

**ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM
BOARD MEETING**

April 30, 2025, 1:00 p.m.

**Illinois State Museum
502 South Spring Street, Springfield IL**

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

I. Welcome

Chair Jonah Rice called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. He commended the completion of the plumbing project and encouraged the Board to inspect the upgraded facilities.

Jeff Nevins joined the meeting at 1:03 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Meghan Lindstrom called the roll and a quorum was present.

III. Approval of the Minutes of February 5 and February 21

The Minutes from the February 5 and February 21 meetings were presented for approval. Meghan stated she had received a list of grammatical errors from Leverne Backstrom but there were no changes to the substance of the Minutes. Mike Murphy moved to approve the Minutes, Leverne seconded, and the Minutes were approved unanimously.

Jonah advised the Board to prepare for the American Alliance of Museum (AAM) accreditation visit. He recommended reviewing the institutional documents presented at the last two Board meetings, touring the Museum facilities again, and learning more about the work of the Illinois State Museum Society (the Society).

IV. New Business

Director's Report

Illinois State Museum (ISM) Updates

Jenn Edginton provided an update on the museum's future exhibit schedule. Staff are planning major exhibits for the coming years to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Route 66, the 150th anniversary of the Illinois State Museum, and the 250th anniversary of the United States. Progress also continues in the planning of the 1908 Race Riot originally conceptualized as an exhibit in the Springfield Sangamon County Transportation Hub. An advisory group has been formed to help the Society and Museum staff ensure the exhibit is created in collaboration with the community in the way that best serves the local community.

Brooke Morgan joined the meeting at 1:10 pm.

Jenn provided an update on the Beardstown High School Spanish Club partnership. She reminded the Board that this project is made possible by a grant through the International Sites of Conscience run through the Society. The Spanish Club students worked with ISM staff to create a new display at the end of the exhibit *At Home in the Heartland*, are designing an exhibit for one of the temporary galleries, and designing a pop-up exhibit that will remain at the Beardstown High School.

Director Natalie Finnie left the meeting at 1:11 pm.

Jenn stated that the Illinois State Museum would once again staff the First Lady's Tent at the Illinois State Fair running August 7 to August 17. The theme had not yet been decided but Museum staff were already creating art activities for the public.

Jenn also shared a short summary of other planned events and exhibit changes that would occur through the summer. These included History Day, the annual *NOIR* art exhibit, the loaned *Minohsayaki: Painted Robes* exhibit at Lockport and later Springfield, and continuing the Beardstown collaboration.

Director Finnie rejoined the meeting at 1:12 pm.

Jenn provided more information about the *NOIR V* art exhibit planned to run from May 31 to Labor Day and History Day, scheduled for May 1. Jenn clarified that History Day is a statewide competition and while winners will go on to

Nationals this year it is unclear if there will be a National History Day moving forward due to cuts made to the program's budget.

Jenn shared that the Museum is moving forward the first large strategic plan initiative of developing the Museum's volunteer programming. A volunteer open house will be held at ISM on May 22 to start reimagining the volunteer cohort.

Jenn confirmed the Historic Sites (HS) transition under ISM is still scheduled for July 1. She has worked with Jeff Nevins to explore more opportunities for collaboration between HS and ISM.

Jenn recommended that Board members join the tour following the meeting to view a new art exhibit and a new collection on display in the lobby. The *Here, There* exhibit was funded through a grant from the Terra foundation run through the Society. Three outside curators were invited to explore the ISM's art collections and use them to curate a new exhibit. The new collection in the lobby was historical items donated by descendants of Abraham Lincoln's extended family. It includes paintings, tintypes, prayerbooks, and bibles. Erika Holst, Curator of History, gave a presentation on the new collection the previous week and the donor flew in from Seattle to attend.

Jenn provided an update on staffing. The ISM was given a headcount increase of 2 positions for the fiscal year and the most needed positions were determined to be a Natural Sciences Registrar and Associate Director at Dickson Mounds Museum. The Natural Sciences Registrar position had been posted, applications were collected, and the Central Management Service is processing them. The Associate Director position for Dickson Mounds Museum had been accepted by the preferred candidate but later rescinded, so the position will need to be reposted. One of the Museum's educators has accepted a position at Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the position will also need to be posted once the transfer is complete.

Jenn asked the Board if they had any questions or comments. Mike stated he is on the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau Board and they are preparing for the Route 66 anniversary. He asked Jenn to share any Route 66 events with him so it can be added to the Visit Springfield calendar.

Ashish Sharma joined the meeting at 1:18 pm.

Jenn stated that Museum staff who had been moved to the RCC during the plumbing project will return to ISM next week.

Leverne asked for more information on the Route 66 plans. Jenn confirmed the full project was still in the development phase but would be part of the ISM's "Land of Stories" America 250 commemoration. Staff have been planning to crowdsource local history stories and one temporary gallery space will be reserved for a Route 66 exhibit. Leverne recommended that staff reach out to the Kathrine Dunham Museum for possible collaboration considering the museum's proximity to where Route 66 cut through East St. Louis.

Wanza Davis asked if the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum was involved in the Museum's 1908 project. Jenn confirmed they are part of the advisory board for the exhibit and Museum staff are dedicated to telling the story in collaboration with the broader community.

Accreditation prep activity

Jonah invited Jenn to share more information about the accreditation process. She informed the Board that AAM's accreditation renewal cycle is usually 10 years but the Museum had been put on a 5 year cycle due to the difficulties the Museum has faced in the last decade. AAM had also agreed to push the evaluation back one year following the death of former Museum Director Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko. Jenn confirmed all institutional documents had been submitted to AAM by the deadline. AAM will review the documents, return with concerns, and then Museum staff will have an opportunity to address those concerns and make necessary changes to the documents. The next step will be a site visit by reviewers selected by AAM, who will tour the facilities and meet with Museum staff and stakeholders including members of the Board. After the site visit the reviewers will return to AAM and share their findings with the larger commission. The ISM will learn the results of the reaccreditation process in November.

Jonah asked if AAM could impose any sanctions on the Museum or conduct follow-up reviews or visits. Bob Sill stated that the accreditation review committee could table the reaccreditation if ISM did not meet their standards. In that situation the staff would be given guidance on what needed to improve before the next evaluation.

Jonah asked how many reviewers would be present at the site visit. Jenn confirmed there would be two reviewers and AAM would provide ISM with a list of potential reviewers to check for any conflicts of interest. This list of potential reviewers will be investigated by ISM's Leadership Team along with

Director Finnie who plan to advocate any candidate with experience in state government.

Mike asked if community partners would be invited to meet with the reviewers. Jenn confirmed there were plans to invite Board members and community partners to meet with the reviewers, but the time would be limited since they only had 2 days to tour the sites and conduct interviews of staff and stakeholders. Mike recommended that staff encourage as many community partners as possible to be involved.

Jenn reviewed the Museum's current organizational chart and highlighted the chain of command through the Museum to DNR, with the Board serving in an advisory role for the director of the department. Jenn noted one significant gap in staffing had been the lack of employees focused on marketing. She explained that a marketing position was not a current priority because the ISM has been assisted by the DNR communications team. Jenn also outlined how the staff were divided beneath each member of Leadership Team.

Jeff reaffirmed that the transition of Historic Site under the ISM would occur on July 1 but there would still be a separation between the Historic Sites and the Museum system. Because of this Historic Sites will not be involved in the reaccreditation process. Jenn stated that Amanda Bryden had been acting as Registrar of History for both Historic Sites and the ISM but a new registrar would be hired for Historic Sites.

Jenn stated that the Illinois State Museum Society had been added to the Museum's organizational chart at the request of AAM. The chart confirmed that the Museum and Illinois State Museum Society were separated but work in partnership with the Museum Director.

Jonah asked Society Chair Matt Berry if the relationship between the Museum and the Society was like the relationship between a foundation and a college. Matt confirmed it was similar although he lacked any insight due to not having a background in college administration. Jonah asked if the Society was under the Governmental Accountability Standards Board (GASB) and if it completed audits separate from the Museum. Jamila confirmed the Society held audits separate from the Museum. It was unclear if GASB had any influence on the Society or its relationship to the Museum. Jenn stated she would research it. There was some confusion about the nature of the question. George Sisk confirmed that the Society Board is a standalone nonprofit.

Jenn distributed copies of the Society's Articles of Incorporation originally filed in 1952. Jenn read aloud the purposes for establishing the Society:

- “1. To promote the program and welfare of the Illinois State Museum.
2. To offer an opportunity for those persons and organizations interested in fostering educational efforts in Art, Science, Natural History, and Conservation to work with the Illinois State Museum in promoting sound educational programs and exhibits in these fields.
3. To promote research in fields appropriate to the Illinois State Museum.”

Jonah asked how well the Board members would need to know about the Society's documentation and funding for the accreditors site visit. He also enquired if there were any issues with federal funding. Jenn clarified that the Museum was not federally funded but the Society managed some federal grants.

Jenn described the improper governing structure that prompted the firm separation between the Museum and the Society. The former Museum Director had served as the administrator of the Society and was involved in the Society hiring process. Society staff were also imbedded in the Museum's organizational chart and one Society staff member was included in the Leadership Team, which meant a Society employee influenced decisions that affected State workers. Museum staff also had more access to Society funds and fiscal elements.

Jonah asked if the Museum statute prevented State staff from soliciting grants. Jenn stated that historically the Society handled all Museum grants but there was no statute limitations preventing DNR's grants arm from soliciting funds on the Museum's behalf. Director Finnie clarified that DNR was steadily growing their grants arm and grants could also be handled by the DNR foundation. Jonah further asked if there was any language related to this subject in the Strategic Plan. Jenn stated that the Strategic Plan did not directly mention grants but did contain a section about strengthening the relationship with the Society.

Jenn provided a brief overview of how State and Society work was divided, how procedures were established to clarify how Museum workers can collaborate with Society staff, and how ISM is completely removed from the hiring practices of the Society. Jenn also clarified there was a new process

established to request funds from the Society and that Museum staff create “budget asks” each Fiscal Year that are considered by the Society instead of State staff planning the Society's budget.

Tamira Brennan asked if grants secured through the work of a State employee needed to be managed by DNR instead of the Museum Society. Director Finnie and Jenn confirmed that both could manage grants for the ISM.

Jenn distributed copies of the MOU between the Museum and the Society which was signed in May 2024.

Jenn read the statute language change in 20 ILCS 801/1-25 (5): “At the sole discretion of the Department, the State Museum may cooperate with the Illinois State Museum Society for the benefit of the State Museum.” Jenn explained this language change shifted the intent for the statute from directing that the Museum “must” work with the Society to “may” work with the Society. She continued to read the statute:

“This cooperation shall not grant any special rights, authority, or privileges to the Society. Upon the recommendation of the State Museum Director with the approval of the Director of the Department, the State Museum may enter into agreements with the Society for the operation of a sales counter and other concessions for the benefit of the State Museum and the Society. The State Museum may enter into agreements with the Society for programs at or outside the State Museum. The Society shall be solely responsible for its own budget and the preparation of the budget, its staff, its equipment, its supplies, and its programs.”

Jenn listed the grants the Society had managed most recently for the Museum. In 2021 the Society was awarded an “Equity in Education” grant through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The grant was extended three times as the Museum experienced staff turnover and uncertainty following Cinnamon's passing. The new education staff had been preparing to fulfill the grant requirements when it was terminated. Another IMLS grant awarded to the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) listed the Society as a subgrantee which the Museum used to fund the Beardstown Project. The grant was recently terminated but money had been drawn down to fund the projects. Jenn also listed grants used to fund the Route 66 oral history project, the *Here, There* art exhibition and catalogue,

and the 1908 exhibit being planned for the Sangamon County Transportation Hub. Jenn reported a grant was being considered to fund a Juneteenth Family Day. Logan Pappenfort stated that a NAGPRA grant had funded work at Dickson Mounds Museum and ended last August.

Ashish asked for the dollar value awarded in each grant. Jamila clarified the IMLS Equity in Education grant was \$179,000 while the one in partnership with the ICSC was \$30,000. The Route 66 grant was \$8,000. The Terra Foundation grant that funded the *Here, There* exhibit was \$50,000. The Sangamon County Transportation Hub grant was \$220,000 for phase one which covered planning, expert consultation, community conversations, label writing, and exhibit design. Jamila clarified that this was a federal grant through the county and Hanson and while funding for the second phase has been approved it has not yet been signed. Until the funding has been secured phase two of fabrication and installation cannot move forward. Director Finnie asked how much funding would be needed for phase two. Jamila tentatively estimated the funding needed would be around \$200,000 but more information would be required from the designer to confidently determine an estimate. Mike stated that the full grant for the entire project was \$157 million.

Jamila stated that the Society had funded Juneteenth in the past but would not do so in 2025. She reported that the Society has applied for a grant through Arts Midwest to fund the Big Read program but the organization had chosen to wait to approve any grants before it can confirm the funding. Jamila also stated that the NAGPRA grant that ended in August was for \$88,000. A separate \$88,000 grant from the USACE helps cover a Society employee to curate federal collections. The Society also has a Klassen trustee grant which was used to fund the ethnographic collection and maintain the collections database. Jenn clarified that the funds allotted for the database had been depleted so the database would need to be funded by the State in the future.

Jenn shared more ways the division between the Museum and Society had been defined. State staff do not have access to the Society membership. Donation boxes in the Museum go to the Society, which are then used to fund Museum exhibits and programming when requested. The Shop is solely operated by the Society. All Society Staff are supervised by Jamila. Any State staff working with the Society need to receive permission from the Museum Director. The Museum Director will discuss the collaboration with DNR's

Ethics Officer to ensure that State staff do not complete work for the Society that could be considered fundraising.

Jenn stated that the Society could no longer fund any traveling for State staff attending conferences as it would be considered a gift. George clarified that the change in policy was made because the Museum and the Society have a business relationship as defined in the Ethics Act.

Leverne asked if the accreditation site reviewers could interview any Board members. Jenn clarified that any Board member could attend the stakeholder meetings.

Jamila distributed copies of The Living Museum volume 64, number 4. The magazine contained an extensive article of the Society's history from 1952 to 2002, written by Karen Ackerman Witter, former Associate Museum Director for Policy and Planning.

Jenn opened the floor for questions.

Tamira asked who would create the Museum's new brand identity referenced in the Strategic Plan. Jenn stated that the Museum's Exhibit team had been considering it but the process will need to be broadened to include Historic Sites. She shared that the current plan is to create a more universal brand such as "Illinois Museum" which can be applied at all sites such as "Illinois Museum at Emiquon" and "Illinois Museum at Crenshaw House." Jenn shared that Jayette Bolinski from DNR has been brought in on the project along with designers from the Central Management Service.

Acknowledgement of Repatriation

Jenn reminded the Board that repatriation projects no longer required Board approval. Brooke clarified that this process would only be followed when repatriating NAGPRA eligible individuals and funerary objects, although accurate record keeping required the use of deaccession request forms.

Brooke provided a brief overview of the plan to repatriate 15 Native American ancestors and 348 funerary objects. The first repatriation request would return one Native American ancestor from DeKalb County to the Prairie Band Potawatomi. The second repatriation request is part of a larger consultation being led by Indiana University and involves many institutions which hold collections from the Fisher Site in Will County. The ISM will repatriate three collections including 10 Native American ancestors and 85 associated funerary

objects. The third repatriation request is of 19 unassociated funerary objects from North Dakota which were published in a Notice of Intended Repatriation. Brooke explained that the National Parks Service required a different notice because the items are identified as grave goods but it is unknown if they were used in burials. Brooke stated that the objects are associated with the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation. The fourth repatriation request of four Native American ancestors and 244 associated funerary objects from North and South Dakota is also associated with the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation.

Brooke stated she will be working with Tribal partners in North Dakota to arrange transport soon. She also shared that she is waiting for a claim letter from the Miami and Prairie Band Potawatomi before moving forward with the second repatriation request.

Jonah thanked Brooke for providing the report.

DNR Report

Director Finnie provided the DNR report. She reported that the Department has been busy this legislative season on working to secure the budget for the next fiscal year. The Senate appropriations hearing was in March and the House appropriation hearing was held the previous week. The Governor's proposed budget included a small increase for DNR which would secure an additional 55 headcount for Parks and Historic Sites.

Director Finnie also reported that some over appropriations were identified and trimmed back to match actual spending, especially in the capital lines. She also said that work continues to improve fiscal record keeping following the 2023 self-report the Department made to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. An audit was initiated in spring of 2023 and it remains open. Director Finnie assured the Board that no money was missing but it has been confirmed that grant funding was not always pulled down due to the poor record keeping. She further assured the Board that Illinois legislators from both sides of the aisle have been supportive through the process and corrective actions are being taken to avoid fiscal mismanagement in the future.

Director Finnie provided an update on staffing. DNR's FY25 approved headcount was 1350 and currently the Department stands at 1257. She explained the slowness in hiring was caused by difficulties in the new hiring module but she is hopeful the Department can reach 1300 by July 1. The

approved headcount for FY26 is 1405. The Chief of Staff left April 1 and a new Chief of Staff will start soon who has both a conservation background and experience with State government.

Director Finnie provided an update on DNR's commemoration of 100 years of conservation. The Conservation Police are celebrating 125 years and are the oldest established police force in the state outside of the city of Chicago. The previous week DNR invited state lawmakers to the Legislators and Lures event held at the fairgrounds. The Old State Capitol reopened following extensive renovation and a grand reopening is being planned.

Director Finnie shared that the Department would not be able to apply for any grants through the Department of Homeland Security due to the Illinois TRUST Act.

Director Finnie provided a brief review of the Shabbona Lake State Park transfer that had started in the legislature in 2023. She noted that the law would establish an intergovernmental co-management agreement with the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation on how to manage public access to Shabbona Lake State Park and will also establish that DNR is made whole and does not owe any federal grant money tied to the property.

Director Finnie shared that she and Logan had been meeting with the Sauk and Fox Nation at Black Hawk State Historic Site to discuss potential collaborative initiatives for the site.

Jonah asked if there were any events at ISM similar to the Legislators and Lures event. Director Finnie shared several exhibition openings where state lawmakers were invited and attended. Jenn shared that the ISM's auditorium space is often rented out by legislators and the Lieutenant Governor had booked the space for an event just the previous evening.

ISMS Report

Matt Berry provided the Society report. He reported that he had accepted the position of Chair for the Society last November and was excited to attend and discuss the work between the State and the Society. Matt shared that the Society had begun its strategic planning process and is considering the role of the Society and how the Society can continue to support the Museum for the future. The current schedule would have the strategic plan finalized by mid-September or early October. Matt shared that the Society is planning

extensive outreach efforts and community conversations and will reach out to the State Board, staff, and DNR.

Jamila reported that the Society would continue to attempt to draw down the remaining funds awarded by IMLS grant despite the federal situation.

Jamila stated that the Society is looking forward to funding the exhibit for Route 66 based on the oral history project. Jonah asked how the Society and State communicate when doing work such as developing the Route 66 exhibit to ensure efficiency. Jenn clarified that she has a biweekly meeting scheduled with Jamila to discuss progress on projects and determine what Jamila needs to move forward with funding.

V. Old Business

Jonah asked for old business.

Director Finnie stated that she was aware of the need for Native representation on the Board following the resignation of Chris Pappan. Jenn stated that she and Logan had created a list of potential candidates that would be sent to Director Finnie.

VI. Public Comment

None present.

VII. Adjournment

Jonah recommended all Board members to join the Museum tour following the meeting.

Jonah asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mike moved to adjourn, John Barker seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.