



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD AGENDA
556 W. Maple
Thursday, August 3, 2023
5:00 PM**

Mission Statement: *The Birmingham Museum will explore meaningful connections with our past, in order to enrich our community and enhance its character and sustainability. Our mission is to promote understanding of Birmingham's historical and cultural legacy through preservation and interpretation of its ongoing story.*

- 1. Election of Chair**
- 2. Call to Order**
- 3. Roll Call**
- 4. Approval of the Minutes**
Minutes of June 1, 2023
- 5. New Business**
 - A. Interpretive Plan for Site, Continued
- 6. Communication and Reports**
 - A. Director Report
 - B. Member comments
 - C. Public comments
- 7. Next Meeting: September 7, 2023**
- 8. Adjournment**

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**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD MEETING
556 W. Maple
Thursday, July 6, 2023
5:00 PM**

Members Present: Caroline Ashleigh, Bev Erickson, Alexandra Harris, Marty Logue

Members Absent: Pat Hughes, Judith Keefer, Jay Shell

Student Members Present: Alexander Motea

Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack

Guests: Kristy Barrett

Chairperson Logue called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

**Approval of the Minutes
Minutes of June 1, 2023**

MOTION: by Ashleigh, seconded by Logue:

To approve the minutes of June 1, 2023.

VOTE: Yeas, 4
Nays, 0

New Business

Members reviewed interpretive planning issues relating to the museum site (with the exception of the Hunter House, which has its own Interpretive Plan) of the grounds/landscape, Allen House and former schoolhouse site, and actual physical and digital objects in the museum's permanent collection. For the first two steps in the process, museum staff proposed overall objectives and key interpretive themes that offer cohesiveness and consistency to our overall interpretive activities. After discussion and clarification, the following objectives were established by consensus:

1. Enhancement of visitor experience
 - a. Engagement opportunities
 - b. Educational experiences
2. Enhancement of collection and historical resources
 - a. Artifacts
 - b. Information
3. Increased community support
 - a. Manpower/volunteer resources
 - b. Financial donations
4. Civic engagement/partnerships

The following interpretive themes were established by consensus:

1. Glacial landscape, Rouge River, and Indigenous Peoples
 - a. Physical characteristics of site, landscape, and region
 - b. Importance of Native American occupation and relationships
 - c. Saginaw Trail, early settlement
2. Building of Birmingham; expansion from village to city
 - a. Agriculture
 - b. Manufacturing
 - c. Commerce
 - d. Shaping of Birmingham; role in Oakland County
 - i. Early schools
 - ii. Clizbe/Village
 - iii. Harry/Marion Allen
 - iv. Allen House, pool and polio
3. 19th to 21st century culture and everyday life
 - a. Adult and children roles
 - b. Migration
 - c. Foodways
 - d. Cultural change
4. Preservation/conservation movement; how a community's needs change over time

Communication and Reports

Director Pielack clarified that the museum's strategic plan would not need to be reviewed and updated until the end of 2023, rather than this year as she previously announced. The Hunter House Interpretive Plan, however, is due for review and updating at the end of this year.

Member Comments

Ms. Ashleigh inquired about the potential marker for the Elijah Fish burial site that would perhaps have a QR code and a small amount of text to explain the designation of the site and the repair/restoration of the grave marker. She was curious about whether there is a city-wide program of any kind to install signage at historic sites. The museum currently does not have such a program; the Historic District Commission has been looking at various designation opportunities and a number of years ago there was a program that installed signage on some of the commercial buildings downtown. Ms. Erickson inquired about whether there are multi-community programs that maintain the Rouge River; however at this time, each municipality handles this individually.

Public Comments

Ms. Barrett announced that she has applied for the Alternate Museum Board position and will be interviewed by the City Commission at their next meeting.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 3, at 5:00 PM.

Ms. Logue adjourned the meeting at 5:53 PM.

Museum Site Interpretive Planning, Part II (August)

Established Objectives:

1. *Enhancement of visitor experience*
 - a. *Engagement opportunities*
 - b. *Educational experiences*
2. *Enhancement of collection and historical resources*
 - a. *Artifacts*
 - b. *Information*
3. *Increased community support*
 - a. *Manpower/volunteer resources*
 - b. *Financial donations*
4. *Civic engagement/partnerships*

Established Interpretive Themes:

1. *Glacial landscape, Rouge River, and Indigenous Peoples*
 - a. *Physical characteristics of site, landscape, and region*
 - b. *Importance of Native American occupation and relationships*
 - c. *Saginaw Trail, early settlement*
2. *Building of Birmingham; expansion from village to city*
 - a. *Agriculture*
 - b. *Manufacturing*
 - c. *Commerce*
 - d. *Shaping of Birmingham; role in Oakland County*
 - i. *Early schools*
 - ii. *W.D. Clizbe/Village*
 - iii. *Harry/Marion Allen*
 - iv. *Allen House, pool and polio*
3. *19th to 21st century culture and everyday life*
 - a. *Adult and children roles*
 - b. *Migration*
 - c. *Foodways*
 - d. *Cultural change*
4. *20th century preservation/conservation movement; how the community's needs changed over time*

Historic and Cultural Resources

1. Allen House (the Hunter House has a separate Interpretive Plan)
2. Grounds
 - a. Pool
 - i. Natural springs/environmental importance
 - ii. Allen swimming pool; Jim Allen's polio history
 - iii. Wildlife, native plantings
 - b. Gardens
 - i. Heritage plants
 - ii. Water gardens for storm water management
 - iii. Pathways
 - c. Walls-19th century
 - d. Rouge River
3. Hill School Bell and structure
4. Main museum sign

1. Permanent collection
 - a. Audio/visual materials
 - b. Born digital/digital only objects
 - c. 2-D objects and archives
 - i. Documents, books, and ledgers
 - ii. Photos
 - iii. *Creem Magazine* archives
 - iv. Vertical files and information
 - d. 3-D objects
2. Use collection
3. Greenwood Cemetery and digital FindAGrave files
4. Professional staff
5. Trained/professional volunteers
6. Traveling exhibit materials
7. _____
8. _____



Director Report

DATE: August 3, 2023
TO: Museum Board
FROM: Leslie Pielack, Museum Director
SUBJECT: Director Report

Allen House Windows, Phase II—The final repairs are being completed, and we anticipate the windows will be reinstalled on the interior some time in August. The re-installation will be minimally disruptive during our public hours. We look forward to the conclusion of the project and the installation of our new protective storm windows this fall.

Construction of Phase 1 and 2 of the ADA/Barrier Free parking and path is queued up and planned for mid-August. It will be a two-day project or so, weather depending.

Podcast—"Birmingham, Uncovered" is getting more attention, both locally and with some downloads from unexpected places around the globe, such as the Middle East. The recent episode on Rhoda Bingham Daniels hit a new high for the museum in downloads in the first 24 hours it was available—almost 40 in the first day. Caitlin and the podcast will also be featured in a video promotion by the City at some point, so stay tuned! She will be doing programs on a whole range of colorful characters from Birmingham's past. The podcasts launch every week, so check in on Thursdays to get the latest twist on Birmingham's story, courtesy of Caitlin Donnelly.

Yearbook Digitization—The museum has completed the sorting phase of the deaccession project and is preparing to digitize the available yearbooks for online access. This will take some time yet, but the goal is to share the digitized and searchable materials with the public. Updates to come.

UGRR in Oakland County: The museum-led project has begun to narrow down a selection of individuals who were freedom seekers as well as abolitionists or those who engaged in anti-slavery activities. Some eye-opening stories have emerged, and will be included in some of the second phase grant application. The second phase will include an expanded educational objective to develop actual curriculum materials, an expansion of research into other communities in Oakland County, and the inclusion of a special legal history consultant to sift through legal records to help identify local activities during the most active time of the Underground Railroad, in the mid-19th century.

Aging in Place Ad Hoc Committee: The City has formed and appointed an ad hoc committee to update and study the current status of aging in place issues in Birmingham, and create a report with recommendations to the City Commission. The goals of the committee go beyond senior services to consider a wide range of needs, including housing, transportation, and other issues facing families who want to remain in Birmingham as they age. Former City Manager Tom Markus recommended that the museum be represented on the committee, and the commission appointed Director Pielack to the 18-month committee. One early activity will be conducting a survey of the community, so stay tuned for more information this fall.

Collection Update: The museum has received donations of items for the Use Collection that will be used in the Hunter House to help tell the story of 19th century life. A few items will also be used to add to the kitchen display in the Allen House.