

Abita Springs Trailhead Museum (ASTM) Board Meeting Minutes January 18, 2023 at the Museum

Minutes taken by Courtney Blicht, Secretary

Members Present: Calissa Folsie, Stewart Eastman, George Long, Courtney Blicht, Ron Blicht, Jimmy Nelson, Felicia Walker, Martha Gruning, Melissa Smith, Geralyn Lips

Absent with notice: Niki Mendow

Visiting: Kerry Brandon

- Meeting called to order at 5:06pm by George Long, President
- Stewart moved that minutes of the December 2022 meeting be approved. Martha seconded the motion, which was approved.
- Financial report by Martha
Account balance is \$37,778.15 as of December 31, 2022.
Gross income for the year 2022: \$26,822.54 Expenses: \$30,759.06
Net income for 2022: -\$3,936.52

Unfinished Business

- Flooring bids: Martha reported that the three bids must be updated to include refinishing with cabinets remaining inside the museum. Must also include removing, painting, and replacing baseboards. The Town has not yet approved although bids are lower than originally budgeted.
- Earth Day plans: George and Stewart will meet with the Town and others involved in plans for the Choctaw portion of an Earth Day event. Items to be discussed would be to assess potential involvement, a long term plan, and development of a heritage trail and bike route.
ACTION ITEM: George will schedule the meeting within the next two weeks.

New Business

- Response to TOAS letter from Officers: Martha was dismayed at the Town's response when Officers inquired about a random \$1500 charge to the Museum for replacement of exterior deck rails. The Town thought it was fair since there are many expenses which we do not pay. Without our knowledge, the Town stopped following the previously agreed upon allocation for maintenance and administrative costs. Martha explained in the letter that we are volunteers and the Museum is not a profit center. She explained that volunteers want to raise money in support of our mission and not to raise money to cover such costs. Courtney said it was very discouraging when the Mayor said he could spend the money on tiddlywinks if he wanted to. The Mayor said he does not read his emails and it is more effective to speak to him in person.

Martha suggested that when we turn in our annual budget each November, Officers should sit down with the Mayor to discuss what capital projects the board may consider supporting. Geralyn said we have relinquished Push Mow Parade, the Garage Sale, and now the Busker Festival as sources of income. Martha clarified that ASTM donated \$950 last year for a sound system at the Busker Festival and a fee for its coordinator. Discussion ensued regarding whether or not we should continue with this support since we no longer benefit directly from it.

- Board Officers election: Since no nominations were submitted, Felicia motioned to close nominations and Jimmy seconded. The Board voted unanimously to continue with current officers. George and Courtney informed the Board that after ten years of service this would be their last year. George encouraged other board members to recruit potential new board members in the future. He also asked them to consider serving as Officers.

- En Plein Air: Dates confirmed by TOAS as April 21-23. Ron provided an update indicating that 12 artists have signed up so far and is hoping for 25. He is encouraged that there are four new artists this year. Cleco has again provided \$1500 as sponsorship support.

ACTION ITEM: George and Lynnette Soules will get a press release to media outlets.

Ron explained to the new board members that the Museum receives 30% of all sales at the event.

Kerry Brandon offered his support on technical issues as a volunteer.

- Francis Broussard event report: George said there was a full house with about 40 in attendance for the event presented by Francis and the state archaeologist, Chip McGimsey. George said the audience was engaged and that the new sound system worked very well. Two more events with Francis are upcoming.

- Quilt show: Dates confirmed for March 10-12, setup on March 9. Courtney and George met with Adrienne Petrosini and Ozone Layers Quilt Guild president Becky Hill at Town Hall. The guild will handle security, setup and breakdown, and reception details.

ACTION ITEM: George will speak with the Town regarding insurance issues.

- Totem advertising: Dave Kelsey will make recommendations for refurbishing the pole and individual signs.

ACTION ITEM: George will follow up with the Town to create a contract for potential advertisers.

ACTION ITEM: George will put photos of the totem on our Museum website to give better credit for their support.

- Trees project update: Courtney sent emails to TOAS regarding continuation of the project. In particular, there were two plaques in the Town office that had not yet been placed. The Mayor said the Town will not be placing plaques any longer but the Museum is welcome to continue selling the trees as memorials. Ron offered support to administer this.

- Display of beer steins: Stewart suggested a display of his beer steins. George suggested he plan this in relation to other seasonal events related to Oktoberfest.

ACTION ITEM: Stewart will follow up on what format this might follow.

- Ethics certificates: 2023 certificates have not been received from three board members.
- 2022 in review: Martha said George continues to incorporate email addresses given to us by visitors for use in our email list. Geralyn wondered if there was some incentives to encourage people to serve as docents but no one had any suggestions.

ACTION ITEM: Melissa offered her support in recruiting docents, perhaps students who need internships or service hours.

George cited statistics about our reach. We have 1900 addresses on our email list. The open rate on a recent blast was 43%, 1200 opens, and 53 link clicks. He said the list was underutilized with only three mailings in 2022. He said he thought triggers for those who open emails are mentions in the subject line regarding the garage sale and the Busker Festival in particular, the Town's most popular events.

Tech upgrades will continue. Kerry suggested that we create graphics he could incorporate into his live streams of these events that would highlight our sponsors and events.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30pm, moved by Stewart, seconded by Martha.

Next board meeting is scheduled for 5pm on Wednesday, February 15.