



**History Nebraska
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
July 10, 2020**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by President Lance Bristol. Bristol welcomed the board members and guests. Bristol stated that a notice of the meeting had been given to the press and that a copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was posted in the room.

President Bristol reminded the board of the mission of History Nebraska and asked for a roll call.

Present:

Lance Bristol, Kim Elder, Richard Herink, David Levy, Marilyn Moore, John Nelson, Vickie Schaepler, Charles Schroeder, Pamela Snow, Eileen Wirth, Bryan Zimmer

Board members attending the meeting via Zoom:

Bob Bartee, Ann Bruntz, Tom Kraus, Connie Spellman

Staff in attendance were, Trevor Jones, Director and CEO, Michelle Furby, CFO, and Lana Hatcher, Executive Assistant.

Guest in attendance was Cindy Steinhoff Drake

President Bristol asked the board for approval of the April 17, 2020 Minutes.

Motion to approve the April 17, 2020 board minutes was made by Nelson, Second by Schroeder

Roll Call: Bristol, Elder, Herink, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder, Snow, Wirth, Zimmer

Motion to approve Minutes: PASSED

Members attending remotely were unable to vote per the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

History Nebraska Foundation Report:

Zimmer reported on the status and next steps regarding the History Nebraska Foundation. Zimmer stated that the formation of the new Foundation was publically announced on June 30, 2020. Articles of Incorporation have been filed with the State of Nebraska, and that a request for 501c3 status has been filed with the IRS, and is currently in process. Zimmer thanked the board for their assistance with the formation of the Foundation, and gave special thanks to David Levy and the Baird, Holm Law firm for assistance with drawing up the bylaws and articles of incorporation. The History Nebraska Foundation Board members are David Levy, Bryan Zimmer, and former History Nebraska Board of Trustees President, Katherine Endacott. Zimmer indicated that they plan to expand the roster soon. The Foundation plans to complete a Memorandum of Agreement with History Nebraska to formalize operations. Zimmer added that the board could contact him with questions.

Schroeder asked if there was a timeline to receive 501c3 status from the IRS, and whether or not the Foundation would be able to accept donations before 501c3 status is approved. Levy responded that the Foundation will be able to accept donations and retroactively credit donations once 501c3 approval is received, adding that donations will be tax deductible after the 501c3 status is approved. Levy stated that the Foundation needs to be clear with donors that from a legal standpoint, there

may be a small chance that they might not be able to take a deduction. Zimmer added that we should receive approval of 501c3 status by the end of the calendar year.

Herink asked what amount of funds the Foundation had available so far. Zimmer responded that the Foundation has approximately \$300,000 in funds.

Finance Committee Report:

Treasurer Bruntz stated that the Finance committee met via Zoom last week and found the current finances to be in order. Bruntz referred the board to the Revenue Budget Projections sheet. She pointed out that the June 30, 2020 Operating Donations amount of \$221,004.10 includes a \$199,002.34 donation for the Willa Cather statue.

Bruntz added that the amount of General Fund Operations remaining is \$390,766.60.

Governance Committee Report:

President Bristol began the report with the board's ranking of vision projects. Bristol thanked the board for all of the discussions regarding History Nebraska's vision projects, and stated that Director Jones had converted all of the comments into a numbering system in order to rank them. The number one unanimous priority remains digitization; the number two project is the Kennard House renovation; the number three project is extending learning communities; and the number four project is the building of a new museum.

Bristol stated that later on in today's meeting the board will discuss the former state legislators' proposal for establishing a trust fund for the State Capitol gardens. The fund is to support the former state legislators' efforts to care for the State Capitol grounds, and courtyards. The fund is contingent on mutual agreement between the former legislators' and History Nebraska. That agreement is currently in draft form.

Bristol stated that proposed fee schedule changes for the Library/Archives is also on the agenda and that new copy fees/charges will be discussed later in the meeting.

Guest: Paul Hammel, reporter for the Omaha World Herald entered the meeting room.

Personnel Committee Report:

Moore reported that the Personnel Committee met last week and discussed three topics.

- The evaluation of the Director and CEO
- Conducting the board self-evaluation
- A revised schedule for the Heritage Hero awards.

Moore stated that the board should expect another self-evaluation Survey in September, with a report to be given at the October meeting.

Schaepler proposed a change to the Heritage Hero awards schedule: The board will continue to assist History Nebraska staff with sending out the submission letters and will plan to stuff the letters into envelopes at the October board meeting in order for the letters to be sent out in October. Responses to the letter will be due on December 1st and board members will have the entire next year to present the awards. The announcement of the winners will be made at the January board meeting, at which time the list of winners will be distributed per district, and the delivery of the awards will be coordinated.

Schaepler also proposed that the Heritage Hero awards take place

every other year rather than every year. Wirth volunteered to rework the presentation materials and letters. A Heritage Hero website has now been developed, with a searchable list of the award winner's names. Photos will be added to the site. President Bristol stated that he agrees that the awards should be presented every other year. Jones asked Schaepler if she could type out the proposed schedule to share with the marketing staff for PR purposes. Schaepler agreed to do so.

Nominating Committee Report:

Spellman gave an update on the Nominating Committee. The committee consists of Ann Bruntz from Congressional District 3, Marilyn Moore from Congressional District 1, and Connie Spellman, from Congressional District 2

Spellman stated that board members terming off the board will be Bristol, Elder, Nelson and Zimmer, and board members up for election to a second term are Moore and Spellman, with Bruntz seeking a second term as a Governor appointed trustee. Spellman stated that statutory requirements for filing the slate is July 18, 2020, and that the committee is working to get the slate filed by that deadline. Deadline for accepting nominations is August 19. Ballots are to be prepared and sent to members by September 18, 2020. Spellman noted that there were changes to the application document last year, and no revisions were made this year. She added that members in good standing are welcome to submit applications and that the 25 endorsement signatures from History Nebraska members is still required.

Bristol thanked the committee for their hard work on putting a slate together.

Director's Report:

Director Jones began his report by reminding the board of History Nebraska's five strategic plan goals adopted in 2017.

Jones reported on the results of the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2019-2020. Due to COVID-19, History Nebraska had no onsite attendance in the fourth quarter. As a result, the organization met only 60% of the annual attendance goal. The bright spot was that website use increased by 36%, and History Nebraska developed and launched several new programs for educators. In addition, we surveyed teachers statewide to learn how we can better meet their needs.

Jones reported that the leadership team completed four of their five rocks (80%) for the last quarter.

- Failed to complete Salesforce training program
- Implemented Preservica
- Assessed all educational programs
- Implemented staff capacity assessment
- Reviewed budget and created options

Jones described the educational program assessment process and stated that more changes would be forthcoming. At this time, he can share that History Nebraska has made a decision to eliminate our traveling trunk program and completely rethink the Brown Bag program.

Guest: Paul Hammel left the meeting at 2:19 PM

Jones next reported on the results for the 2019-2020 fiscal year:

Three of the six leadership team rocks were completed. Membership growth failed to meet expectations. We had 1,678 members at the end of the fiscal year, which was 44% below goal. The reasons for the failure is that we have not completely implemented the Salesforce system, renewals did not occur in the last quarter due to COVID-19, and we have not yet determined the proper formula to grow membership at a rapid rate.

Financial Results for FY2019-2020:

- The earned revenue goal was \$1.9 million. We ended up 9% below goal. Considering that COVID-19 closed our doors for the entirety of the 4th quarter, this number is much better than our projections.
- Our goal was \$2.5million from the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation, and we ended up 35% below goal. We expected money to be transferred from Weese Fund to complete the exhibit project, but the transfer request was denied.
- We received \$1,131,575 in grants and contracts, which was 6% below goal. Several federally funded projects were tabled or cancelled due to COVID-19.
- State appropriation was 2% below the spending goal.
- 309 funds were 40% above goal. Jones complimented History Nebraska Facilities Manager, Charley McWilliams, stating that Charley does a great job.
- Total for revenue for the year was \$9,283,334. This is 10.4% below our budget goal, but was a 9% increase over last fiscal year. Jones added that History Nebraska remains in stronger financial position than almost all of our peer institutions. Our growth in earned income over the last four years has allowed us to continue to operate throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Schroeder complimented Jones on the financial status of the organization. Schroeder added that using this time for an in-depth program review was brilliant. He added that he agreed with the decisions regarding the Brown Bag lectures and the Educational Trunks. Schroeder stated that Mick Hale was a great addition to History Nebraska's educational program.

Schroeder also stated that in regards to membership, the world has changed, that growing membership is a major challenge that many organizations are struggling with. Schroeder stated that if we feel we need spend the organization's time elsewhere, he would support that. Levy concurred with Schroeder stating that maybe rather than members, we should focus on regular donors since organizations continue to struggle with maintaining members.

Elder asked is there has been any impact with offering membership promotions? Jones responded that promotions have had a positive impact. We have learned that offering tangible incentives are more attractive than digital incentives. Jones added that we do not know yet what kind of a retention rate we will see and don't know if this will be a viable long-term strategy. We probably will not know for a year or two if this has truly been effective. Jones added that the state credit card system is cumbersome and frustrating for users. We can track that people go to purchase a membership but fail to complete the process. At the Nebraska History Museum, guests are now routed to the front desk to get a ticket for admission, given a membership pitch and a suggested donation, and exit through the gift shop. We will let the board know how well this works. President Bristol added that he liked the new personal communication with visitors at the front desk.

Jones continued by discussing the annual goals for the last fiscal year (2019-2020).

History Nebraska refined, documented, and implemented an organization wide IT solution, including training and a growth plan. We refined and implemented a comprehensive attendance strategy, including price points and donations. However, the strategies developed in the pre-COVID-19 world may not work in a post-COVID-19 world. We were able to document and schedule to make our

Chimney Rock site “Best in Class”. However, we have not been able to implement it since we are not yet open to the public. We were able to accomplish the goal of accessing needs, outline options, and document next steps for History Nebraska’s strategic growth with the help of the Board of Trustees. We were able to document and schedule the volunteer program; however, we could not implement it due to COVID-19. At this point we have not allowed any volunteers to return for onsite work. We did reach our goal to identify options and implement solutions for forecasting, accounting, budget, and compliance issues across History Nebraska, but we failed to finish all training aspects for compliance issues.

Jones reported next on Goals for Fiscal Year 2020-2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)

- Jones reported on the Vision Traction Organizer. This is the document that History Nebraska uses to implement strategic goals.
- Jones noted that our target to be the most engaging and relevant state historical society in the nation by our 150th anniversary (September 25, 2028) is now an 8-year target. Jones stated that we were too ambitious with last year’s membership projections and have revised the measurables to 2,500 members.
- The 3-year picture with the future date of 7/1/2023 shows that measurables remain the same except for membership. We now project membership to reach 4,500 by 2023.

Jones stated that it was a challenge to create a viable one-year plan in the midst of a global pandemic. Many of the tools we use for projections are now of limited value.

However, these are the goals for the year:

- Earned revenue projections: \$1,300,000. We anticipate that we will lose at least 50% of earned income this quarter due to COVID-19, and that earned income will continue to suffer.
- We project \$600,000 in support from foundations.
- We project that Federal Grants and Contracts will be \$1,200,000.
- State appropriation is projected to be \$4,355,000. Jones stated that the state might hold back 4% over the course of the year, and we are planning for that contingency.
- We project 309 funds to be \$500,000.
- The total budget is projected to be \$7,995,000

Levy asked how an \$8 million budget would impact the agency when compared to last year’s \$9.2 million. Jones responded that we will not hire SOS or short-term help for projects, delay filling most vacant positions, and will not hire seasonal staff. This will be a very lean year for the organization and the board can expect that we will prioritize digital projects above all others.

The board discussed the “Issues List” on the Vision Traction Organizer.

- Nelson asked what the “solve leaders in two seats” on the VTO meant. Jones replied that it means that we have people doing two jobs. Our goal is to eventually hire people to fill those extra positions, but this will not happen in the next year.
- Nelson also asked Jones to explain the issue listed on the VTO: “Devise better ways to sell merchandise offsite.” Jones responded managing our own online sales is not profitable, but we are looking at ways to partner with others (such as our current agreement with the University of Nebraska Press). Jones added that are entering into a contract with a store that sells Nebraska merchandise and we will sell the Good Life signs and other unique items

through them. We will continue to partner with organizations that can provide services more efficiently than we can.

- Barteo asked if an intern program could be used to help offset a lack of staff. Jones replied that we already have 20 slots in the organization for student workers in partnership with UNL, and that we also have interns, but it is difficult to supervise a large number of them. Schroeder agreed, interns are an enormous asset, but require a lot of management.

Jones talked about the five key goals of the one-year plan. These are the key projects that we will work on in the next year as an organization.

1. Update Accountability Chart (Right People Right Seats), create and implement leadership training program and schedule to be Followed by All.
 2. Identify options, best practices and possible partners/joint ventures to document and begin to implement digitization plan to achieve one million digital records.
 3. Define best practices, document, and implement comprehensive revenue generating plan including membership, monetization of digital data, retail, and admission.
 4. Onboard new foundation with clear messaging, metrics, and goals.
 5. Document, plan and implement a strategy for including Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion in hiring, content development, program presentation, and board growth.
- Jones reported that we are on schedule to open Chimney rock by the end of the month. Landscaping at Chimney Rock will be done in the fall.
 - Jones reminded the board that the “Votes for Women” exhibit won a national award from AASLH, and we are extending exhibition’s run. Jones thanked Museum Curator, Laura Mooney for her work on the exhibit.
 - Jones reported that we are an anchor partner with the Smithsonian on the Initiative – Made by Us. It is targeting a younger demographic and leverages our limited marketing resources to reach new audiences. This campaign will continue until 2026.

Levy asked if a press release would go out on the exhibition award. Jones responded that we plan to do marketing on the award in the coming weeks.

Jones ended his report by stating that 2020 is hard year to navigate. We have worked with consultant Susie Wilkening, who is the foremost person in nation on data regarding visitor attitudes toward museums. She gave a presentation to our staff on Inclusive History in Nebraska. Jones quoted Wilkening: “This research has made clear that our society’s polarization extends to history...But also that our shared history is a vital bridge that can bring our communities together.”

The board took a 15-minute break at 10:31 AM

Approval of Deaccessions:

Motion to approve of Deaccessions was made by Schroeder, Second by Schaepler

Roll Call: Bristol, Elder, Herink, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder, Snow, Wirth, Zimmer

Motion to approve Minutes: PASSED

Members attending remotely were unable to vote per the Nebraska Open Meetings Act

Action Item: Proposal to create trust fund for State Capitol Gardens

Elder read the proposal to create a trust fund for the State Capitol gardens: "Whereas the Nebraska State Capitol is a National Historic Landmark and History Nebraska actively works to support historic preservation efforts, History Nebraska's Board of Trustees authorizes the board President, and Director and CEO to take action to create a State Trust Fund to support efforts at the Nebraska State Capitol to restore and maintain the Capitol's courtyard gardens. This authorization is contingent on reaching mutual agreement with the Nebraska Association of Former Legislators on how the funds shall be used."

Motion to approve proposal to create trust fund for State Capitol Gardens made by Elder, Second by Wirth

Roll Call: Bristol, Elder, Herink, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder, Snow, Wirth, Zimmer

Motion to approve the creation of trust fund for State Capitol Gardens: PASSED

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Schroeder asked whether or not funds have already been raised for the upkeep of the capitol gardens. Jones stated that the former senators needed a place for endowment, and since History Nebraska can accept gifts, the Board of Trustees has authority to accept monetary gifts.

Nelson stated that he was on the fundraising committee for the project. The goal was one million dollars. \$300,000 has already been spent to get the gardens in shape. The former senators were concerned that the state would not continue to maintain the capitol gardens. It was determined that they had to have a foundation and an amount in trust as income for upkeep of the gardens. This trust is for maintaining and earning interest for the gardens. Nelson added that this is a temporary situation until the group can have legislation introduced to allow the state to hold and accept funds to maintain the capitol gardens.

Levy stated he supports entering into a fiscal agreement as long as History Nebraska has no liability for the project itself. Jones stated that he sent a draft to the Attorney General's office for review. This money does not count against History Nebraska's budget in any way, and there is no financial cost to us.

Action item: Fee schedule changes from collections group.

Motion to approve fee schedule changes was made by Levy, Second by Moore.

Roll Call: Bristol, Elder, Herink, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder, Snow, Wirth, Zimmer

Motion to approve fee schedule changes: PASSED

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President Bristol asked if there was any other business to discuss:

Wirth asked what the board should do about the annual meeting, stating that it is normally held in Omaha. Wirth wanted to know if it was going to be held and if so, what type of planning needed to be done. Jones stated that by law we have to do an annual members meeting. He added that it is good to hold a fundraising event. However, the board had discussed having the annual meeting separately. Jones stated that we have held an annual Night at the Archives event, and could tie the annual meeting to that event sometime in October, and then do a different event in Omaha for fundraising. We do not know what October will be like concerning the virus. We can plan to hold the Night at the Archives as a virtual event as well as a member meeting.

Wirth agreed, stating that this is not a year to plan a fundraiser.

Bristol asked if there were any questions and comments from the public.

Cindy Steinhoff Drake addressed the board on her own behalf regarding personnel issues and handed a copy of her statement to the board members and staff in attendance.

At 11:00 AM President Bristol requested a motion to go into **Executive Session** for personnel, legal matters, and real estate and to protect the public interest and/or for the protection of needless injury to the reputation of an individual and if such individual has not requested a public hearing.

Motion to go into Executive Session for personnel, legal matters, and real estate and to protect the public interest and/or for the protection of needless injury to the reputation of an individual and if such individual has not requested a public hearing was made by Moore at 11:15 AM, second by Schroeder.

Roll Call: Bristol, Elder, Herink, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder, Snow, Wirth, Zimmer

Motion to go into Executive Session for personnel, legal matters, and real estate and to protect the public interest and/or for the protection of needless injury to the reputation of an individual and if such individual has not requested a public hearing: PASSED

Members attending remotely were unable to vote per the Nebraska Open Meetings Act

At 12:05 PM a motion to return to Open Session was made by Levy, Second by Zimmer

Roll Call: Bristol, Elder, Herink, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder, Snow, Wirth, Zimmer

Motion to return to Open Session: PASSED

Members attending remotely were unable to vote per the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

President Bristol stated for the record that the only matters discussed during the Executive Session were regarding personnel, legal issues, and real estate.

Action Item: Recommendation for Director and CEO's Salary for FY20-21:

Motion to approve the Recommendation for Director and CEO's Salary was made by Moore:

"The Personnel Committee has completed the evaluation of Trevor Jones, based on input from the full board. We commend Mr. Jones for his forward-thinking leadership in achieving the strategic goals established by the board. We appreciate his leadership during the pandemic by using the time to move History Nebraska forward, not waiting for it to "go back to normal." We applaud his visibility across the entire state and his commitment to hearing and valuing the stories of all Nebraskans. We appreciate the work he has done to support the board in the establishment of the new History Nebraska Foundation. Based on the performance evaluation, I move, on behalf of the Personnel Committee, that Mr. Jones receive a 3% increase in salary for the coming fiscal year, effective July 1, 2020."

Second by Levy.

Roll Call: Bristol, Elder, Herink, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder, Snow, Wirth, Zimmer

Motion to approve recommendation for Director and CEO's salary: PASSED

Members attending remotely were unable to vote per the Nebraska Open Meetings Act

President Bristol asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn made by Nelson, Second by Schroeder

Roll Call: Bristol, Elder, Herink, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder, Snow, Wirth, Zimmer

Motion to adjourn: PASSED

Members attending remotely were unable to vote per the Nebraska Open Meetings Act

MEETING ADJOURNED at 12:08 PM

President Bristol thanked the board for their hard work, and thanked History Nebraska staff: Lana Hatcher, Michelle Furby, Amanda Pinkelman, and Trevor Jones for their assistance with the