



The Martha's Vineyard Museum

97th Annual Meeting Minutes
July 27, 2020 ~ Held Virtually via Zoom

Chairman of the Board of Directors Stever Aubrey called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Report of the Chairman

- i. Aubrey gave instructions on the virtual format of the meeting and outlined the agenda.
- ii. Aubrey began his remarks by reflecting on the accomplishments of 2019, including the opening of the Marine Hospital campus, calling it a “historic year” and thanking all those who supported us, especially former Executive Director Phil Wallis, the staff, interim Executive Director Heather Seger, the Board, and Treasurer Dale Garth.

Report of the Executive Director

- iii. Interim Executive Director Heather Seger echoed Aubrey’s thanks to Phil Wallis and thanked the Board and staff for trusting her with the role of Interim Executive Director.
- iv. Seger remarked how 2019 feels “like a lifetime ago” when reflecting on the large groups and in-person events of the Museum, but then remarked how we “sowed seeds” that are sustaining us through 2020.
- v. Seger reflected on how the first “seed of success” was that staff learned the importance of being open to feedback, especially during the opening of the new campus. Surveys were sent and feedback analyzed to update the strategic plan whose themes of inclusion, excellence, and sustainability will shape the future of the Museum’s identity.
- vi. The second “seed of success” was recognizing the need for the Museum to be as accessible as possible to everyone within our community, which included working with the MA Cultural Council, Museums for All, Island Wide Youth Collaborative, The Vineyard Healthcare Access Network, and the Island Disability Coalition; staff and volunteers attending an implicit bias workshop, and Cronig’s and Cape Cod 5 helping to make sure price was not a barrier to people visiting.
- vii. Seger remarked on our large potential for growth. The Museum saw a 365% increase in visitors from our best year in Edgartown. If we focus on access, it will allow us to reach our potential.
- viii. The third “seed of success” was the role we play in sharing Vineyard history with Island schoolchildren. Two-thirds of Island kids visited the Museum at least once during the school year for a total of 2,479 interactions. Seger remarked that giving children “a connection to their community, a sense of place, and a sense of identity” may be one of the most important ways we can carry out our mission.
- ix. Seger concluded her remarks by expressing excitement for the Marine Hospital building’s reopening in the next week and encouraging everyone to come visit for art, culture, and reassurance that the Vineyard has been through, adjusted, and thrived through hard times before. She thanked members and donors for the increase in the number of supporters saying we need their help more than ever in 2020.

Report of the Treasurer

- x. Treasurer Dale Garth began his remarks by acknowledging the momentous year 2019 was and how it surpassed its expectations by having over 25,000 visitors in the over nine months of operation in 2019.
- xi. Garth stated that 2019 was the Museum’s first year operating on its new campus and it operated with a much broader scale of activities, but despite the potential for uncertainty in financial planning, generally the revenue from operations and operating expenses were managed fairly closely to planned levels.
- xii. Garth said the first-year results gave us more confidence in longer term financial strategies and the Museum’s ability to achieve year-in, year-out financial sustainability by having a greater proportion of expenses covered by revenue from operations and earnings from our endowment. Steady, modest increases in operating expenses and rapid growth in visitors and participants in Museum activities should yield these

results and make the organization less dependent on annual fundraising, however, this business model was interrupted by the effects of the pandemic.

- xiii. Garth continued by saying by the end of 2019, most of the major planned capital investments had been completed including finishing the new campus for a total of \$19.8 million. The project was primarily paid for through funds from the comprehensive capital campaign.
- xiv. Outside of the capital campaign, the Museum received donations of \$2.5 million to purchase and make improvements to three houses on Skiff Avenue adjacent to the Museum's campus for collection storage, office space, and other needs.
- xv. The Cooke House Legacy Garden project got underway in 2019. The first phase of garden development is just now being completed for a little over \$500,000, also raised specifically for this project.
- xvi. We anticipate continued capital planning investments will be needed to maintain and make improvements to the Museum's facilities.
- xvii. The comprehensive capital campaign was formally completed at the end of 2018, but the Museum still needed to raise funds to cover cost of construction and operation. The target was to raise \$9 million in 2019 and 2020 to complete the funding for the building project, add to the endowment, support operations for these two years, and build the needed working capital to move forward. Progress was made in 2019, but slower than planned.
- xviii. By the end of 2019, the Museum had borrowed \$7 million under the bank agreement, which was reduced to \$6.8 million in Jan. 2020.
- xix. Another important step was to raise the Museum's endowment to support operations. By the end of 2019, the Museum's endowment had reached \$2.5 million.
- xx. The COVID-19 pandemic, while not a 2019 event, has impacted the Museum financially. There was a sharp fall in expected revenue for operations for the year due to the campus being closed and the number of programs and events being greatly reduced. The specific plan to address this shortfall includes four items: receiving funds through the Federal Payroll Protection Program, raising funds from the Board, reducing planned expenses, and reducing capital spending.
- xxi. Garth concluded his remarks by stating his excitement for what the Museum can bring to the Island and how its business model can work. Getting through these difficult times and getting back to our planned growth path in the coming years is key.
- xxii. Heather Seger and Dale Garth then answered questions from the attendees.

Report of the Governance Committee

- xxiii. Cathy Weiss thanked all the members who are participating in the call.
- xxiv. Weiss stated that in addition to bylaw revisions, the governance committee recently established recruitment, orientation, and stewardship policies for the Board, conducted a skills survey, and worked with the committee chairs on what the Museum's transition to the new campus means for their work.
- xxv. Weiss announced the slate of Board members for the class of 2023, which the committee unanimously supports: Nat Benjamin, Jeb Blatt, Gordon Cromwell, David Foster, John McDonald, Phil Regan, and Cathy Weiss. Stever Aubrey moved the motion to approve these members, Dale Garth seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously.
- xxvi. Weiss thanked the Board members whose terms have expired: Elizabeth Beim, Julie Flanders, Chris Murphy, and Juliana Rogers.
- xxvii. Weiss also thanked the current officers who will be passing their batons in August: Stever Aubrey, Barbara Alleyne, Dale Garth, and Julie Flanders.
- xxviii. Weiss transitioned to the bylaw discussion and mentioned that each member was sent a bylaws chart with a summary of each motion. She called for a motion to adopt the revised bylaws, Aubrey moved the motion, Garth seconded it, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Interim Executive Director Heather Segar adjourned the 97th annual meeting to begin the Martha's Vineyard Medal ceremony at 5:33pm. The Medal was awarded to Steve Bernier, Skip Finley, and Juliana Germani.