society's other accounts are held. Vanguard has not been easy to deal with administratively. The Finance Committee has requested the Board's approval to move the Vanguard accounts to Wells Fargo where the assets would continue to be maintained in separate accounts. Board member Charles Dean moved to approve this proposal; Suzanne Gluck (and others) seconded the motion, and all Board members in attendance unanimously approved.

6. Development Report

Steve Rotella reviewed the Society's fundraising, concluding that overall it is in line

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with last year's revenues. However, revenues attributable to the Griffin Giving Circle are running a little behind last year, suggesting that this program, which has been a very strong source of revenue since its inception, needs to be more actively managed. Steve asked that a Board member step up to focus on this program and perhaps refresh it in order to maximize its potential. General membership, which is now largely automated, is doing well.

A general discussion ensued regarding the Griffin Walkway and the status of getting engraved bricks for new Griffin members. The bricks that were being used originally have been discontinued and efforts are being made to source new bricks for the walkway that will fit in with the existing walkway.

Steve suggested having a fresh look at the branding and benefits of the Griffin Giving Circle program as we plan for 2024 to ensure the program's continued efficacy.

7. Collections Committee Report

Chairperson Charles Dean reported that the Collections Committee has been meeting regularly and has accepted some nice items for the collection. They also met with Amy Folk to discuss potential deaccessions, focusing on items that are so damaged that they will never be exhibited and items that should not have been collected by the Society in the first place. The Committee voted unanimously to deaccession three (3) items: a bed made up of unmatched parts from other beds not in the collection; a carriage step that is from a carriage that is not in the collection; and a bellows that is broken beyond repair. Steve made a motion to deaccession these items; Tom Dyja seconded it and the motion was approved unanimously by the Board.

8. Vail House Collections Center Project Update

Leslie Koch, who is heading the Collections Center Project Committee, joined the meeting to update the Board on the Collection Center Project. She reported that an RFQ ("Request for Qualifications") was issued to potential architects for the Collections Center Project. An effort was made to reach out to every architect in the Oysterponds community about this opportunity. Other architects from the North Fork and elsewhere recommended by Board members and the Gardiner Foundation were also sent the RFQ. The next step will be for the Committee to review the responses to the RFQ, interview potential candidates, and to make a recommendation to the Board as to the selection of architect for this project. Criteria taken into consideration include sensitivity to historic fabric given that the project entails an addition to and renovation of Vail House; and experience working with a historic preservation board as well as on civic projects. It is also important that the architect embraces a true sense of partnership with the Society in undertaking this work and is a good listener to address the Society's needs. Eight architectural firms have responded to the RFQ. The interview process will commence shortly. The Committee anticipates identifying a firm to recommend to the Board at the next Board meeting. Also on the Committee are President Steve Rotella, Executive Director Alison Ventura, Board member Tina Silvestri and former Board member and former Chair of the Collections Committee Ann ffolliott. Tom Dyja expressed confidence in the qualifications of the Committee members and that the Society is "on the right path" with this project. Steve thanked Leslie and the Committee for their hard work and noted the sensitivity of the project and its importance for

the Society and the community.

9. Buildings and Grounds

Chairperson Jennifer Valentino noted that the Committee has been focusing on addressing various deferred maintenance issues as well as groundskeeping. In addition, some of the issues raised in the Pokorny report regarding Vail House have been addressed; rot issues at Webb House are in the process of being addressed. Funds available specifically for Webb House-related costs will be accessed as applicable to cover necessary painting and repairs. The fixed expenditures (e.g., utilities, communications and security as well as grounds maintenance) outlined in the B&G annual budget are responsible for a substantial portion of the budget. A new sprinkler system has been installed. George and Linda Hossenlopp generously donated this. Many other recent expenditures are attributable to deferred maintenance or repairs necessary due to maintenance having been deferred. Keeping up with maintenance and anticipating issues will help minimize future repair costs. Steve noted that given the value of the Society's buildings, the costs of maintaining them is money well spent. The Society's campus is an important element of the overall collections. EJ Camp commented that maintaining the campus' beauty is a central aspect of what the Society gives back to the community. Tom Dyja said in future budgeting discussions regarding Buildings and Grounds, it behooves us to be realistic about the costs of maintaining the Society's campus and not to skimp. Jenn said that the Committee plans to undertake more Saturday morning work days for the community to help with appropriate B&G projects such as campus clean-ups, etc.

Steve thanked the Board and staff for all their hard work as we head into the busy summer season and move forward with the Collections Project.

10. Adjournment

The meeting of the Board was adjourned at approximately 10:07am.