



History Nebraska
Board of Trustees Meeting (Remote)
April 17, 2020

Minutes

Lance Bristol, President, Board of Trustees called the first teleconference meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 9:05am by stating: "Let the record show that we are in compliance with the Open Meeting Act in accordance with Governor Rickett's Executive Order No. 20-03. Requirements for advance publicized notice and the agenda have been met. A copy of the Open Meeting law and a copy of the Governor's Executive Order have been made available on the Board of Trustees page of the History Nebraska website. Today's teleconference via Zoom link is <https://zoom.us/j/983849017> and the Meeting ID: 983 849 017. This information has been included in the Public Notice of Meeting and I am requesting that this information be added to the minutes of today's meeting."

President Bristol asked for the roll call of members present.

Roll Call

Bob Barteo, Lance Bristol, Ann Bruntz, Kim Elder, Richard Herink, Tom Kraus, David Levy, Marilyn Moore, John Nelson, Vickie Schaepler, Charles Schroeder, Pamela Snow, Connie Spellman, Eileen Wirth, Bryan Zimmer

All History Nebraska Board of Trustee members were present.

History Nebraska staff members present: Trevor Jones, Director & CEO/Board Secretary
Michelle Furby, HN CFO, Lana Hatcher, Executive Assistant, History Nebraska IT Team members:
Jay Shaeffer, Kelsey Soukup and Andrew German

President Bristol asked if any members of the public joining in on the zoom conference would like to identify themselves for the record to please do so at this time. Bristol stated that members of the public do not have to identify themselves unless they wanted it to be noted in the record, however, if they would like to speak during the public comment period of the meeting they will need identify themselves for the record. No members of the public identified themselves. President Bristol requested that the offer for the members of the public to identify themselves be added to the minutes as well. President Bristol reminded the attendees that due to time constrictions, the board has the right to limit the amount of time members of the public are allowed to speak during the public comment period of the meeting to five minutes, however there is no time limit for members of the board to speak.

President Bristol reminded the board that the mission of History Nebraska is to open to all the histories that we share.

Action item: Approval of the minutes from the January 17, 2020 meeting.

President Bristol stated that the board members have had an opportunity to review the minutes and would entertain a motion to approve the minutes.

Ann Bruntz made the motion to approve the January 17, 2020 minutes, second by Charles Schroeder

**Roll call Yes: Bartee, Bristol, Bruntz, Elder, Herink, Kraus, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler
Schroeder, Spellman, Wirth, Zimmer
Abstain: Levy, Snow
No: 0
Motion to approve minutes passed.**

Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation Report:

There was no report submitted from the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation in advance of the meeting and no Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation staff were present to deliver a report.

Finance Committee Report:

Treasurer, Ann Bruntz reported that the Finance Committee met via zoom last week and looked over the financial projections. Bruntz asked Michelle Furby, History Nebraska CFO to give a quick report. Furby stated that there had been one error in the report that had been given at the Finance committee meeting. The amount listed in publications \$47,220, had a \$9,000 mistake, it should have been sale of services for contract for archeology. The correction has been made. Furby stated that the report submitted to the board for review prior to today's meeting reflects the correction. Bruntz asked if everyone had a chance to review the report. Bruntz went on to say that History Nebraska had a good third quarter, however moving forward will be more challenging. Bruntz asked Director Jones to comment on the status of fourth quarter earnings. Jones replied that our earnings' forecast looks dismal since we are not counting on earning money from admissions or retail and there will be minimal to no earnings in the fourth quarter. Bruntz asked for approval of the Treasurer's report.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE Treasurer's report made by Moore, second by Spellman.

Roll Call:

**Yes: Bartee, Bristol, Bruntz, Elder, Herink, Kraus, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler,
Schroeder, Snow, Spellman, Wirth, Zimmer
No: 0
Motion to approve Treasurer's report passed.**

Governance Committee Report:

President Bristol reported that the Governance Committee met last Friday to discuss a letter to be sent to the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation Executive Committee and CEO on behalf the History Nebraska Board of Trustees Executive Committee and CEO proposing a joint meeting between the officers to discuss financial challenges faced by both organizations relating to COVID-19. President Bristol asked for a vote to approve sending the letter to the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation Executive Committee and CEO.

MOTION TO APPROVE sending the letter was made by Nelson, Second by Wirth.

Roll Call:

**Bartee, Bristol, Bruntz, Elder, Herink, Kraus, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder,
Snow, Spellman, Wirth, Zimmer
No: 0
Motion to approve of sending the letter passed.**

President Bristol added that the basis for the letter is that many foundations across the country are taking a serious look at how they can increase their financial support, and the meeting is to discuss what financial support we can expect from our foundation during this crisis.

Personnel Committee Report:

Marilyn Moore gave the Personnel Committee report stating that the committee met via Zoom on April 10, 2020, with all committee members in attendance, and that the major item of discussion was the evaluation of the History Nebraska CEO. The committee agreed that they would use the same process as the last two years. Jones' self-evaluation form and the CEO evaluation form will be sent to all board members on June 8, 2020. The board will have eleven days to give their responses and return them to Moore by June 19, 2020. Moore will compile the results of the completed forms and the committee will review the aggregated responses in early July and share them with the board at the July meeting. At that same time they will share a recommendation for salary adjustments for the coming year. Moore asked the board to set aside time between June 8, 2020 and June 19, 2020 to complete the form.

Moore also reported that the committee discussed the Heritage Hero Awards, stating that Vickie Schaepler has volunteered to head up the program.

The committee will report to the board in July about what the timeline will be for awards presentations in 2021. Schaepler stated that the committee will use the rest of this year to get organized and make it easier to do presentations during the next year. It will be rolled out in January so there can be a full year to present the awards. Elder thanked Schaepler for taking on this monumental task. Wirth offered her assistance with writing letters, promotional materials, and bullet points for presentations. Schaepler added that the article that Wirth is doing could go out prior to sending out nomination forms. The board thanked Wirth for the article that she wrote in the History Nebraska Newsletter. President Bristol thanked the committee for their great work

Director's Report:

Jones began the Director's report with a quote: "We are all currently working to manage the unthinkable." Jones acknowledged this is a time of overwhelming loss and fear for everyone, and this is a challenging time to talk about board business. However, he is also an historian, and it is both fascinating and sobering to note that we are living through a time that will have chapters written about it in history books.

Jones stated that he is proud of the History Nebraska staff in the work that they have done. In the past few weeks we have donated extra masks, created educational materials on the fly for those who are learning at home. We've ensured the safety of our collections across the state even though we have been shut down. Everyone in the organization has been doing good work in challenging situations. Jones stated that he wanted to single out our IT and security team who were able to get staff to work remotely in record time, and who also managed the meeting hosting today.

Quarter Three, FY 2019-20 Results:

Jones stated that the third quarter ended March 31, 2020, and although we lost three weeks of revenue by closing on March 16, it was still a good quarter. We reached 75% of our revenue goal at the completion of 75% of the fiscal year. Attendance in the third quarter of FY19-20 was 16% higher than in the previous fiscal year. We were on track for our best attendance year in recent history, far in excess of our goal of growing attendance by 5%.

Jones reported that in the third quarter, the board held a strategic planning meeting and identified new strategic projects, leading off with a mandate to step up efforts to place materials online. The agency also received \$90,000 from unicameral for retirement payouts. LB310 passed, which gives the Department of Revenue deadlines when dealing with tax credits. This law will be a huge help for the Nebraska Historic Tax Credit. The deaccession issue at Ft. Robinson has been solved, and the

final payment to the Cather Foundation has been made. History Nebraska co-published a book with the Omaha World-Herald, *The Black Experience through the Lens of Rudy Smith*. History Nebraska also became an anchor partner in a new initiative with the Smithsonian's "Made by US" program which will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States.

Quarter 4, FY 2019-20 Forecast:

Jones stated that the picture for the fourth quarter is much bleaker. We are not expecting any significant earned income over the next three months. We now have no chance of hitting our attendance goals for the year and it is reasonable to expect that our sites may be closed until June 30. We will also not hit our retail or earned income goals. Our fourth quarter losses could total \$500,000.

The Chimney Rock project has been delayed due to the lockdown of the fabricator in Ohio. Fabrication is 50% complete and we cannot move forward until those elements are fabricated, moved to Chimney Rock, and installed by our staff. Our best estimate is for an opening between July 3-15. We will be unable to have a July 11th opening event, and things are too uncertain to reschedule a grand opening at all. We will plan to open in July, but realistically it may not happen until August.

Levy asked if the governor might ask or direct us to reopen the sites or museum sooner? Jones responded that the governor did not give a directive to close, but left the decision to agency discretion. We are prepared to open sooner if we can, however, we are trying to hold off on hiring seasonal staff if there's nothing for them to do. We do have permanent staff at our sites and we could open all sites (with the exception of Chimney Rock) quickly if we needed to.

Bartee stated that if the governor chooses to lessen some of the restrictions, they will likely be gradual. We should prepare for the possibility of maybe fifty people in the building at a time, we would probably have to test every employee and have PPE available in each setting, and possibly provide for testing of visitors. These measures will possibly have to be put in place until a vaccine is available. Jones noted that he has talked to colleagues in the cultural sector who are planning for restricted audiences and no large gatherings in all of 2020.

Nelson asked what the fabricators in Ohio were providing. Jones responded that the fabricators were building exhibit cases for artifacts, banners, hands on interactives, and the exhibit infrastructure.

Elder stated that he will continue to put the North Platte meeting in July meeting on hold for now, and will continue to update the board.

Longer-term Outlook for History Nebraska:

Jones then moved to discuss a longer-term outlook. Right now American museums are losing an estimated \$33 million per day in revenue. The American Alliance of Museums estimates that between 10-30% of museums will be permanently closed one year from now.

These are challenging numbers, but History Nebraska is not going to disappear. We are not in danger of closing permanently, and in the short term our financial position is strong. We have grown earned income by 55% over the past three years, and we currently have cash available. There is no immediate financial crisis for us, but the long term outlook is not positive. We are unlikely to have strong earnings in the first quarter and it is also very likely that there will be state budget cuts that we will need to respond to. The state's general fund provides approximately 50% of our budget.

Most current predictions regarding the economic recovery of the United States state that it will take years. It will take time for the cultural sector to recover and we should plan in terms of years, not months. One of our core tasks should be to rethink our programs, revenue streams, and business models in the coming months. Our goal still remains to be most engaging and relevant historical society in the nation and we are committed to reaching that goal.

The leadership team has created five goals for the next quarter in the Vision Traction Organizer.

Our goals for the next three months are:

- 1. Focus on our digital projects by implementing a new program called Preservica, refine our documented processes, train, prioritize, and schedule the implementation of our digitization plan.**
- 2. Assess all educational programs and their value; define and schedule next steps for a new post pandemic environment.**
- 3. Define and document Salesforce training needs. Design, schedule, and execute a training program for each necessary team.**
- 4. Implement a staff capacity assessment, look at each seat on our accountability chart and document plans to reallocate staff resources to serve strategic projects as needed.**
- 5. Review the budget and document options to streamline and modify it if needed.**

Wirth stated that she is not hearing about communicating this to stakeholders, etc., and asked if Jones wanted assistance from board to provide a communication piece to help people understand that History Nebraska will come out of this experience different, but in some ways better. Schaepler responded that it can wait because people are unsure at this time. Wirth agreed that it can definitely wait, but we could state that we are digitizing to serve the public online, just to get it on the radar as an important component. Zimmer added that it might even be as simple as a Facebook post showing retail staff scanning documents to let people know what we are doing to keep occupied at this time. Bruntz stated that she has noticed a lot of tweets from History Nebraska focusing on different facts. Wirth stated that we could put information out as a historical perspective about how we lived and survived during tough times. Jones gave a few examples of how History Nebraska has been providing resources and tying to historical content.

Bartee asked if there were ways that we can work with history and social study teachers through the fall semester by sending them items to use in remote learning. There may be ways to take advantage of this situation that will be helpful to history and social study teachers. Jones responded that he has been having conversations with educators around the state, adding that there will be fundamental changes to education and how we reach both students and teachers in the coming years.

Bruntz asked if the staff who are working remotely has access to everything they need do this type of thing. Jones responded that yes, most staff are working remotely, but it is less efficient than working in the office. Our reference staff are still working onsite since they cannot do their work remotely because everything is not digitized. Jones stated again, that our IT team has been heroic in regard to making sure that staff have remote access.

Schroeder asked if the American Alliance of Museums is providing good resources for remote staff. Jones responded that AAM is providing resources, and that he has shared their materials in his daily briefings. Jones added that the American Association for State and Local History is providing excellent webinars that our staff can access for free.

Jones stated that there is money from the federal government allocated for museums. The Institute for Museum and Library Services has grants for loss of earned income, and Humanities Nebraska has received funds to give out to cultural heritage organizations throughout the state. We will apply for any and all money for which we are eligible. However, we cannot expect that these funds will offset more than a small portion of our losses.

Bartee asked if History Nebraska was planning for membership incentives for people to come back after the hiatus. Jones stated that we were fortunate that one of the goals for last quarter was to provide membership incentives each week to entice new members. We are also working on doing some co-op marketing with our peer institutions to pool marketing with Morrill Hall, the Lied Center, and the Children's Zoo in order to work together with messaging to visit all of us once we are open again.

Jones asked the board to look again at the strategic projects that were discussed in January and explore how the resources, timelines and even the focus of those projects could change in the coming months.

Jones concluded his report by stating that this is a time of great uncertainty, but it is also a time of opportunity to think about how we can serve the public better. It may take longer than we want, and it may require more flexibility than we're comfortable with, but we will come out of this a stronger, engaging, and relevant organization. Jones thanked the board for their leadership, forward thinking and their wisdom during this challenge.

Moore stated that she wanted to affirm Jones's direction for the organization. The five quarterly goals assures the board that this is a forward moving and forward thinking organization and what comes out of this will be the result of thoughtful planning and attention. Moore added that we are grateful to Jones and the Leadership Team for details provided today and going forward. The board members all stated their agreement. Schroeder added that he seconded Moore's comment, but added that this is a time that Jones has demonstrated the kind of leadership in the executive role that is critical at this time. The board should make sure that they know what their role is and to be supportive of Jones not get in the director's way. Schroeder thanked Jones for the approach that he is taking and is looking forward on working collaboratively.

Administrative issues – Action item, approval of Deaccessions:

Motion to approve deaccessions with President Bristol's signature was made by Elder, second by Zimmer.

Roll Call:

Yes: Bartee, Bristol, Bruntz, Elder, Herink, Kraus, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder, Snow, Wirth, Bryan Zimmer

Absent: Spellman left meeting at 9:57am.

No: 0

Motion to approve deaccessions with President Bristol's signature passed

President Bristol asked if there was any other business.

Wirth conveyed a message from former board member, Katherine Endacott, who has been ill, stating that she sends the board her greetings, and misses and cares about the board, and History Nebraska, and will be back.

President Bristol gave the public an opportunity for questions and comments. There were no questions or comments from the public.

President Bristol asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion to adjourn was given by Schaepler, and second by Herink.

Roll Call:

Bartee, Bristol, Bruntz, Elder, Herink, Kraus, Levy, Moore, Nelson, Schaepler, Schroeder, Snow, Wirth, Zimmer

Absent: Spellman

No: 0

Motion Passed

MEETING ADJOURNED AT: 10:13am