

OLBRICH BOTANICAL SOCIETY
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting Minutes
March 16, 2021

Members Present: Philip Bradbury, Alnisa Allgood, Renee Boyce, Mary Phillips, Julie Rupert, Susan Goodwin, Bethany Ordaz, Laura Peterson, Juscha Robinson, Maurice Sheppard, Tim Sherry, Bill White, Liz Dannenbaum, Moira Harrington, Brad Hinkfuss, Eric Knepp, Roberta Sladky

Members Absent: Julie Bernauer, Sandi Statz, Betty Chewning, Laurel Neverdahl

Advisors Present: Jack Bolz, Jt Covelli, Barb Tensfeldt, Paul Williams

Staff Present: Rebecca Benedict, Katy Nodolf, Kim North, Marty Petillo, Rylee Schuchardt, Kai Skadahl, Joe Vande Slunt

I. **The meeting called to order at 4:00 pm.**

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Mr. White and seconded by Ms. Peterson to approve the meeting minutes of February 9, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

IV. **OLBRICH STAFF PRESENTATION**

A. Report on Education Department Virtual Programming – After a brief overview of the Education department and programs, Kim North, Education Programs Manager, spoke about virtual education. She explained how staff decided to focus on the adult program audience for virtual education, notably with the new Virtual Lecture Series. She affirmed that in-person classes would be taking place in the new Frautschi Family Learning Center beginning in April, and, that virtual programming would continue in the future after the pandemic, especially during the winter months.

V. **REPORTS**

A. President's Report

- a. **OBS Recruitment Committee Update: participation in the recruitment of the next Garden Director.** – Ms. Sladky noted that she is working on a transition plan and a recommended plan for management.
 - i. **Susan Goodwin was added to the committee of Alnisa Allgood, Bill White, Renee Boyce, and Julie Rupert** – Ms. Goodwin thanked leadership staff for their notes on what they are looking for in a new director.
- b. **Board retreat take-aways -- committees may be formed in the future to work with staff to address these issues:**
 - i. **Staff will work to develop a brief summary of the Society's budget, including revenue sources and expenses.** – See section 'v. Financials' below.
 - ii. **Accessibility and Diversity: There appears to be a consensus that a demographic study of Olbrich users and visitors is needed to create a baseline. Staff will put together resources and costs for potential projects. Assuming the Board wishes to proceed, staff will work with a Board committee to implement the plan. Staff will continue to address this issue through the Community Engagement and Inclusion Work Group and report back to the Board on a regular basis.** – Ms. Sladky explained that she is looking into resources for a

comprehensive visitor survey to capture demographics for a baseline. Her plan is to have some vendors/ballpark costs identified (before retirement) so that an OBS Board committee can move forward – partnered with staff. She added that the survey probably wouldn't occur until 2022, assuming that Olbrich wouldn't have normal attendance in 2021. There was discussion about including virtual program participants in the survey.

- iii. **The next major activity is the development of a strategic plan for Olbrich including filling key vacant positions (unfilled in 2020 due to the pandemic and not in the current budget) and preparation of a conceptual plan for the 10 acre area adjacent to the Thai Garden. With the completion of the Learning Center and Production Greenhouses, it is important that the Board focus on potential expansion of the gardens. A staff and Board committee may be a good vehicle to move in this direction.** – Ms. Sladky mentioned that the recruitment process for two vacant OBS positions would begin after a new Gardens Director is hired, with onboarding starting in early 2022. It was noted that if circumstances change and the Gardens can begin normal operations, the hiring process could be accelerated. Ms. Sladky recounted that, after public meetings, the Olbrich Park Land Use Plan was approved by the Parks Commission and Common Council in 2009. She explained that as part of that process, OBS released a deed restriction for the 5-acre Garver property, in exchange for approximately 10 acres (to be restricted for Botanical Gardens) adjacent to the Thai Garden. There was discussion about who would be involved in developing the conceptual plan which would begin this fall.
- iv. **Grand Opening: Although the Learning Center was largely completed a year ago, it is time to begin to plan for a larger community grand opening and including a ceremonial opening for major donors and city officials. A staff and Board committee to work for a grand opening in the Fall of 2021.** – Ms. Sladky stated that OBS Staff, Joe Vande Slunt and Missy Jeanne would be involved in this committee.
- v. **Financials: Rylee Schuchardt and Mary Phillips have developed a summary cash flow (“dashboard”) that will be made available to Board members. It is a useful tool to monitor the organization’s cash flow.** – Ms. Schuchardt explained that the cash flow dashboard would be consolidated and easy to read. A question was asked about the January spreadsheet which shows the OBSF disbursement in January. Ms Sladky explained that the annual disbursement is determined in the previous fall by the OBSF Board of Directors and is distributed quarterly.

President Bradbury stated that if members of the Board were interested in joining any of the committees that were discussed, they should notify Roberta Sladky.

B. Financial Report

- a. **January 2021 Financials** – Rylee Schuchardt reviewed the January Financial Reports. She noted that, in keeping with the 2021 “modified medium” confidence operating budget, all departments continue to be mindful of expenses and are staying under budget.

C. Director’s Report

Staff Written Reports – Ms. Sladky reviewed the staff reports. She noted that she and staff are working on updating the OBS Employee Handbook.

- D. **Development Report** – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the Development report. He highlighted the section about the Olbrich team working on renaming the Rose Garden to better reflect Olbrich’s mission and reminded the Board to submit their suggestions.

- E. **Marketing & Public Relations Report** – Ms. Nodolf reviewed the Marketing and PR Report. She noted that she will be participating in the virtual Governor’s Conference on Tourism and also in a virtual industry

recovery discussion with Destination Madison. She added that she and a local designer, with help from Olbrich staff, are working on a new map of the outdoor gardens.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business

VII. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

VIII. **ADJOURNED**

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 pm.

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