

Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites

Regular meeting of the Board of Directors via Zoom

Sept. 1, 2021

APPROVED

Board members present: William Browne Jr., board chair; Andrew Dahlem, vice chair; Andrew Briggs, treasurer; Liz Witte, secretary; Melissa Caito; Fred Cate; Linda Conti; Jordan Gathers; Nancy Jordan; Thao Nguyen; Angila Retherford; Judy Singleton; and Mary Walker.

Board members absent: Gary Anderson; Kathy Roudebush; Roland Shelton; John Wechsler; and Robin Winston.

Advisory board members present: Steve Anderson; Greg Pemberton; and Alice Schloss.

Staff present: Cathy Ferree, president and CEO; Susannah Koerber, chief curator and research officer; Amy Ahlersmeyer, chief marketing officer; Nora Woodman, chief development officer; David Daum, vice president of finance and IT; Kisha Tandy, curator of social history; Marc Allan, director of communication; and Renee Bruck, manager of communication.

State-appointed representative: Indiana District 82 Rep. David Abbott

Partners: Dan Bortner, director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Guests: Aaron Wainscott, legislative assistant; and Meredith Lizza, senior operations director for the Office of Gov. Eric Holcomb.

Members of the public: Link Ludington

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors was called to order at 12:05 p.m.

Consent agenda

The consent agenda, which included the June 2, 2021, board minutes, was unanimously approved.

Finance and Budget Update

David Daum presented the Balance Sheet for Fiscal Year 2021, which showed assets totaling \$15.434 million and total liabilities totaling \$4.688 million for the year. He presented the revenue and expenses statement for FY21, which included total revenues of \$9.751 million and total expenses of \$9.726 million. He said overall expenses, including payroll and benefits, came in under budget for the fiscal year.

David also presented the year-end dashboard for FY21. He noted the numbers for FY21 were compared to FY19 since FY20 wasn't an accurate comparison. For FY21, the museum system had attendance that totaled 63,063 – which was a return rate of 37%. Paid daily museum attendance totaled 44,207 for a

return rate of 57% when compared to FY19. School tour attendance for FY 21 totaled 1,559 visitors, which was a decrease of 97% over FY19.

Cathy Ferree noted the museum system saw attendance spikes in the spring and summer, but attendance has been influenced by the COVID rates. With the recent uptick in cases, attendance has begun to trend down again for the museum system.

David presented the dashboard for FY21 operating fund financials for the state historic sites. During FY21, Levi and Catharine Coffin State Historic Site and T.C. Steele State Historic Site had a net surplus before allocations, while the other nine locations had a deficit.

He also presented the dashboard for the first month of FY22 during the meeting. Museum attendance for July 2021 totaled 10,597 visitors, or a 95.85% return rate when compared to FY19. Paid daily museum attendance totaled 7,947 visitors, which was a return rate of 104.69% over FY19. So far, school tour attendance totaled 224 for a 70% return rate.

Andrew Briggs made a motion to approve financials, and Melissa Caito seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Investment Committee Report

Nancy Jordan provided an update from the investment committee. She noted the museum's investments now total more than \$5 million, which opens new investment opportunities. She said investments over the past year had a return of 30.5%, which was great.

Nancy also presented a new endowment policy to the board for consideration. She said a deep dive into past records showed that everything is accounted for, but the new endowment policy sets out good guidelines for all endowment funds received from the Lincoln license plates to donors. The new policy sets guidelines about how to approve and document disbursements and how to recognize endowment donors. Cathy noted board members must approve any expenditure out of the endowment. Steve Anderson said it was noteworthy that the investment committee spent two meetings looking at the policy, and that this is a thorough policy.

Nancy made a motion to approve the new endowment policy, dated Sept. 1, 2021, and Andrew Briggs seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

President's Report

Cathy presented information about the state Pulse Survey. She told board members that participation from Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites employees was low, but the survey dates were relatively short and survey participation wasn't able to be mentioned during an all-staff meeting prior to its closing. From the responses of the survey, a few opportunities for improvement were identified including how to recognize achievement, professional development opportunities and the resources needed to complete tasks.

Survey results were presented to staff during an all-staff meeting, and results will be discussed in more detail when Cathy meets with individual departments. This was the first year that the Pulse Survey was available, and the results from the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites were benchmarked against other state agencies. Moving forward, the museum system will be able to benchmark against prior years, as well as other state agencies. Even though this was the first year of the survey, Cathy said it's always important to take advantage of data gathered, and she hopes to be able to have the opportunity to communicate with staff and encourage them to take the survey moving forward.

Cathy also provided an update on DEIA Training. Cathy told board members that she and Karrah Herring, the state's chief equity, inclusion, and opportunity officer, spent some time together recently, and Karrah will be making a presentation to museum staffers. All Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites employees will be brought to Indianapolis for this in-person training.

Museum personnel also will be participating in workshops with Tapestry Solutions for Inclusion. The workshops will include three two-hour sessions on Zoom and are likely to start in October. The workshops will include an assessment tool, which gives assessment as a whole and on an individual level. A six-month program with Tapestry for the leadership team will include homework for the team to do together, and assessments will be taken to address strengths and weaknesses. Goals will be set, and another assessment will be taken in one year to gauge improvements.

The Arts Council of Indianapolis took on a leading role within arts organizations since the beginning of COVID and organized then-weekly meetings to discuss how organizations could navigate the pandemic. Although those meetings have decreased to monthly meetings, organizations still gather to discuss issues facing arts organizations in Indianapolis. The sector at large asked about diversity, Cathy said, and the Arts Council of Indianapolis proposed working with Racial Equity Institute of North Carolina. The institute includes multiple sessions that Cathy, the board chair and leaders in other arts organizations will take part in thanks to grant funding. Cathy said this training will allow Indianapolis organizations to have a common language when addressing racism and be able to learn from one another.

Cathy also provided the board with a master planning update. TDC is currently working to finalize the internal assessment, and consultants will be in at the Indiana State Museum on Sept. 7 to meet with the leadership team and to identify external partners and to conduct an external audience survey to determine visitors who could be coming but aren't and why. TDC will work with LearningTree on the survey, which will be focused on Marion County and is being funded by the Lilly Endowment. After the initial master planning process for the Indiana State Museum, Cathy anticipates working with community foundations to mirror the process in the communities near the state historic sites.

She also presented the FY22 state match capital spending request, which totals \$1 million. Project requests include the repaint and stain of the Limberlost State Historic Site visitor center for \$30,000; a total station, which is used to survey landscapes and localities, for \$80,000; necessary maintenance equipment, including all-terrain vehicles, mowers, a tractor and golf cart, for Angel Mounds, T.C. Steele and Whitewater Canal state historic sites for \$150,000; repair and restoration of the New Harmony State Historic Site cemetery wall for \$100,000; implementation of moisture infiltration mitigation in the Culbertson Mansion State Historic Site carriage house – which is used as the location for the Friends of Culbertson Mansion's Literally, A Haunted House annual fundraiser – for \$200,000; the addition and

upgrades of infrastructure for the school group spaces at the Indiana State Museum for \$200,000; and the replacement of the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site waterwheel for \$240,000.

Cathy noted the waterwheel in Metamora isn't historically accurate as it was added to the mill at the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site in 1973, but the waterwheel has become an icon to the community and to the site. The Metamora Grist Mill was originally powered by turbines, and during the updates to the Grist Mill experience last summer, the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites explained this story in more detail. Some early mills in Indiana were powered by watermills though, and after some discussion, we would like to tell a story of how water power technologies advanced throughout the years in the Whitewater Canal experience. Although the waterwheel at Metamora would not be authentic, the repair and restoration of the wheel will allow these stories to be told to visitors.

Bill said he and Cathy had talked about the waterwheel's removal from the site, but the wheel has become a fixture in the community and removing it isn't positive. Instead of removing it, he said a strategy to tell the story was developed. This story will also help to advance the turbine story, which isn't as fully interpreted as it could be just yet. He noted this is a good strategy at this time.

Andrew Dahlem made a motion to approve the spending request, and Nancy seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Cathy noted the spending request would be taken to the state budget committee for consideration.

Collections Piece

Kisha Tandy discussed a recent acquisition to the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites. A letter written by Levi Coffin in 1877 was added. Kisha said this is an extremely significant artifact addition to the collection as it is the first letter in the collection written by Coffin. The letter to James W. Sulistrom has been authenticated, and it's significant because it allows us to better understand Coffin near the end of his life. Kisha read the letter Coffin wrote to his friend Sulistrom from Coffin's home in Cincinnati. The letter, in part, says "We have abundant cause of thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for his many mercies, and permitting us to live to witness the downfall of slavery which we had so earnestly labored for, but never expected to witness. I regret that I cannot make a larger contribution, but I am an invalid, have been confined to my house..." even though he and his wife, Catharine, did so much to help freedom seekers to safety. Coffin died in Sept. 1877, just a few months after writing the letter. Kisha noted the museum system will be able to tell many stories from this one letter. The goal is to display this letter at the Levi and Catharine Coffin State Historic Site in the future.

Major Projects

Amy Ahlersmeyer provided the board with an overall site status update on the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site in Metamora. The site averages about 5,200 visitors per year, she said, with 5,264 visitors at the site in FY19. The canal boat was running, and the mill was free during FY19. Attendance totaled 2,944 during FY21 when admission was added to the Grist Mill and with the canal boat not operating. Amy noted Whitewater Canal is the sixth most visited site of our 11 state historic sites.

The canal boat – though not currently in operation – is still part of the guided walking tours, which were instituted earlier this year. The walking tours are only offered on Saturdays and the tours have a \$2 upcharge with an average of 5 participants. The tours take visitors on a guided walk along the canal where the guide talks about the aqueduct and allows visitors to get up close to the boat.

Amy noted the canal boat is 32 years old, although the boat was expected to have a life expectancy of only 25-30 years. Inspections on the canal boat need to be completed by Coast Guard for it to be able to operate, and the future of the boat will be clearer following the inspections.

Amy told board members that the museum system is hiring a programmer for the Central Region. The new staff member will work out of the Levi and Catharine Coffin State Historic Site in Fountain City, and also serve Whitewater Canal State Historic Site. She also mentioned the museum system is beginning to investigate succession planning as Jay Dishman, site manager at the Whitewater Canal for more than 30+ years, has indicated his plans to retire within the next few years. In efforts to retain some of Jay's institutional knowledge, the museum system is already placing other staffers there so that they can learn how to run the site, including the grist mill and work with the horses from Jay. Amy said one person who might be interested in taking the position following Jay's retirement has been identified.

Amy also provided information about community contacts, including Steve Collier, a Metamora resident and former president of the merchant's association, and Mikel Beck, executive director of Franklin County Tourism. Steve runs the Metamora website and has been very vocal about needed improvements at the historic site. ISMHS also has been working with Steve to remove state-owned tree limbs that were a danger to his property. Mikel helps liaison with other community partner members, assisted with finding talent for a photoshoot at the location and is a great resource.

Amy noted Whitewater Canal's Grist Mill corn meal ranks as the third top seller across museum system, and the Whitewater Canal merchandise also is top seller. Canal Days – a fall festival in Metamora – returns this year in October.

Susannah Koerber provided an update on the engineering studies at the Whitewater Canal. The Whitewater Canal site is a little over 14 miles long from the feeder dam at Laurel toward Brookville, and it includes locks, the Duck Creek aqueduct and grist mill. This year, major repairs have been made to the park gazebo and handrails, bridges and the aqueduct roof have been repainted.

The Whitewater River system is most active in the state, and over a number of years, the river has moved more than 400 feet toward the Whitewater Canal and a lock. The latest observations seem to show the movement has slowed, and there is no need for remediation at this point. DNR continues to monitor the situation.

Susannah said the engineering study is still in the preliminary stages, but the study includes Lock 25, Duck Creek Aqueduct and Lock 24. Lock 25 is the most visible canal structure due to its location next to the mill and is the focus of local and tourism interest. The waterwheel in Lock 25 was installed as part of a major 1971-1973 renovation of mill and site. Even though a renovation took place in the 1970s, masonry and access issues exist at this lock, and it needs repairs. Susannah said there is need for a sizable investment in the site about every generation. The cost of the needed repairs to Lock 25 total \$1.2 million.

Duck Creek Aqueduct is the only surviving structure of its kind in the United States, and it is a National Engineering Landmark. The aqueduct was restored in 1946 after site was acquired by the state, but the museum system is anticipating major work will be required before it becomes an emergency if the structure is to remain standing for the next 50 years. In 2017 and 2018, 35 beams were replaced during an emergency repair, she said. Still, work is needed to secure the structure due to issues with the abutment and Duck Creek itself. The concrete and stone walls need to be repaired and flooding also poses a real threat to the aqueduct. If the aqueduct collapsed, there would most likely be no way to reconstruct it with historic elements. Work proposed for the aqueduct includes lifting the aqueduct to rebuild the trough that carries the canal with steel framing and waterproof it. The steel beams would then hold even if wooden components would fail during a flood. Proposed repairs would total about \$4 million, but even without these repairs, necessary work projected for the next few years would total more than \$1 million.

Lock 24 is located outside of downtown Metamora, near the horse barn, but it is critical to water flow of the canal. Over the years, the lock has had masonry deterioration, including a bulge in the wall and damaged gates, but proposed work would address the structural issues and return this lock to an operational state. Susannah noted the wooden gates are replaced regularly and were last replaced in 2005. The total cost of this proposed work would be \$1.4 million.

The renovations at Whitewater Canal State Historic Site would total \$6.6 million for the full package, but this total does not include any repairs to or replacement of the canal boat. The full engineering study should be available in late September.

Angel Mounds State Historic Site

Cathy gave board members an update on the Angel Mounds infrastructure state funding. Through a partnership with Indiana University, \$4 million has been allocated for infrastructure improvements at Angel Mounds.

Nora Woodman said the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites received an invitation from the Lilly Endowment to apply for a planning grant of \$100,000 through the Religion and Cultural Institutions Initiative.

Notification of the grants are expected to be made in November 2021. The grant project team is already working to make sure the Indiana State Museum and Historic sites has a viable topic related to the Angel Mounds State Historic Site, with hopes that the museum system would have an invitation to submit a proposal for up to a \$2.5 million implementation grant in mid-2022.

Meeting adjourned, and board members entered into executive session at 2:01 p.m. The next board meeting will take place on Dec. 1, 2021, from noon to 2 p.m.