

**OHIO HISTORY CONNECTION**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, February 28, 2024 –**  
**1:00 pm**  
**OHC – 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Cardinal Conference**  
**Room**

**Trustees Present:** Charles Moses (President), Melody Young (Treasurer), Alex Hastie (Secretary), Ann Bair (Vice President), Jon Elsasser, Bob Roach, Betty Weibel (Vice President), Heidi Samuel, Jon Elsasser, Renu Ramankutty, Guadalupe Velasquez, Chief Billy Friend, Rich Hillis

**Trustees Absent:** Steve Coon, Greg Simpson, Betty Montgomery, Jen Miller

**Trustees on Zoom:** Betty Weibel (Vice President), Jan Allen, JB Hadden, Joseph Anthony

**Ex Officiis Present:** Laura Battocietti (Director, Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board), Michael Woytek (President, Ohio Academy of Sciences), Katelyn Bowling (Designee for Director, Ohio Department of Development), Representative Joe Miller (Designee for House Minority Leader)

**Staff & Others Present:** Megan Wood, Wesley Newhouse, (General Counsel), Stacia Kuceyeski, Jeff Ward, Ann Ruege, Diana Welling, Jen Aultman, Jillian Ramage, Jerry Dannemiller, Kevin Boehner, Brenda Estes, Theresa Hopewood

I. Call to Order

President Charles Moses called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm. Mr. Moses asked the trustees to look at the handout on the History Fund check presentations and site visits. He asked if anyone can attend to let Megan and Theresa know. Mr. Moses also asked everyone to look at the tentative schedule for the FY25 board and committee meetings. Mr. Moses thanked all the committee chairs for the work done over the last few months.

Executive Director's Report

Mrs. Wood thanked everyone for their flexibility with location changes in the last couple of board meetings. Mrs. Wood mentioned additional handouts, the proposed revision, revised version of the strategic plan, the proposed meeting scheduled dates, and the opportunity to come to any of the History Fund checks hand out and a dashboard in addition to the dates. These documents were emailed to everyone attending via zoom. Mrs. Wood asked everyone to look over the proposed FY25 meeting schedule and let Theresa

know if there are any dates that are an issue. Once the board meeting dates have been settled, calendar notices will go out.

Mrs. Wood shared updates on some ongoing major projects. The Collections Care Center construction is well underway and the plan for completion is this summer. Ribbon cuttings and all celebrations will go out as we get closer to having dates. We want to make sure construction proceeds as planned. Talk to Ann or Theresa to schedule a hard hat tour if anyone is interested. Tours happen later in the afternoon when there are less workers on site.

Ohio Village is turning 50 this year and at the end of this season it will be closing for some work. We plan to also be able to unveil the National Register marker for Ohio Village. Across the organization and state, we had a lot of different programming at the National Afro American Museum, at the Ohio History Center and Harriet Beecher Stowe House and many others. We have an in person and online member event at Ohio History Center coming up on March 5<sup>th</sup> that talks about the impact of World Heritage. April 18<sup>th</sup> is World Heritage Day. Our World Heritage Day is in September. There will be some possible events in Licking County. The governor is planning on the two new rest stops right off I-71 on the north side and one on the south side right where Route 79 hits I-70, South of the Great Circle. Will send out the time once the governor schedules.

Our next board meeting is June 20<sup>th</sup> and our annual meeting. The annual meeting will be held in the auditorium where the official business is conducted and our garden party directly afterwards.

Trustees will be receiving a quick demographic survey in their email later today. We have a variety of funding sources like GPC that asked us to provide demographics on staff and board. It's an anonymous survey.

## II. Consent Agenda

### **Portfolio Line of Credit**

Mr. Ward reminded everyone that Ohio History Connection had developed a relationship with developing investments during the first half of the fiscal year. Fidelity Investments gave us an option that we could establish a line of credit using the investment portfolio as short-term collateral to meet cash requirements to purchase the leasehold interest of Moundbuilders Country Club. The value of the portfolio right now is about t \$18 million. As it stands right now, \$1,000,000 has been gifted and/or pledged to Ohio History Connection. Fidelity would loan up to 50% of the value of the portfolio.

Mr. Moses asked the trustees to look at the minutes from the December 14<sup>th</sup> board meeting and the Executive Committee meeting of February 14<sup>th</sup> for approval.

Mr. Ward presented the portfolio line of credit that was approved by the finance committee on February 7<sup>th</sup> during the finance committee meeting, as a recommendation to the Board for approval.

Mr. Moses entertained a motion and a second to approve the consent

agenda. Motion to approve the minutes and portfolio line of credit was unanimously approved.

### **III. Marketing & Communications**

Mr. Dannemiller recapped that earned media with respect to the Ohio History Connection and the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks was discussed in marketing. The acronym PESO (paid, earned, shared, & owned) was also discussed. Mr. Dannemiller reviewed earned media, the media channels that Ohio History Connection owns, social media channels, both for the Ohio History Connection and for the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks. The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks have been live for five months. For Q2 of last fiscal year (October – December), there was a spike around the inscription moment and a week or two beyond that. The engagement for Facebook users was 35,135. There was a drop from Q1. Instagram followers continues to increase. Facebook new followers for Q4 was 98,000, Instagram 37,000 followers who still had a Twitter feed, which will decommission soon. The marketing team treats YouTube as seriously as Facebook and Instagram. A concerted effort over the last year or so has been made to beef up the library so that the content is relevant and fresh. In addition to producing new content, YouTube video views 22,000, a 62% increase over Q1. With respect to new followers and engagement, except for the slight dip, because of the spike posts are doing well across the organic feeds this Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks. Web data for the newly launched Hopewell site in Q2 had 34,000 views with an average session lasting almost 2 minutes. The channel breakdown shows the Great Circle Earthworks is the third most visited page with 637 clicks, sites overview 1,990 clicks, and plan your visit with 1,187 clicks. Under social engagement rate on Instagram, we have about 500 followers which we're trying to push that every single day. Instagram has high numbers because people want that content, they're interested in it. New followers continue to go through the roof. There was a typo in the number of new followers, it's almost 5,000 new in Q2, new member, new followers on Facebook. We're trending great work for the new ceremonial earthworks site. Our goal is to continue and sustain that visibility that we had immediately after inscription with great content and a lot of other parallel sorts of integrated marketing work to support that and drive to both our website and social feeds as well.

The question was asked how much we're spending.

Mr. Dannemiller responded, in this current fiscal year, roughly \$125,000 in terms of paid media.

### **IV. Development**

Ms. Ruege shared that they exceeded expectations at the end of year campaign.

### **V. USDA Grant for Ohio River Museum**

Ms. Aultman shared that Ohio History Connection has been working on building a new Ohio River Museum for a long time. We've been working on paperwork with USDA and have received the funding. Working through the process we've reached a point where we need to authorize the execution of

a Letter of Intent to award the \$2,750,000 grant provided through the USDA's Community Facilities grant program to be used for the Ohio River Museum Re-invention project. The authorization says we promise within 120 days we will meet the conditions. The conditions are related to the disbursement of funds including that these funds will be the last funds to be used to complete the projects and spend our other funds related to security requirements, insurance and bonding requirements, civil rights and equal opportunity requirements, which include non-discrimination statements. The governing body of the organization needs to authorize the signing of this letter so the project can get underway. Normally the board would authorize the executive director to sign. The USDA requires an extra step of board action. A motion was moved to authorize the execution of the letter. The motion was seconded and approved by everyone.

## **VI. Committee Reports**

Mr. Moses announced that he wanted to nominate Mr. Jon Elsasser for a board elected trustee seat. Mr. Elsasser came in 2015 and filled the last year of another trustee seat that was vacated. Mr. Elsasser was then re-appointed by the Governor's office for two more three-year terms. Mr. Elsasser is eligible for two more years to get his nine years and we currently have an open spot. A second nomination and a vote are needed. All members were in favor and approved.

### **Executive Committee Recap – Adopt revised version of Ohio Connection Strategic Plan 2024-2030**

Mrs. Wood shared that copies of the strategic plan that was not part of the board packet but had been sent out earlier and copies were handed out prior to the start of the meeting. A significant revised plan is being considered for the organization. Once the plan is adopted, it can be shared with the world. The first version was created in 2020 with flexibility because we were living in a world of shifting. Since the plan was first created, our staff retreated a few times around our values and visions. There were several opportunities to work and talk together about our shared dreams for the future. In August 2023, the trustees retreated and identified the top two priorities in this plan. In the months that followed, it was discussed and edited to get to today's version. The plan was most recently reviewed and revised by the executive committee a couple of weeks ago.

Mrs. Wood proceeded to walk everyone through the plan and show how the staff have already started to engage with deeper implementation planning. This is our FY25 starting right through FY30 strategic plan, the dates on it now and FY30 takes us through June of 2030. Our mission is to spark the discovery of Ohio's stories to embrace the present, share the past, and transform the future. This has been our mission for over a decade, and what we are embarking on now. Together with this plan transformed the future of Ohio, but also the future of this organization. As a group, we have identified 2 big objectives that will be our guiding priorities in the plan.

Our two strategic objectives are to capitalize on World Heritage inscription of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks by creating a world class visitor experience and promoting broader economic development in the region and to enhance the main campus of the Ohio History Connection to better serve all audiences and to showcase the broad range of Ohio stories and highlight

our site network. In addition to the broad ambitions, there are operational objectives. The staff will be working on making continuance improvement throughout the time period of this plan. Each year, our executive team (Mrs. Wood and her direct reports) will draft measurable goals for each of these operational objectives. Mrs. Wood shared a little bit more about how we will get there. Since the board retreated in August, our executive team has reorganized our meetings around the two major objectives and also tracking progress on our operational objectives and major projects. Mrs. Wood pointed out one of the documents given, a dashboard that represents where we are today on a variety of goals, our operational objectives. We will present this at each board meeting and will also be using it internally to discuss progress on our operational goals. The staff will create metrics annually that align with these goals.

Mrs. Wood shared more detail about Campus 2.0. After the Collections Care Center, work begins on to Ohio Village improvements, which will begin this summer after the Ohio State Fair ends in August. The Ohio Village will close to improve infrastructure and fixing accessibility and safety issues and potentially opening in about 18 months. Once we're able to complete Ohio village and once we are able to complete the necessary planning and engineering, we can hopefully then close the Ohio History Center for 18 months to two years and reopen with the facelift of the building upgrades and infrastructure and new experience that tells the story of Ohio in an immersive and cohesive set of narratives that also make connections to our sites. Capitalizing on World Heritage inscription for the Hopewell Ceremonial, Earthworks is multifaceted. It involves improving Ohio History Connection sites and experiences, and it also means pulling together stakeholders across the state to create a vision for a broader experience for visitors to the region. One of the most urgent pieces of this plan and our strategic future is fundraising for the Hopewell ceremonial earthworks. While funding for this includes many parts, the work is going to happen in phases. The development staff, Mrs. Wood, our fundraising committee, a group of former trustees that we're beginning to form into a formal group, will focus on the first priority of private fundraising. Before we do any significant capital campaign fundraising either for Hopewell or for this Campus 2.0, this first or preliminary phase of fundraising will commence between now and June of 2025. There is a goal to raise \$1.2 million to support the operations at Newark Earthworks and Fort Ancient and the associated marketing.

### **Finance Committee Recap**

Mr. Ward shared an overview of the finances through the mid-year point of the fiscal year, December 2023. Total support and revenue were \$18.2 million, budgeted amount was \$17.2 million, ahead of budget by \$900,000. Total expenses close to being in line with the budget at just over \$134,000. Much of this is related to some of our capital projects. The operating surplus is \$1.5 million for six months, projected to be \$700,000. Variance were up at \$850,000. Our investment gain, which we consider below the line because those are long-term investments, is up about \$800,000 through six months. Net surplus or change in net is \$2.3 million to the good. GRF is on track for budget, grants are doing better. Earned revenues, admissions, and retail sales are trailing right now. Several thousand people

attended special events at Ohio Village, All Hallows Eve and Dickens of a Christmas. These numbers were less than a year ago but we're projecting some growth in attendance. Weather can sometimes affect these attendances. Dickens of a Christmas is down against budget by about \$82,000. That makes up most of the shortfall in the earned revenue categories. Contributions were better than budget by \$227,000 through six months. The annual fund is ahead by about \$47,000 over a year ago, up about 12-1/2% from one year to the next. The categories for most expenses are doing better than budget except for maintenance and repairs. Those areas are over budget through six months by \$200,000 and \$232,000.

The question was asked regarding salary costs being better as planned.

Mr. Ward responded we have a shortfall of people against budget in the Preservation Office. SHPO office is the one area where there has been consistent employment over time. There are employees that have so much time in with the organization and retirements are going on. Many of the positions are very specialized and will take time to fill the positions. We have two open positions.

### **Fundraising Committee Recap**

Ms. Ruege gave an overview of the fundraising committee meeting held a couple of weeks ago. World Heritage was the main topic during the meeting. Mr. Coon is planning an event that he will be inviting everyone to in April. This is setting it up for success, for a fundraiser up in his working area.

### **Historic Sites & Real Estate Committee Recap**

Mr. Hastie shared an overview of the historic sites & real estate committee meeting. The committee has some new members. Mr. Hastie is the only holdover member on the historic sites and real estate. The committee has been doing some review on that area. Some sad news is that Debra Moorehead, historic sites administrative assistant passed away. Many worked with Debra, she was great.

Fred Smith, our facilities management director is retiring tomorrow.

The committee focused on reevaluating strong work, looking at our site system and how it works for the organization, and how the committee can improve it. Making some of our stronger sites and Ohio Village, Armstrong, and Serpent Mound stronger. World Heritage was discussed as it is at every meeting.

### **Government Committee Recap**

Mr. Elsasser shared the committee was getting organized and have four open positions for the elected Board of trustee positions. The committee has one sure opening with no incumbent before and is currently looking for someone for that. A former trustee provided a lead up at Hudson. Mr. Elsasser will arrange for her to have a meeting. Mr. Elsasser or Mrs. Kuceyeski will send out something if anyone has any other candidates to consider either for this year or put in cultivation. The committee is seeking representation and diversity in all dimensions. The committee will work with Mrs. Wood and Mr. Moses to manage the openings we have.

VII. New Business  
No new business.

VIII. Executive Session  
Mr. Moses requested a motion to recess into Executive Session, and the meeting convened in Executive Session at 2:34 p.m.

The Board concluded Executive Session at 3:25 p.m.

  
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Alex Hastie, Secretary

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Charles R. Moses, President

4.24.24  
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Date

Date

Prepared by Theresa Hopewood