

**WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES**

ENTITY: WSHS Board of Trustees  
DATE: Thursday, March 8, 2018  
LOCATION: Fort Nisqually Museum  
TRUSTEES PRESENT: Larry Kopp, President, Ryan Pennington, VP West, Bob Carriker, VP East, Sally Barline, Natalie Bowman, Carol Coe (representing Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal), Suzie Dicks, Jim Garrison, Sheryl Stiefel, Beth Willis  
STAFF PRESENT: Jennifer Kilmer, Director; Susan Hesselgrave, Executive Assistant to the Director;  
GUESTS PRESENT: John Meader, AAG

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Called to order at 1:00 PM, President Larry Kopp presiding.

II. Consent Items

a. Minutes September 23, 2017 Meeting [Exhibit 1]

b. Future Board Meeting Schedule [Exhibit 2]

There was discussion of the long gap between the September and March meetings. Currently the bylaws stipulate three regular meetings annually. Director Jennifer Kilmer affirmed that she would like to see a fourth meeting added to the regular schedule. She will research possible winter dates, with the meeting to occur prior to the start of the legislative session. Jim Garrison offered that the Governance Committee review the bylaws and propose suggested changes to the board at a future meeting.

c. Finance Report [Exhibit 3]

Bob Carriker moved to approve Exhibits 1-3 as presented. Sheryl Stiefel seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

III. Board Training – John Meader, Assistant Attorney General, State of Washington

Topic: Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) and Public Records Act (PRA) [See Attachments A & B].

This training session for the trustees is one part of WSHS' compliance with the OPMA and PRA.

IV. Director's Report—Jennifer Kilmer [Exhibit 4]

Toytopia is a hit, with over 1600 visitors opening weekend. There has been very good marketing exposure in Tacoma and regionally.

President Larry Kopp praised the high quality of the presentation and orchestration of Governor Jay Inslee's visit and public opening of WSHS's Great Hall of Washington History's new entry portal and newest exhibits on January 18, 2018, with Mayor Woodards in attendance. "These upgrades, utilizing the best technologies and artifacts, depict the richness of the pre and early history of our region and our Washington emigrants and together serve as an introductory taste of the exciting renovations yet to come thanks to the support of the Washington state legislature and administration."

Master planning is starting the week of March 12, focused on an overarching vision for the future development of the Great Hall and focused on relevance to the public and audience engagement.

Jennifer Kilmer shared her participation on the American Association for State and Local History Council (AASLH), the Women's Suffrage Centennial Taskforce, and the USA250 Commemoration at the national level.

VP Bob Carriker congratulated Jennifer Kilmer on her invitations to serve in such prestigious roles as AASLH board member and others, noting that she deserves credit for cultivating those relationships and raising the national reputation of WSHS.

Kilmer added that the purpose of USA250 was for AASLH to get out in front in shaping the 250 celebration, expanding to from traditionally regionally-based interpretation to a wider audience, focused on what it means to be an American. She noted that the hope was that, similar to the bicentennial, this would usher in new heritage-focused granting.

In staff changes, Laura Berry has left WSHS to take on a consulting project, and Lianna Shepherd has been hired to step into the Director of Development position. She will start at the beginning of April.

Regarding the repair of the failed pedestal system on the plaza, the current proposition is that the contractor replace at no charge the failed pedestals and reinstate the warranty start date as of date of replacement. If the system fails again, we will go through legal action.

Natalie Bowman inquired as to the status of the currently closed museum gift shop. Jennifer Kilmer reported she is working with two potential tenants: an artist/gallery, and Spaceworks. It is likely that any lease arrangement will agree to six months rent-free to get them established in the space, which will involve set-up costs on their part.

Regarding collections, Bob Carriker asked whether the current halt on acceptance of new collections items was potentially disadvantageous to our reaccreditation process. Jennifer Kilmer elaborated that it was not a complete halt and that if Lynette was presented with something exceptional, she was bringing that to Jennifer for consideration. Further, Jennifer thought Collections staff was making such good progress on boxing and shelving items, she felt that they were going to complete earlier than previously thought, and that would free them up to resume acceptance of new items. Also, anything that was in the process of acquisition is going forward. For instance, a Dan Newhouse plaque has recently been accepted. In regard to staffing at the Research Center, we've increased staffing there by 1.5 FTE over the past six years. It was agreed to begin acquiring items again at Lynette Miller's discretion so long as progress continues on reshelving and processing.

V. Policy, Planning & Governance

a. Legislative Report – Jennifer Kilmer [Exhibit 5]

Many good outcomes from this 2018 legislative session, as detailed in the report. Happily, we are the lead agency to carry out the Women's Suffrage Commemoration.

At the last minute, History Day funding got folded into the larger civics bill for OSPI, which although passed, was only a fraction of what they had requested. So it is unlikely for us to see any History Day funding from that. Jennifer Kilmer will be reaching out to OSPI to advocate that WSHS continue to manage History Day as we have done in the past, with funding out of our own budget and participant fees.

Regarding capital projects funding, Bob Carriker asked about the Research Center and an engineering study of that site, which has been requested on multiple occasions for that building. Kilmer said that the Research Center was also part of the master planning process – how best to use or modify our assets to carry out our mission. It was pointed out that the ownership of the Research Center was complex, and that the City of Tacoma had a claim on it if WSHS were to stop using it. There was a general sentiment that this would have to be negotiated with care. Further, the Board of Trustees will be involved in the master planning and visioning process.

In summary, for operations we asked for \$1+million, we received 200K. This is a step in the right direction. We will continue to pursue funding, asking that the state support the agency at an adequate level.

b. Finance Committee – Jennifer Kilmer (for Alex McGregor, Chair)

The board was queried as to their thoughts on the new format of the Finance Report. There was general agreement that having the additional detail and narrative was very helpful. Larry Kopp asked that an executive summary top sheet be added to future reports, and others agreed.

Regarding the reserve funds: We have had the Station Camp monies noted on our balance sheet in previous reports, they have now been removed. They have never been counted as part of our reserve funds. Larry Kopp applauded the successful completion of the process to return the Station Camp funds to the State of Washington capital fund. He noted the importance of increasing focus on maintaining an adequate cash reserve to support the museum against unforeseen circumstances, as well as continuing to garner financial support for our generous discounted ticket programs that now represent 36% of admissions. There was general agreement that we want to grow our reserves. Kilmer noted that we have made budget cuts this year to stay on track with the budget for the biennium, which is our financial goal.

Beth Willis noted that the current bylaws may be deficient in terms of specifying financial reserves and in other ways. In referring to Jim Garrison's offer, she recommended that a bylaws review be conducted by the Governance Committee. Larry Kopp made a motion to charge the Governance Committee with reviewing the current bylaws and presenting their recommendations for any changes to the full board at a future meeting. Beth Willis seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

c. Governance – Sheryl Stiefel, Chair

President Larry Kopp's term is ending, effective July 1. Ryan Pennington has agreed to stand for election as board president. Sheryl Stiefel has agreed to stand for election to the VP West position, currently held by Ryan Pennington. The committee is looking for candidates for the role of VP East, as Bob Carriker is retiring, effective at the end of March. John Hughes has agreed to chair the Collections Committee, currently held by Bob Carriker. Jennifer Kilmer asked the trustees to reach out to prospective trustees and help cultivate new trustee candidates.

The next task of the Governance Committee will be the annual performance review of the Executive Director. Last year a process was developed where the first step in the review is a self-evaluation by the director for the committee's deliberations.

VI. Reaccreditation Progress – Jennifer Kilmer [Exhibit 6]

The process is going well. We have completed the first step, the self-study [Exhibit 6], in advance of the due date. Patty Tobiason, Deputy Director, launched that process in gathering requested documentation, and Jennifer Kilmer and Mary Mikel Stump, Director of Audience Engagement, worked together to write the narrative portions.

As an aside, Jennifer Kilmer noted that Patty Tobiason has now retired, after 30 years of service to the Society. Kilmer has no plans on rehiring for that position of deputy director, due to the reorganization that has happened in the past few years, with Exhibits and Education being placed together under Audience Engagement. Lynette Miller, Head of Collections, now reports directly to the director. The current need is for someone to manage Capital Projects.

Concerning how we stand for reaccreditation, Kilmer stated that while we have had financial challenges beyond our control, we have done a really good job of carrying out our mission. The lack of funding has forced us to focus on essentials and the highest priorities. For instance, a lot of maintenance work, often unseen, has gone into the facilities of the Research Center to insure the proper conditions for the collections. She thanked the board for the good work done in 2016 on the mission and strategic plan for the Society.

Further, from what she has seen as an AAM re-accreditation evaluator herself, Kilmer believes that we can be confident and secure of our evaluation in this review process. The site visit report from last time (15 years ago) made three observations which we have made great strides in addressing:

- a. Inventory of collections: We now have a full inventory of our collections, and over 70% catalogued.
- b. Diversity: We have committed to IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility), through our exhibit topics, reduced/free admissions, and public programs.
- c. Silos between departments: The reorganization brought education and exhibits together under the department of Audience Engagement, and from a managerial perspective, we have regular communication between departments at our weekly stand-up meetings and our monthly department managers meeting.

The site visit from the evaluators will happen this summer, with the re-accreditation process completed in spring of 2019.

President Kopp praised the director's work of the last five years in progressively and personally reaching out to more and more of WSHS's main constituencies, including the local museum and education communities, state legislators and officials, history professionals, and the public, noting the increase of WSHS's visibility in social, print, and electronic media.

Bob Carriker noted that, regarding the renovation of the Great Hall of History, a master plan was needed which can guide efforts for the long term, and was needed in collections as well. Larry Kopp concurred.

Kilmer stated that the timeline for the draft of the master plan was anticipated this summer. This process will include a lot of ideas regarding the Society's work overall, not just a gallery overhaul.

VII. Valedictories

Bob Carriker was lauded for his long service to the Society and its collections, and his dedication and essential contribution to creating the high caliber of COLUMBIA magazine. Jennifer Kilmer thanked him especially for offering his invaluable advice and perspective to her at many junctures.

VIII. Good of the Order

No items were brought forward.

President Larry Kopp adjourned the meeting at 3:25 PM.