

**ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM
EMERGENCY BOARD MEETING**

February 5, 2025, 1:00 p.m.

Research and Collections Center

1011 East Ash Street

Springfield, IL 62703

Attending: Officers: Chair Jonah Rice and Secretary Tamira Brennan; Board Members: John Barker, Leverne Backstrom (by phone), Wanza Davis, Mike Murphy, Director Natalie Phelps Finnie, and Ashish Sharma; Illinois State Museum Society: Vice Chair Candice Trees and Jamila Wicks; Illinois State Museum Staff: Cori Claycomb, Jenn Edginton, Meghan Lindstrom, Logan Pappenfort, and Bob Sill; Department of Natural Resources Staff: Jeff Nevins and George Sisk.

I. Welcome

Chair Jonah Rice called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Meghan Lindstrom called the roll and a quorum was present.

III. Approval of the Minutes of November 13, 2024

The Minutes from the November 13, 2024 meeting were presented for approval. Mike Murphy moved to approve the Minutes, Director Natalie Phelps Finnie seconded, and the Minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. New Business

Director's Report

Jenn Edginton introduced Cori Claycomb, the Illinois State Museum's (ISM) Curator of Art and History Education, who served on the Accreditation team and greatly assisted the creation of the documents presented to the Board. Jenn also provided a short overview of past and planned events, particularly Freeze Fest at the ISM which drew in more than one thousand visitors and Eagle Day at Dickson Mounds Museum (DMM) which drew in more than five hundred.

Jenn provided an update on the status of the ongoing construction projects. The plumbing project at the ISM is ongoing and construction was completed on the public restrooms on the 1st and 2nd floors. The Lower Level public restrooms are projected to be completed in mid-March and are being converted into family restrooms. Work in the staff restrooms on the 2nd floor, the Mezzanine, and the 3rd floor are also projected to be completed mid-March. The roofing project at DMM had been completed and the new observation deck was completed in time to be used at Eagle Day.

Jenn provided updates on the Museum's exhibitions. Here, There, currently on display at the Lockport Gallery, will be moved to the ISM in March. The Lockport Gallery will then show the *Minohsayaki* "Painted Robes" exhibit paired with Great Lakes beadwork from the Museum's collection. *Minohsayaki* will be moved to the ISM in the future as part of the America 250 commemoration. Cori is planning out a new art exhibition to be shown in the Lower Level that will focus on making art more accessible for children.

Jenn stated that Museum staff are considering ways to update existing exhibitions. Current plans include making the videos in *Changes* bilingual, updating the language in *At Home in the Heartland*, reimagining the old anthropology hallway, and finishing up the displays on the first floor of Dickson Mounds Museum.

Jenn provided short updates on the fifth annual *NOIR* exhibit and the 1908 exhibit which has grown to involve more community partners. The Beardstown project is progressing and the Beardstown High School's Spanish Club members are gathering oral histories from their families. They will also be creating an exhibit for ISM which will be stationed in one of the temporary exhibit spaces for at least five years. This project is funded by a federal grant but all federal funding had been drawn down through the Society so the project can continue regardless of the national situation.

Jenn also provided a few statements about several collections. Curator of History Erika Holst is building relationships with the Jewish community in Danville and collecting items relevant to the history in the area. Doug Stapleton is working to grow the art collection, particularly works made by Indigenous artists. A collection of over 350 ears of corn and seeds were rematriated during a ceremony held in December to Braiding the Sacred, a group of Indigenous seed growers, and a contingent of Haudenosaunee people including community leaders. The collection had been left at the

Research and Collections Center by a researcher over 50 years ago but never accessioned by the Museum, so a deaccession request was not necessary. Director Finnie commended the Museum on the repatriation and shared her experience at the ceremony with the Board.

Jenn reported that all Museum loans had been stalled as the process was being reviewed by Legal. Just that morning Legal had given the Museum the green light to resume loans. She thanked George Sisk for his assistance in ensuring the Museum's loan process was legally sound and forms were worded accurately.

The Board discussed the climate change pop-up exhibit present in the room. It was curated by Curator of Geology Melissa Pardi and featured research performed by Board member Ashish Sharma.

Accreditation Documents

Values

Jenn presented the *Values* for review. Leverne Backstrom asked if the order had been chosen deliberately.

Wanza Davis joined the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Jenn confirmed the order was intentional. The original *Values* were rearranged to show that *curiosity*, *inclusivity*, and *collaboration* were prioritized in the Museum's work.

Jonah asked if the accreditors who would visit and evaluate the Museum would ask about the strategic planning process. Jenn confirmed they would.

Mission

Jenn explained the long process of preparing for this Strategic Plan. In 2022 the Board, State staff, and Society started to work with strategic planner Laura Roberts. This process was interrupted by former Museum Director Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko's passing. While State staff focused on filling administrative roles and supporting the Museum through the transition some Board members continued to meet with the strategic planner without the knowledge of State staff. Following both State staff and Board member turnover the strategic planning process was reset. The current Strategic Plan being presented to the Board was created with the input of leadership at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), ISM Leadership Team, ISM Board

members, ISM staff, the ISM Society, community partners, and Museum visitors.

The proposed 2025-2030 Strategic Plan for the Illinois State Museum is divided into four sections: *Connect*, *Inspire*, *Sustain*, and *Celebrate*. Each section contains an outline of achievable goals and objectives as well as a case study showing what that work looks like at the Museum when those goals are met.

Connect

Jenn read out the seven goals in the *Connect* section, focused on deepening relationships between the Museum and both local and State-wide communities. The case study for *Connect* was the Beardstown project being developed in partnership with the Beardstown High School's Spanish Club.

Jenn invited the Board to discuss the *Connect* section of the strategic plan.

Mike asked how the 300% increase in attendance listed in Goal 2 would be achieved. Jenn explained it was comparable to pre-Covid attendance and would be managed by targeted marketing, a return to previous numbers of school group visits, more robust programming, and updates to the existing exhibits.

Ashish asked if the Museum had created an Execution Plan for the Strategic Plan. Jenn confirmed that a plan would be devised on how to implement the Strategic Plan but none had been formally developed since an Execution Plan was not required for Accreditation through AAM.

Leverne recommended the language in Goal 1 about DEIA principles be reworded in consideration of the divisive national debates about the topic. The Board and staff debated alternate language that could be used to show the welcoming principles of the Museum.

George stated that Legal was in the process of reviewing potential issues around DEIA and had not yet made a determination.

Cori and Jeff Nevins continued to discuss alternate language for Goal 1 with the intention of presenting it to the Board later in the meeting.

Inspire

Jenn read out the six goals in the *Inspire* section, focused on the Museum's programming and exhibits. The case study for *Inspire* was the award winning *Growing Up X* exhibition. Jenn reminded the Board that many of the

permanent exhibits were over 20 years old and would need to be reviewed in the coming years.

Jenn invited the Board to discuss the Inspire section of the strategic plan.

Candice Trees asked how the Museum tracked loans of the collections to other institutions. Jenn explained that the Museum had established policies, procedures, and documentation at each step in the outgoing and incoming loan process. She confirmed that the process had recently been reviewed by DNR Legal.

Sustain

Jenn read out the six goals in the *Sustain* section, focused on internal procedures, branding, and improving the visitor experience. The case study for Sustain was the annual *NOIR* art exhibit celebrating Black art and creativity.

Jenn invited the Board to discuss the *Sustain* section of the strategic plan.

Tamira Brennan directed the Board to consider Goal 15, which addressed aging infrastructure, and noted that funding for those projects are out of the control of the Board and Museum. Jenn and Bob acknowledged the funding issue and clarified the goal was focused on creating a list of priorities, from more severe and expensive issues such as the Dickson Mounds Museum roof issue to more feasible projects like a new loading dock for downtown ISM.

Jeff stated he had been considering new funding opportunities to address State Historic Sites in need of maintenance and repair. A recent legislation change will allow for corporate sponsorships at the Pullman State Historic Site. Jeff recommended the same strategy be considered for the ISM and other State Historic Sites.

Director Finnie supported the creation of a plan to address needed improvements and repairs even if funding had not been secured.

Mike asked if the collaboration mentioned in Goal 17 was meant to be internal or external. Jenn clarified that it meant collaboration with outside institutions to build capacity, considering State budget constraints and a limited headcount. She provided a new partnership with the DuPage Children's Museum as an example. ISM Education staff have facilitated DuPage Children's Museum's *Wonder Clubs* at different after-school programs in the Springfield area. ISM staff use DuPage Children's Museum's supplies and

instructions to train local teachers on running engaging STEM activities for their students.

Mike asked if the Museum was open to working with other institutions in the Springfield area. Jenn confirmed that the Museum was open to collaborating and had started partnering more with the State Historic Sites in Springfield, especially the Dana-Thomas House.

Director Finnie recommended the Museum consider developing more trainings for teachers and build a certification program. Jenn confirmed the Museum could do that and suggested the teacher course work at the Museum of Science and Industry as a model.

Ashish recommended more language be added throughout the plan to emphasize natural sciences and history, particularly in relation to the ecosystem and environmental stressors. He also recommended the plan include more of a future perspective and prioritize forward thinking.

Celebrate

Jenn read the 3 goals in the *Celebrate* section, focused on celebrating key anniversaries and commemorations on both the state and national level. The case study for *Celebrate* is the *Bicentennial and Beyond!* exhibit celebrating the founding of Illinois.

Jenn invited the Board to discuss the *Celebrate* section of the strategic plan.

Jenn informed the Board the first major celebration will be the “100 years of conservation” in collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources. Jenn reported that a proposal had been sent to the Society to fund a larger *Big Read* program as part of this celebration.

Director Finnie clarified that the Department of Conservation was founded in 1925 and through the years the Department accepted more responsibilities and occasionally changed names until it became the Department of Natural Resources in 1995.

Mission

Jenn stated that the current Mission Statement was too large and unwieldy and proposed a more condensed Statement:

To Connect the world with Illinois' past and present while promoting stewardship of our cultural and natural resources for a just and sustainable future.

Board members and staff proposed different language for the Mission Statement. They considered potentially shortening it further while still retaining the purpose of the function of the Museum. Jonah recommended the Board move forward without definitively deciding the wording of the Mission Statement in consideration of time. Jenn collected all suggestions for further consideration.

Ethics Statement

Jenn informed the Board that they were also beholden to the Ethics Statement along with staff. The primary restrictions are that staff cannot leverage their positions to grow their personal collections, they cannot purchase items the Museum sells at auction, and they cannot be involved in fundraising. George explained that fundraising is restricted because DNR is a regulating agency and it will be impossible to evaluate how much influence DNR has over individuals, companies, or the leadership of companies who could be solicited for donations. Jamila Wicks asked how that would affect grant writing. George clarified that grant writing would be allowed since grantors are known entities and the Department can investigate and identify any potential conflicts. Director Finnie also clarified that the Department can accept donations but it cannot solicit them.

Collection Management Policy

Jenn informed the Board that the new policy creates a Collections Committee which will be responsible for evaluating donations, acquisitions, etc. After approval from the Collections Committee the Museum Director will have final authority on approving new acquisitions. The policy also outlines the loan program, accessioning and deaccessioning, and limits the type of institutions the Museum can loan collections to. Jenn also stated the Policy outlined the proper deaccessioning process. All sales are to be held at auction and the proceeds are locked in as State funds to be used only to purchase new acquisitions or pay for the upkeep of current collections. She thanked George for his assistance in ironing out the process.

Bob Sill stated that all collection forms had been updated.

Jenn stated that the NAGPRA moratorium once voted on by the Board had been included in the new Policy.

Jeff asked if the language outlining Society purchases with the intent to donate to the Museum could be used to subvert the Collections Committee. Jenn agreed that the language needed to be refined to make it explicit that such Society purchases would be made at the Committee's recommendation.

Jonah invited the Board to ask any outstanding questions about the documents being prepared for reaccreditation.

Jenn reminded the Board of the timeline of the Accreditation process. She stated that the Emergency Plan was not presented to the Board for approval and another meeting would be scheduled to discuss and approve it. More language was needed in the Plan to address visitors during emergencies.

Candice asked what was covered by the Emergency Plan. Jenn clarified that the Emergency Plan covered a wide variety of potential disasters and provided guidance to Museum employees on how to protect themselves and the visitors in such events. Salvage Plans were also being created to address collection care after disasters occur.

Leverne suggested a grammatical edit. Jenn agreed the edit was correct. Leverne stated she would email Jenn a list of similar grammatical edits that would not affect the content of the documents.

Jenn thanked all attendees for their assistance with finalizing the documents. Jonah thanked the Museum staff for their work constructing the documents and preparing for reaccreditation.

Cori proposed alternate wording to replace the DEIA language in Goal 1, Objective C:

“ISM will uplift and honor our vibrant and unique communities by incorporating welcoming and unifying practices in all programs and experiences.”

Jonah asked the Board if they would accept the change. None were opposed.

Director Finnie directed the Board to consider changing the language in Goal 16, Objective D since it addressed DEIA principles as well. She recommended the document be adopted contingent on rewording that objective to match the change in Goal 1. None were opposed.

Jonah asked for the following single motion as a package to accept the following:

To table item: 4.A.2.d.--Emergency Planning and

To approve: 4.A.2.a—Strategic Plan

4.A.2.b—Ethics Statement

4.A.2.c—Collections Policy and

4.A.2.e—Mission Statement

With the reasonable modifications and intent of the Board made from floor discussions to be formed into a final draft for the ISM.

Tamira moved to approve, John Barker seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

V. IDNR Report

Director Finnie provided the DNR report. She stated that her office is still working to build a budget for the next Fiscal Year. Funding the Department usually receives from the Federal Government has been placed on hold. Director Finnie is hopeful that the funds will be released soon but the Department is planning a worst-case scenario budget. She assured the Board and staff that while the Department is preparing for possible financial cuts they will not result in layoffs. Some appropriations lines have been identified that can be reduced.

Director Finnie reported that she had been in meetings with the Governor's Office and they are aware of the projects and improvements that DNR will have to put on hold if funding is not found. She requested an increased headcount to try and meet all the Department's obligations although she acknowledged any headcount increase will be dependent on an improvement in the financial situation.

Director Finnie provided a short summary of the Department's hiring strategy over the last Fiscal Year with a focus on fully staffing Lands and Historic Sites.

Director Finnie stated that she expected to hear soon from the Governor's Office of Management and Budget on the Department's approved headcount for Fiscal Year 26.

VI. Society Report

Candice provided the Society report. She stated that the Society was preparing for strategic planning and hoped to include the ISM Board and other stakeholders in the process. She anticipated it would begin in full over the next three to four weeks.

Candice thanked Jamila for working diligently to draw down money for the Society's federal grants. Jamila shared that the Society had several federal grants through organizations including the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Parks Service, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. She clarified that no grants were directly tied to paying the salaries of Society employees.

Jamila stated that the Society had completed audits for both FY23 and FY24.

Jamila stated that the strategic planning timeline starts with hiring a consultant in February and anticipates that a finalized Strategic Plan will be completed by June 30. Listening sessions will be scheduled to gather feedback from stakeholders during the process.

Jamila and Candice shared an overview of Society bus trips held in 2024 and a summary of upcoming bus trips, with the next one visiting Chicago-area locations including Starved Rock State Park, the National Public Housing Museum, and Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley House. Jamila also shared that the Society was able to offer two scholarships to students and two for educators on each bus trip.

VII. Old Business

Jonah asked for old business.

VIII. Public Comment

None present.

IX. Adjournment

Jonah asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mike moved to adjourn, John seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.