

Operations Committee Meeting November 2nd, 2021

1200 West 35th St, River Level



Date and Time

Start: 12:00 PM

End: 1:30 PM

Attendance

Jerry Thomas, Mary Ann O'Rourke, Dylan Hoffmann, Kath Thomas, Jim Jarecki, William Derrah, Trigg Waller, Patrick McBriarty

Next Meeting

Tuesday, December 7th at Noon.

Note on Action Items – Jerry Thomas has prepared and distributed a document of action items in excel format to the staff and volunteers of the museum (see attachment).

Agenda

- i. Operations Committee Chair
 - a. Activities this past month
 - i. Reprise of CMM Festival
 - ii. Lobby Completion
 - iii. Open House (500 people)
 - iv. Celebration Event
 - v. Next steps, continue with phase 2 planning of South Gallery
 - b. Finances
 - i. Driehaus Grants
 - ii. Audit Successful and Complete
 - iii. Endowment
 - c. End of Year Tasks
 - i. Bridgeport Building issues: path outside, tuck pointing, status of drains
 - ii. Change process for existing exhibits needed.
- ii. Communications – Mary Ann
 - a. Ads, Newsletter
- iii. Curator – Dylan
 - a. Acquisition proposals
 - b. Map visit update
- iv. Third Friday
- v. Membership – Daisy
- vi. HVAC Report – Trigg
- vii. Old Business
- viii. New Business

I. October OPC Meeting Minutes

October 5, 2021, there was no meeting. On October 4, there was a short meeting to announce the \$1M Gift from Capt. Dave Truitt. There are therefore no minutes from the October meeting to approve.

Jerry asked for a motion to approve the September minutes as distributed. The motion was made, duly seconded and passed.

September minutes are ready for posting.

II. Operations Committee Chair

A. Activities this past month

Recap of CMM Festival 2021 - Jerry reported the amount raised as of November 2nd, approximately \$104,000 which is well above the \$80,000 planned in the budget for the next year. Jerry then reminded the committee that the fundraiser is not over until the end of the year, so there is still time to make the stretch goal of \$150K.

Jerry thanked the people in the room for their work on the Festival, and then acknowledged and thanked Valerie Van Heest and all volunteers and donors not in the room.

Jerry then recapped the debriefing meeting held by the CMM Festival committee on October 29, and relayed the suggestions from the committee, including

- the idea for a video to be presented at the next years festival showing the operations of the museum over the course of a year, in order to show donors exactly what their money has gone to and what it could go to – to make the typically boring or mundane aspects of museum operations that donors are less excited to donate to, appear more clear and more exciting than a list of activities would.
- It was also discussed ways to correct the two main problems of the event, the confusion on the start time of the event and the lack of larger donations. The plan is to make the open of the zoom room, start of the meet-and-greet, and start of the event clear as three different starting times, to prevent confusion again.
- The plan to increase the excitement of donations during the event is to hold back on more \$1,000 and \$2,000 level donations – as the Metzger’s did this year – to announce during the event.

Lobby Completion - The lobby was completed at the beginning of October, a month later than anticipated. There were also issues brought up of the process for approving changes that will be addressed later in these minutes. Nevertheless, the new lobby is a resounding success and great improvement over what was there before. This was confirmed at Open House Chicago.

Open House Chicago – Jerry reported that there were approximately 500 visitors over the course of the two-day event. Dylan agreed that the event was a success. He noted some issues to for next year: there were two extremely busy weeks because of the lobby opening event, open house Chicago, and the CMMFestival. He recommended that next year the festival be scheduled at least a week apart from open house Chicago. The committee agreed and planned to take that into account during the planning process for CMMFestival 22.

Celebration Event – The purpose of the event was to thank the operations committee and the board. At this event, Capt. Dave thanked everyone who worked on the lobby and on the event. Kath thanked the people, both in the zoom meeting and not, who helped with the lobby celebration event by either helping to set up or to clean after the event.

Southern Gallery Renovations – Jerry reported that we are currently halfway through the planning phase. The next steps include the following:

- more on the Ralph Frese canoes, information both on the objects themselves, as well as further exploring how his life and work fit in with the indigenous populations where the originals for his replicas originate.
- An exhibit along the river gallery about the Chicago River, the engineering projects that allowed the city to expand, and the environmental projects that are making the river safer and more habitable.
- Progress on Bill Pinkney – Jim Forney has completed the digitization of all of Bill Pinkney’s videos.

B. Finances

Driehaus Grants—Jerry reported that he and Sarah had completed filing the report on the last Driehaus grant.

Audit Successful and Complete—Jerry recapped the recent audit. The audit went more smoothly this year because for each transaction, the records were stored directly into Quick Books. Jerry thanked Ronnie, Glen, Daisy, and Faith for the assistance with their help on the store inventory, which was part of the audit. He also thanked Sarah whose help on QuickBooks was invaluable.

Overall picture—Jerry recapped the state of the finances going into the end of the year and year-end charges, including insurance, board insurance, the rent bill from the Bridgeport Arts center. Based on the success of CMMFestival 21 and the \$1M Dave Truitt endowment, the financial picture for the year end is strong.

Mary Ann asked for clarification on how endowments work. Jerry explained that the endowment is an investment account with \$1 million in it. The museum will receive annually the interest accrued on that investment account. Dave Truitt has specified that the endowment annual grants are to be used only for the general operating costs of the museum, not for specific exhibits, as it is much easier to find donors who are willing to give to special exhibits and events. Mary Ann expressed concern over risk, due to the inherent risk of investments. Jerry assured Mary Ann that although there is risk, the risk involved is a question of how much money the museum will receive each year.

Jerry expressed the intention for the group to accrue more endowments. If the museum had \$10 million in endowments, there would be no need to fundraise to support operations. In this case fundraising would be for special projects and exhibits.

C. End of Year Tasks

Bridgeport Building issues: path outside, tuck pointing, status of drains—Jerry reviewed the status of the Bridgeport Arts Center’s flood control plan. He reported on a meeting the past week with Trigg, Jim, Malik and Mike, that there is no update on the drainage system

plan, but the building has been doing other work to prevent the level of damage that the last flood caused from happening again.

- They've invested money into reconstruction and reinforcement.
- They are in better contact with the water authorities,
- have flood gates for every sliding door that are ready to be installed when necessary,
- and are investigating installing sewer and roof check valves.

Jerry reported that the museum took accountability for not doing enough to prevent the flood and promises to do more in the future. William Derrah questioned whether these intentions would help, since the pumping system Chicago has in place that flooded the museum prevented the flooding of the whole South Side. Therefore, he argued, that there is not too much that can be done to prevent flooding of the museum if the water levels get so high again. Jerry would relay this concern back to the building.

Change Process for Existing Exhibits Needed—Jerry acknowledged that there have been suggestions for changes to the museum and lobby subsequent to the completion of the lobby. These suggest the need for a clear and systematic process for proposing and making changes to exhibits, not just in this case, but more generally. Jim Jarecki expressed concern that the change made to the Eastland exhibit was being decided by one person rather than a group. Don Glassell expressed concern that there were errors in the lobby that need to be corrected. Patrick McBriarty suggested that a need for a style sheet for the exhibits to ensure cohesion. Jim Jarecki pointed out that the display that was taken down was very popular with women, and others noted that this demonstrates the problem with one person making changes – we all have biases that impact our preferences for different exhibits and taking something down because it isn't one's own preference may be making the museum less appealing to whole groups of other people. Mary Ann expressed concern over typos in the lobby and suggested that she and Kath Thomas be allowed to review the copy on all signage before it is printed to reduce future typos.

Jerry acknowledged the chain of miscommunications that led to changing the Eastland poster unilaterally and expressed the need for an entirely new system of proposing and approving changes to prevent this from happening again. Dylan agreed to put together a draft of an approval process as part of his work creating documentation systems for the museum in general. Based on this, Jerry proposed a temporary solution of a list with two columns to be circulated to the operations committee, one column of urgent changes and one column of things that can wait to be discussed at the next meeting. See the attached action item list.

III. Communications – Mary Ann

Ads, Newsletter—Mary Ann reviewed the status of the newsletter. The copy and photographs were set, and has been given to Daisy, who will complete and send out

Mary Ann mentioned Bill Pinkney's two solid radio interviews on WBS, and reported that the announcement of Dave Truitt's endowment got a lot of interaction on social media, but was a hard sell with mainstream media.

IV. Third Friday:

Jim Jarecki said that he'd like to continue with Third Friday lectures online, but that the museum should work on getting the tech to do hybrid events. The committee agreed, believing that very few people want to do the event fully in-person.

V. Curator – Dylan

Dylan recognized a new volunteer, a UIC student named Daniella, for her help in the continuing work of an inventory collections plan.

Acquisition proposals—Dylan then circulated information on three items for the collection: framed prints donated by Valerie Van Heest; and three pressure gauges donated by Trigg Waller. A motion was made and duly seconded to accept framed prints from Valerie Van Heest to add to collections. The motion passed.

Trigg proposed donating three pressure steam gauges that were locally manufactured to the collection. Don Glassell suggested using these steam gauges to organize the exhibits to show the transition from sail to steam. Dylan noted that the changes Valerie made while installing the lobby have done that, by separating the schooners and the steamships and giving more focus to the steamships. A motion was made and duly seconded to accept the three pressure gauges. The motion passed.

MAP visit update—Dylan reported that the visit to review/authenticate/validate the maps in the collection is scheduled for Tuesday, November 16th.

VI. Membership – Daisy

Daisy reported that she is in the process of creating a new centralized system for tracking memberships and donations in order to streamline the process of renewals and use the data to discover ways to increase membership.

Jim Jarecki noted that at the festival, some were confused on the rules of membership and renewal. Daisy will update the website to make rules clearer.

VII. HVAC Report – Trigg

Trigg reported that he, Jerry, Jim, and Dylan would discuss the HVAC system at the museum on Friday, November 5. He reviewed the most important things that the HVAC system will provide the museum: fixing the big swings in temperature; big swings in humidity that shorten the lives of the artifacts; and providing good air quality to staff and guests. Trigg noted that these plans were related to the plan to seal the roof to prevent dust falling on the artifacts and guests. The hope is to get a solid plan that addresses all of these issues.

Jerry requested a solid proposal to send to the board but expressed his concern over the investment in HVAC since we are only tenants. He wants to discuss with the building management a financial arrangement that works for both parties.

VIII. Old Business

There was no old business.

IX. New Business

Holiday Party - Jim Jarecki brought up the possibility of a holiday party featuring live music from Lee Murdock. Murdock typically would split the income from concert tickets with the museum, but since for a virtual event there may be little or no ticket sales, he said he would do a performance for a flat fee of \$300.

The committee discussed the possibilities for the event, if it should be on zoom or in-person and to only invite either new members or big donors.

Kath typed in the chat her proposal for the event:

*Dec 11 Sat or Dec 19 Sunday work for me
Benefit concert and holiday cookie exchange
New members and kid focus
Lee Murdock concert \$20 admission accepting his flat fee offer per Jim
Budget nibbles and beverage \$250
Limit 40-50 in house -- can the concert be Zoomed ?*

Kath suggested an event to take place early next year. The consensus from the Operations Committee agreed that an event early next year would be preferred to a December event.

William Derrah suggested an in-house event to thank volunteers with no live music to take place around the holidays. Mary Ann pointed out that we have just done that with the lobby opening event.

A motion was made and duly seconded to not have a holiday party. The discussion affirmed that the committee and staff are coming off of a very busy October – including the lobby celebration, and they believed that this was very much like a holiday party. The motion passed.

Technology required for hybrid events – In order to do hybrid events, the museum would require a flat screen tv in the southern gallery, a microphone system that broadcasts to and between the in-person and zoom audiences, and a video conferencing system. Mary Ann O'Rourke suggested speaking to Jim Forney about the set-up details and technology recommendations. Jerry agreed and asked for someone in the committee to get a dollar amount for the systems in order to submit for approval to the board. Patrick McBriarty thought he knew someone that had done this estimate in the past and would provide that information to Jerry.

Christmas Tree Educational Programs – Jim Jarecki brought up an educational group that wants to do a program on the Christmas Tree ships that would include Lee Murdock speaking and singing, that would have the CMM branding and that would require little active participation from CMM. Mary Ann expressed concern that it's too late in the year to figure this out. Jim Jarecki said he thinks this is a good idea because it gives the program a one classroom trial run, and we can use that feedback to create a more robust program next year. Dylan offered to figure it out. Jerry approved Dylan's time for "figuring it out" on the condition that it not require more than half a day of Dylan's time. Mary Ann moved to move forward with the planning for this educational event. The motion was duly seconded and passed.

Mary Ann reminded the Operations Committee that inclusion and diversity should remain a core aspect of the museum's mission and that the museum should maintain the ideas of Waterways for All even though the festival is over and the fundraiser is coming to a close.

A motion to adjourn was duly made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.

Submitted by Daisy Morey