

**Illinois State Museum  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
10:30 a.m., November 5, 2018  
Research & Collections Center**

**Attending:** Chair Dr. Lorin Nevling, Vice Chair Leo Welch, Secretary Dr. Brian Anderson; Board members Mrs. Donna Sack, Dr. David Sokol, Mr. Roger Taylor, and Mrs. Rosemary Winters participated by phone; Society Board Chair Mr. Mark Pence; Museum Staff Ms. Karen Everingham, Mrs. Tracy Pierceall, and Dr. Michael Wiant; Department of Natural Resources Staff Mr. Chris Young.

**Call tor Order**

Dr. Lorin Nevling called the meeting to order at 10:36 a.m. Ms. Karen Everingham called the roll. A quorum was present.

**Discussion of Strategic Plan**

Dr. Nevling said Board members should have received the draft of the Strategic Plan. He noted that the plan will need an executive summary and the timeline details also need to be included in more detail. He thanked all the staff for their work. Mr. Leo Welch commended the work on the strategic plan as well and suggested the information within the plan be shared with future new Board members.

Dr. Michael Wiant led the discussion regarding the current draft of the strategic plan to be submitted to the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) on December 14, 2018. Dr. Wiant noted there are several staff members on the writing team lead by Interim Director Robert Sill including Ms. Everingham, Mrs. Tracy Pierceall, and Mr. Chris Young that should be recognized for their work. He asked Mr. Young to provide an over view of the context.

Mr. Young noted the key dates that led to the need to reapply to the AAM for accreditation and outlined the significant accomplishments of the staff during this time. The AAM team came away with a very positive view of the Museum, but they also identified areas that needed to be addressed. He concluded that the primary challenges with regard to the accreditation were the budget uncertainties, staffing, and the Director position. He noted that the current draft has addressed those issues, to the best of our ability. He said Museum staff in all the departments had an opportunity to provide input and to assist with determining responsibilities and timelines. The final document will also include a number of appendices to support the overall document.

Dr. Wiant asked the Board to provide their comments and raise any questions for the group to discuss. Dr. David Sokol outlined several areas for consideration including evaluation of online learning components. He said he did not see evaluation addressed in the document. He also noted a need to demonstrate awareness of the costs of things like traveling exhibitions, and he said a current appraisal of collections should also be considered for inclusion. Finally, he noted there should be more specific recognition of collections conservation.

Mr. Leo Welch asked if the Museum has access to attorneys. Mr. Young said the Museum uses the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff attorneys as would any department of DNR. Dr. Wiant noted the attorneys had reviewed various statutory obligation of the Museum on a case by case basis. Mr. Welch asked who is responsible for contact with legislators on behalf of the Museum. Mr. Young stated that DNR has two full-time legislative liaisons that track various pieces of legislation,

and provide information to the legislature on relevant issues before it. Mrs. Rosemary Winters said she believed Museum staff should welcome contact with legislators and develop relationships with them. This should be included in the strategic plan.

Mrs. Donna Sack said an advocacy plan should be part of the Strategic Plan and that the Museum should continue to present economic and educational impact statements.

Dr. Brian Anderson stated he believed the plan needed to have a better vision of the future of the Museum. The story of the past is articulated clearly and compellingly, but the document should emphasize why it is important to the future. He said there was too much on getting back to where we were. He would like for the document to identify aspirations for the future. Dr. Wiant noted the writing team broke the plan into two parts: restoration and transformation. He added there was difficulty in expressing the transformation. Dr. Anderson said that is a difficult piece, but we should note that we will be looking at opportunities in the future.

Mrs. Sack agreed with Dr. Anderson that the document lacked a vision for the future. She added it seemed like a very lengthy to-do list and needs a strategy to move forward. She said the Museum is still in a state of flux and must stabilize. She added the document needs to be audience focused which includes everything from parking to how visitors are greeted to exhibits and programming. She said the Museum needs to build its' brand. She said the Museum should also look to opportunities to work with those state historic sites that have recently come under the umbrella of the Department of Natural Resources. She said the document needs to look at position for the long-term. These things can be crafted from this draft. But the document isn't a sales pitch and that we have to be honest in what we put forth. We need to look at the future and set our strategy for moving forward. Mr. Young stated that the incorporation of the state historic sites and how that will work has yet to be determined. He said he made a decision to stay away from that until we are certain of how this will function. State processes are slow and there will be many hurdles in the process. Mrs. Sack agreed, but noted the document needs to indicate that we are aware of the possible synergies, are open to a conversation, and are positioning ourselves for that. Dr. Sokol agreed that the opportunities should be considered. Mrs. Sack said the document largely looks at refreshing the existing; we need to look to at creating new visions. Dr. Wiant noted the team struggled with stabilizing versus vision due to the uncertainties. He said the team prioritized addressing the issues outlined by the AAM accreditation reviewers. He said we wanted to give the impression that this is pragmatic, rather than an academic, overly optimistic exercise. He said there needs to be less tasks and objectives. Dr. Anderson said we need to be clear that the Museum needs to reestablish capacity first, and then move forward to aspirations.

Mr. Roger Taylor expressed his appreciation of the hard work that has gone into the draft. He emphasized the need to show that the plan is consulted and used continually—not just sitting on a shelf somewhere. He said he felt the document focused too much on the closure. He added that the highest priority should be securing parking for the Museum. Ms. Everingham noted parking is the number one complaint. Mrs. Sack reiterated the need to be audience centric. Mr. Taylor encouraged more contact with legislators—inviting them to the Museum. He also said the State and Society Boards should integrate more, perhaps hold one joint meeting a year.

Mr. Welch said he thought the pragmatic approach was appropriate and vital to attracting a new Director. He added key staff, the status of the Museum's satellite sites, and fundraising are critical to achieving these goals. Dr. Anderson said the aspirational comments are valid and important, but rebuilding capacity and stability should come first. He added the budget from the State has to be restored and that it is possible. You may raise funds for 20-25% of your budget from this, but it will not be enough. He added that he believes the tasks to stabilize are critical for the Museum and the

document. Mrs. Sack said it is important to be inclusive with regard to the telling the story of Illinois. If we get this right, funding will follow. There grant opportunities to support this kind of work. Dr. Anderson concurred, noting there are many corporations in the State that will support this as well.

The Board broke for lunch at 12:09 p.m. and resumed the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Dr. Nevling opened the discussion again by saying the document needs an Executive Summary. Dr. Sokol noted the Executive Summary could also be shared with legislators. Dr. Nevling noted the timelines and areas of responsibility were not complete in the document, and asked if the staff were working on this. Dr. Wiant said the writing team and staff have been asked to provide that information and it will be included in the next draft. He added that the assignments should probably only indicate titles rather than names given those may change over time. Mrs. Sack remarked the timelines also need to identify targets, such as “stabilize the Museum.” It would also be clearer to present the timelines and responsibilities in a chart or table.

Dr. Wiant summarized the comments from the Board. He said the plan should be broken into two parts; be more positive; define strategies; include an executive summary; move target statements to the top and include action statements with defined goals and objectives; present timelines, responsibilities, and outcomes in a table format; and articulate to process of moving from the pragmatic to the aspirations of the Museum.

Dr. Sokol reiterated the need to identify inclusiveness in a more concrete fashion and to serve different groups with regard to our shared history. Dr. Wiant offered an observation, primarily driven by Ms. Everingham, that the Museum is uniquely positioned to tell the history of Illinois and that the history piece has been somewhat overlooked by the Museum. There really is not an Illinois history museum. Dr. Anderson observed that research and documentation has been done, but not interpreted for the public in terms of what it means for today and the future. Mrs. Sack agreed that the history component is important and represents a huge audience, but she didn’t feel the Museum should concentrate too much of its efforts and resources in that area at this time. Dr. Wiant noted that the Peoples of the Past and At Home in the Heartland are essentially historic without interpretation. However, the *Changes* exhibit does draw conclusions about the facts and research. Dr. Anderson said he would like to see those historic exhibits explore more of what those things mean to everyday life. Mrs. Sack said we should very specifically how we will achieve “first voice” and inclusivity in our exhibitions. She also said we should avoid being too hierarchical, and avoid an overly authoritative tone in all our exhibitions and programs.

Dr. Wiant suggested the Board use the Google Documents forum to share comments and observations on the plan. He said the working team will provide the Board with the final draft for comment on December 3, 2018.

Dr. Nevling asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Welch so moved, Dr. Sokol seconded, and the motion carried.

Approved:

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Dr. Lorin Nevling, Chair

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Date

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Dr. Brian Anderson, Secretary

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Date