

**Nebraska State Historical Society
Board of Trustees Meeting
October 11, 2024 - 9:00 a.m.**

**Nebraska State Historical Society - Dr. Don R. Gerlach Capitol View Room
1500 R Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501**

MINUTES

Call to Order

President Sean Flowerday called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Roll Call

PRESENT -

Dee Adams, Jessica Charlsen, Sean Flowerday, Jamesena Moore, Laura Muñoz, Nick Walter, Bob Wickersham

ABSENT -

Jack Berg, Philip Clement, Ben Gray, Rich Herink, David Levy, Jacquelyn Morrison, Arlan Wine

Certification of Publication - Notification of Open Meetings Act

The legal notice required by state statute was published in the *Lincoln Journal Star* on October 5, 2024.

The meeting complies with the Open Meetings Act.

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act is available on the table.

Welcome, Remarks, and Introduction of Guests

Interim Director Cindy S. Drake introduced staff who were attending the meeting, her two new Deputy Directors, David Bristow and Ben Kruse, Chris Goforth, Director of Operations, formerly Director of Marketing, Allan Urlis, Director of Marketing, and Christian Newth, Membership and Volunteer Coordinator.

Other guests included Leslie Fattig, Executive Director of the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation; Gail DeBuse Potter, NSHSF Board Member and recently elected NSHS Board Member; Teresa Breazile, NSHSF Development and Community Engagement Coordinator; Sandra Reddish, NSHSF Western Nebraska Coordinator; Michelle Sullivan, NSHSF Business Manager; Kevin Adams; and Michelle Furby; and Ken Yoho from the Nebraska Attorney General's Office.

Reminder of the Nebraska State Historical Society Mission

President Flowerday read aloud the Nebraska State Historical Society mission.

Opportunity for Public Questions and Comments

No questions or comments were asked.

Approval of the Minutes from the July 12, 2024 Board Meeting

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of July 12, 2024

Motion by: WALTER

Second by: WICKERSHAM

Yeas: ADAMS, CHARLSEN, FLOWERDAY, MOORE, MUÑOZ, WALTER, and WICKERSHAM

Nays: NONE

Absent: BERG, CLEMENT, GRAY, HERINK, LEVY, MORRISON, WINE

Motion adopted

History Nebraska Foundation Report

No one from the History Nebraska Foundation was present.

Interim Director Drake stated that the scheduled monthly payments have been received.

Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation Report

Leslie Fattig, Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation Executive Director, distributed a copy of the Accountant's Compilation Report dated August 5, 2024. The highlights of her presentation were as follows:

- The NSHSF is furnishing \$80,000 towards machinery that will enable the Exhibits Department to fabricate its exhibits instead of hiring outside consultants, as it has done in the past few years.
- \$15,000 for Educational Programming.
- Funded free admission days for all historic sites
- Funded the speaker fees for the Nebraska History Museum
- Provided funding for the NSHS All-Staff Retreat that was held in September 2024.
- We intend to fund the revitalized brown bag lunch program, "Lunchbox Lectures," starting in January 2025.
- Kicked off a \$2.2 million funding campaign to develop and create the upcoming five new exhibits at the Nebraska History Museum. The breakdown is \$400,000 per exhibit plus \$120,000 for the Learning Center. The NSHSF has already received a few low 6-figure commitments to this campaign.
- Wander Nebraska had 197 sites participating in 2024, including each of our sites.
- The NSHSF investments have done well, with a 15% to 21% gain since January 2024.

Nebraska State Historical Society Director's Report

Interim Executive Director Cindy Drake presented the quarterly report—addendum A.

David Bristow presented the plan for rebuilding and expanding the permanent Nebraska history exhibit. This will be developed in five phases, one per year, using many of the items in our existing collections.

In no particular order of development:

- First Nebraskans - (Covering Indigenous peoples from the earliest archeological evidence up to the time of Lewis and Clark.)
- Nebraska Territory (1804-1867)
- Building Nebraska (1867-1916)
- The World Wars (1917-1945)
- Post-WWII (1946-?)

Bristow added that the Kennard House is also on our radar as it is the Nebraska Statehood Memorial. Nebraska state statute requires it to be restored to its original appearance as closely as possible.

Ben Kruse thanked the Nebraska State Historical Foundation for providing the funds to purchase the in-house equipment to fabricate the exhibits. This will allow us to utilize our existing staff instead of hiring outside consultants and complete all phases in a 5-year time frame. The plan is to produce a modular system for the cases that will be made repeatedly, lowering the cost dramatically over what can be purchased commercially.

Kruse also mentioned that he is working on a plan to celebrate Black History Month and is contacting speakers to be involved. The idea is to celebrate Indigenous Month, and then once these two are established, we could move on to Hispanic Heritage Month and so on.

Drake added that we would also like to select a time during the year to honor European immigrants, including those from Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Sweden, some of the earliest settlers to come to Nebraska.

Kruse told the board about the anchor that was found in a cornfield by Brady and his plan to display this in the headquarters building.

BREAK

OUT: 9:55 a.m.

IN: 10:13 a.m.

Nebraska State Historical Society Director's Report, Continued

Drake mentioned that we don't want the Fort Robinson and Chimney Rock residents to think we've forgotten about them. We would like to ask them what are some things they used to do but haven't been doing for the last few years. Are there any of those things you'd like to bring back?

Quite a few buildings at Fort Robinson need repairs and updated interpretation. Overall, Fort Robinson has many visitors, and we need to figure out how to get more people to visit our museum.

Finance Report

Interim Director Drake handed out the FY 24-25 Q1 Finance Report.

Governance Committee

Motion to accept the resignations of Rich Herink and Philip Clement.

Motion by: WALTER
Second by: MOORE
Yeas: ADAMS, CHARLSEN, FLOWERDAY, MOORE, MUÑOZ, WALTER, and WICKERSHAM
Nays: NONE
Absent: BERG, CLEMENT, GRAY, HERINK, LEVY, MORRISON, WINE

Motion adopted

Nominating Committee

Interim Director Drake announced the results of the 2024 Board of Trustees election. Those elected are as follows:

Gail DeBuse Potter, Lincoln - Congressional District 1
Anna Castner Wightman, Omaha - Congressional District 2
Shannon Smith, Gordon - Congressional District 3

Motion to accept the results of the election as provided.

Motion by: WALTER
Second by: CHARLSEN
Yeas: ADAMS, CHARLSEN, FLOWERDAY, MOORE, MUÑOZ, WALTER, and WICKERSHAM
Nays: NONE
Absent: BERG, CLEMENT, GRAY, HERINK, LEVY, MORRISON, WINE

Motion adopted

Drake stated that we will not use the same company that ran the election this year again. We're unsatisfied with their handling of things and still don't know what happened to the 1,600 mailed ballots that went missing. If the board has any suggestions, Drake is happy to hear them.

The board discussed appointing a replacement for the open seat in District 2. To allow time to generate names, it was decided to table this discussion until the January 2025 meeting.

Motion to table the appointment for the open seat in District 2 until the January 2025 meeting.

Motion by: WALTER
Second by: ADAMS
Yeas: ADAMS, CHARLSEN, FLOWERDAY, MOORE, MUÑOZ, WALTER, and WICKERSHAM
Nays: NONE
Absent: BERG, CLEMENT, GRAY, HERINK, LEVY, MORRISON, WINE

Motion adopted

Motion: The Nominating Committee recommends the following slate for the 2025 officers: President Nick Walter, First Vice President Jamesena Moore, and Second Vice President Bob Wickersham.

Motion: MOORE

Second: (Committee recommendation needs no second on the motion)

Yeas: ADAMS, CHARLSEN, FLOWERDAY, MOORE, MUÑOZ, WALTER, and WICKERSHAM

Nays: NONE

Absent: BERG, CLEMENT, GRAY, HERINK, LEVY, MORRISON, WINE

Motion adopted

Heritage Heroes - Bob Wickersham

Bob Wickersham is in charge of the Heritage Heroes program for 2025. This program is run every other year. Nebraska citizens are nominated by their colleagues and peers to receive this award. Board Members will be asked to volunteer their time to present these awards, divided by geographical location. This is great publicity for us and a great way to celebrate the great work happening across the state.

Nebraska State Historical Society Staff Retreat

Jamesena Moore attended the employee All-Staff Retreat held on September 30 at the Auld Pavilion in Lincoln. The highlights from her report:

- The NSHS mission statement remains the same.
- The NSHS values have been changed to align with the State of Nebraska employee values.
- NSHS staff will now follow the DAS employee handbook, which can be found online. Six memorandums will be added once approved by DAS legal counsel. The handbook, minus the six memorandums, can be found online.

Staff is still working through some issues related to all of the recent changes. These issues should be resolved in time, but change is always tricky.

- Employees are still determining who to report to.
- Overall lack of communication.
- Leadership is not showing respect to employees.
- Employees are not showing respect to Leadership.

It was a great day, and I always enjoy spending the day with the staff.

Administrative Issues

Interim Director Drake provided the following handouts to the Board Members:

- The current History Nebraska Bylaws with David Bristow's recommended comments for changes.

The board had questions about whether they have the authority to adopt bylaws. Ken Yoho from the Attorney General's office answered that the board does not have the authority to adopt bylaws per se. Still, there is nothing stopping you from following operating procedures.

During further discussion, a board member stated that they don't necessarily need bylaws but want the board to adopt something that clearly explains what they're doing. We do have to follow what is currently in statute. They have many unanswered questions.

Send comments or suggestions to Lezlee Williams before December 15. Our legal counsel will review these, and I will then let you know what we can move forward with.

- Nebraska State Historical Society Board of Trustees - Role in Operations

Drake stated that her advisors felt this document would help clarify what the board does and does not do in the future.

Drake suggested that, as an advisory board, every board member could pick a project or area within the Nebraska State Historical Society that they would like to advise on based on their interests, talents, and skills.

- Jessica Charlsen has been approached to advise on the education area and grant funding.
- Jack Berg was asked to be an advisor on Chimney Rock and Fort Robinson since he's out in that area.
- Bob Wickersham is interested in Fort Robinson. Wickersham and Berg could work together with Fort Robinson. Wickersham will connect with Berg to work together.
- Gale DeBuse Potter will be the advisor for the Kennard House.
- I had mentioned to Jamie (Moore) in passing that I would like to have a display on Black Nebraskans. Jamie may also be interested in contributing and connecting NSHS with our black Nebraska museum in Omaha, including the Malcolm X Museum and the Black History Museum.
- A project with Native Americans regarding Standing Bear.
- A project about European immigrants.

The board will no longer need a Governance Committee but will need a Nominating Committee to run elections.

Drake asked that board members send comments, suggestions, or questions to Lezlee Williams by December 15. Drake will forward these to DAS legal counsel and report back at the January board meeting.

- Collection Policy Discussion

Drake stated that the Collection Policy and some other policies that were attached to it, which was put into place in April 2021 by the board, is going to be revised by myself with assistance from my Deputy Directors and then I will be presenting it to the staff to give comments. We will be working through this over the next few months. This will address some of the board's concerns about accessions and deaccessions. We will get back to basics regarding the collection policies for the State Historical Society. We may look at some of the recommendations the Iowa State Historical Society has listed in its policies. Iowa and Kansas are the only states in the Midwest that are like us, where the governor appoints the director, and they still have a board. The major thing that David (Bristow) and Ben (Kruse) picked out was the collection policies.

A board member asked for Drake to expand on her statement that the board was concerned about accessions and deaccessions and that they didn't recall any dispute over any of their voting that we had with deaccessions. President Flowerday replied that before they were on the board, there was a lot of back and forth about what was appropriate, how much information was being provided by the board on the deaccessioning plans, and when the board was getting those updates before the meeting.

Suggested Meeting Schedule for 2025 Board Meetings

Interim Director Drake suggested the following dates and locations:

- January 17, 2025 - Omaha
- April 11, 2025 - Grand Island
- July 11, 2025 - North Platte
- October 18 and 19, 2025 - Lincoln

After discussion, the following was decided:

- The January meeting date of January 17 should be moved to January 24 so that it does not conflict with the Martin Luther King holiday weekend.
- The July meeting will take place at Fort Robinson. However, the date may have to change due to the availability of room accommodations.
- The suggested updated list of 2025 meetings is as follows:
 - January 24, 2025 - Omaha
 - April 11, 2025 - Grand Island
 - July 11, 2025 - Fort Robinson (final date TBD)
 - October 17 and 18, 2025 - Lincoln
 - Tentative Schedule
 - October 17, 2:00 p.m. - NSHS Board Meeting
 - October 17, 5:00 p.m. - Social Event with the NSHSF
 - October 18, 9:00 a.m. - NSHS Member Meeting - Auditorium
 - October 18, 9:00 a.m. - NSHSF Member Meeting - Gilmore Room
 - October 18, 10:00 a.m. - NSHS and NSHSF Joint Presentation
 - October 18, 11:00 a.m. - Luncheon

President's Report

President Sean Flowerday expressed his appreciation for Jill Dolberg, Michelle Furby, and the board members. They have been dedicated and committed during his time on the Nebraska Historical Society board. Thank you also to all of the volunteers and staff.

Other Business and Trustees Roundtable

Drake mentioned that the Capitol Gift Store has been mentioned several times by Capitol staff, senators, and others, and they would like to see it reopened. Because the Nebraska State Historical Society operated the last gift store, we should be the ones to get a committee together to conduct a study as to whether we should have this again. We should take the lead on this, but it doesn't necessarily mean the Nebraska State Historical Society will operate it. We must look back on our budget requests and the facts and figures about running the gift store. We are looking to set up an advisory committee on it. Bob has some insight into this because of his time as being a Senator.

Bob said the gift store has been very popular in the capitol building, particularly during the legislative session. It is a wonderful opportunity for the agency to promote itself as the only state agency in the building with our name above the door on the first floor of the Capitol building. People come in and buy cookies, snacks, and books. Even if it costs us cash, it's goodwill. You can't earn that kind of goodwill. We can find some way to do this again, and I'm confident that the Capitol Commission still has the space reserved and would be happy to allow its use by this agency. Because we already manage three gift stores, we should have the capacity, and it's to our benefit. The biggest issue may be dedicated staff because the other gift stores are in buildings with other staff.

Drake said a committee is needed because if we ask for additional staff, the Governor must approve it. We have to build our arguments and present a plan. If we have an agreement with so many departments and employees, we can take it to the Governor.

Bob replied that even if the budget documents have been submitted, that doesn't mean they're set in stone. There would be additional processes to get a budget modification stating what we seek. Gail DeBuse Potter ran a museum with a gift shop. I would like to take this up. Maybe Gail and I could work together.

DAS "Authority over Policy" Draft Document

Drake stated that this document was emailed to all board members yesterday, and understandably, you may not have had time to look at it closely.

Drake asked board members to send any questions to Lezlee Williams by December 15. Drake will forward these to DAS legal counsel and report back at the January board meeting.

Opportunity for Public Questions and Comments

A board member mentioned that we weren't allowed to have Zoom meetings in the past. Does the statute allow for that? Ken Yoho from the Attorney General's office answered that you can hold remote meetings, but only up to half can be remote. If you do remote, any board members who aren't present in the room can listen but cannot participate. If you are doing a full remote, you can participate, but you still need to have a location and staff present so that a public audience can appear.

A board member said that the board is in a very unusual set of circumstances, and its only authority is advisory, so it really can't take any action. Are we subject to the Open Meetings Act if we can't take any action?

Ken Yoho from the Attorney General's Office said that switching from a State Non-Code Agency to a State Code-Agency rarely happens. I'll start with the Open Meetings Act. Advisory boards are subject to the Open Meetings Act. It's not just about taking action but also about discussing policy. Any time you advise the Director, you are subject to the Open Meetings Act. Beyond that, we've already discussed the board's duties, including setting membership classes. You're operating in the interest of enhancing Nebraska's heritage. The Director is not an employee of yours, and they have the authority to enact regulations that would have to be reviewed and ultimately approved by the governor. She can delegate some of those authority and responsibilities to the board.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn

Motion: MUÑOZ
Yeas: ADAMS, CHARLSEN, FLOWERDAY, MOORE, MUÑOZ, WALTER, and WICKERSHAM
Nays: NONE
Absent: BERG, CLEMENT, GRAY, HERINK, LEVY, MORRISON, WINE

The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

Minutes submitted by:
Cindy S. Drake, Secretary
Nebraska State Historical Society

DRAFT until board approved

ADDENDUM A

Director Drake - Director's Board Report
Board of Trustees Meeting - October 11, 2024

The Nebraska State Historical Society is entering a new chapter in its history. This is the first Board of Trustees meeting in which we are now a code agency instead of a non-code agency. During this transition time, I am asking for your patience as we go through uncharted waters. There is no guidebook for this. The only guidance I have is my 45 years as an employee of this institution and the assistance I have received from my Deputy Directors.

To begin with, I want to offer an apology to the board for the following:

1. Last night, there were three board members who attended the membership meeting. I neglected to tell those at the meeting that Jamie, Laura, and Bob were present. I regret this since you deserve respect and should have been recognized.
2. I regret that since July 25th, I did not reach out to Sean and Rich at the scheduled time I intended to due to the last budget preparation work that was due. This also led my not having further communication with all board members on time, and that I did not have a meeting packet for you two weeks in advance. I was late in sending you an agenda as well as emails even within the last few days. That was all on me, not Lezlee, who tried her best to keep me on schedule. Thank you, Lezlee, for all the work you have been doing to keep me on schedule - and also everything that you've been doing during this transition which I know at times has been difficult for you.

Now to give my report. First, I hope you will have time to review the annual report that you have in your packet. I also hope you will read the detailed report that was prepared for our retreat that I requested from the staff about their individual highlights and accomplishments of their job duties the last few months. And that also was an item that you just received in the last few days. We currently have less than 70 employees. We are a small agency with skilled and talented staff in their respective fields. I want them to feel appreciated for their work, and this is one way to do that.

The staff have high expectations of myself, as well as Ben and David. They wanted to know if our mission had changed, what our vision statement was, what the values would be, and goals for the future. Our mission remained the same, but we did prepare a new vision statement, list of values, and several goals for the future. We will also have a new employee handbook from DAS along with memorandums that are just for NSHS and Code of Ethics - all are currently under review by our DAS legal counsel.

I have also revising the accountability chart in certain departments of the agency. This is a very slow process with HR in DAS. It has been frustrating for those involved directly, as well as for myself, Ben and David. Progress is being made, and it is one of our top priorities.

As you now know one of the first changes I made was to drop the branding of History Nebraska and return to our legal name of Nebraska State Historical Society. This is a slow process in some ways due to the schedules of Correctional Services.

We are working closely with Nebraska Department of Administrative Services. Besides their assistance with Human Resources, we are working with their Budget Office to restore financial accountability. This will help us in improving the efficiency and accountability of the agency's use of taxpayers dollars. For example, we now plan to rely upon our own staff to prepare the history of Nebraska. Instead of using out-of-state consulting, firms to do the work. In short, those employed by this agency are now doing what they were originally hired to do.

Today, I do not have members from the budget office that are assisting us, but the major person that I do want you to know about is Gary Bush. He was formerly our Fiscal Analyst, for, I believe, about eight years. Gary is now not only the senior budget management analyst but also our financial manager. He, at the present time, is spending 75% of his time with us and 25% of it back in the budget office in the position of Senior Budget Management.

The Nebraska State Historical Society, as Leslie just referred to, is renewing its partnership with the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation. Which, as she described, has been in existence for the past 82 years. We will work in tandem with the foundation to better fund and work on historical activities which will better serve the residents throughout the whole state of Nebraska.

Just this week, we reopened the James E. Potter Research Room, located at our headquarters building. We opened it again from one day a week to four days a week. 9:00 to 4:30 weekdays except Tuesday. The Potter Research Room services the materials of the Nebraska History Library, including books, newspapers and maps, basically published material. And the Nebraska State Archives - our manuscripts, photos, AV, and government records.

In our Nebraska History Museum, we are planning new exhibits. From ancient times up to the 20th century. All the while, we will also be collecting, not only from the past but also focusing on collecting from the present, as we preserve the current history going on around us today.

We are in process of rebuilding our team of volunteers. Over the years the Society has had hundreds of volunteers who gave many hours to make make NSHS what it is today. We have volunteers now but we want to grow that number. We are in the process of updating all aspects of our volunteer program.

Finally we plan to increase public programming and events that we offer at our museum and our historic sites while continuing to publicly promote the work of the entire agency.