

OLBRICH BOTANICAL SOCIETY
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting Minutes
August 17, 2021

Members Present: Philip Bradbury, Renee Boyce, Julie Rupert, Julie Bernauer, Susan Goodwin, Bethany Ordaz, Laura Peterson, Maurice Sheppard, Bill White, Betty Chewning, Liz Dannenbaum, Moira Harrington, Brad Hinkfuss, Laurel Neverdahl

Members Absent: Alnisa Allgood, Mary Phillips, Juscha Robinson, Tim Sherry, Sandi Statz, Eric Knepp

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

Staff Present: Jake Immel, Lisa Laschinger (Assistant Parks Superintendent), Kaylee McDonald, Marty Petillo, Rylee Schuchardt, Kai Skadahl, Joe Vande Slunt, Sarah Wilcox

I. **The meeting called to order at 4:03 pm.**

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Ms. Peterson and seconded by Ms. Rupert to approve the meeting minutes of July 20, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

IV. **OLBRICH STAFF PRESENTATION**

A. Gift Shop Update – Gift Shop Manager Sarah Wilcox presented a PowerPoint about the redesigning of the gift shop. She announced that the name of the shop changed from *Growing Gifts*, to *Olbrich Botanical Gardens Gift Shop* to make it feel more connected to Olbrich as a whole. She discussed the themes that guided the redesign: Bringing the Garden Inside, which includes increasing Olbrich-branded merchandise and selling houseplants; and Focusing on the Spirit of Olbrich, which includes selling sustainable products, selling fair-trade products, and featuring local artists. She explained how they are creating clean, clear displays based on category sales and profitability by reducing the amount of inventory on the sales floor, aiming for at least a 55% profit margin on new items, slimming down from 800+ vendors to ~200, changing sight lines for shrinkage prevention, creating better walkways for accessibility, and having consistent signage. She added that they are working on clearing out old inventory, some products have been around since 2015, by having sidewalk sales on the weekends where they are selling these items at cost.

Ms. Wilcox announced that they would be featuring an artist of the month where they will work with local artists on consignment to create dynamic, changing merchandise. She noted that the arrangement would be a 50/50 sales split, to create less risk for the store. She noted that their new Square POS system creates reports that will help staff understand where the jump in sales are and help set budgets in the future.

V. **REPORTS**

A. President's Report

a. **OBS Recruitment Committee Update: Garden Director** – Assistant Parks Superintendent Lisa Laschinger reported that 32 applications were received and that was screened down to 10 applicants that were offered interviews to be done via Zoom. She said that the top 2 to 3 candidates would be brought in for final interviews on Tuesday, August 31st. She noted that A Meet

& Greet would be taking place on Monday, August 30th at 6:00 p.m. in Olbrich's outdoor gardens by the Learning Center.

- b. **Grand Opening Update.** – Joe Vande Slunt reported that the public grand opening of the Frautschi Family Learning Center and new greenhouses would still be taking place on Saturday, September 18, from 10 am – 2 pm. He noted that Mayor Satya was confirmed to attend and would be part of opening remarks and a ribbon cutting, then guests would be free to move about the facility and the grounds and participate in activities throughout Olbrich. He said that staff feel confident that the celebration can move forward since it is mostly outdoors. He confirmed that the capital campaign donor reception, scheduled for Wednesday, September 15, had been cancelled since it would have been a larger indoor event. Mr. Vande Slunt will be working with individual donors and families to hold smaller receptions throughout the fall, winter, and spring.
- c. **COVID Concerns**
 - i. **Upcoming programming** – Joe Vande Slunt addressed the new Public Health emergency order for mandatory face coverings indoors, that will be going into effect on August 19 at 12 a.m. He noted that rental groups had been contacted to let them know about this change.
 - ii. **Mandatory vaccinations** – Joe Vande Slunt reported that OBS is waiting for City guidance on how to implement proof of vaccine, or weekly proof of a negative test, to see how that would potentially effect OBS staff. He said that OBS would be asking the Board for feedback on either following the City's policy, or not. The Board unanimously decided to wait for guidance from the City before making a motion on the issue. This will be reviewed at the Executive Committee meeting on September 14 and will be on the OBS Board agenda for the September meeting.
- d. **2022 OBS Budget** – Joe Vande Slunt talked about the plan for the 2022 OBS Operating Budget. He reported that there would not be high, medium, or low confidence budget scenarios for the upcoming year and that all departments would submit their best estimate for 2022. He explained that the hope would be to bring budgets back to pre-Covid levels and make adjustments as necessary during the year, if the pandemic worsens. He added that department heads would be starting the budget process, have the 2022 budget finalized by early November, and recommended that the Board votes on the budget at the November meeting.
Lisa Laschinger reported that the Park's 2022 budget request was submitted to the Mayor, with a 5% reduction proposal included. She noted that the budget will then move to the Common Council and final approval is scheduled to happen in early November.
- e. **2022 OBS Recruitment** – President Bradbury mentioned that a Nominations Committee would be assembled in September, to start looking at 2022 OBS Board recruitment.

C. Financial Report

- a. **June 2021 Financials** – Rylee Schuchardt reviewed the June Financial Reports. She reported that the upward revenue trend continued across all departments for June, with the exception of the gift shop because it was closed. She also pointed out that YTD, all departments remained mindful of expenses and stayed within budget. She explained the new Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) line in the Gift Shop expenses section. She separated COGS, which includes the cost of freight or shipping charges, from other gift shop expenses such as wages, benefits, and supplies. She also pointed out the additional line at the bottom of the summary report titled "Gift Shop Inventory Added." She explained that inventory is an OBS asset and lives on the balance sheet, but that total is not included in operating expenses. Lastly, she talked about the reports that the new gift shop Square POS system can generate and how it will allow staff to true up actual inventory on hand and track cost of goods sold going forward.

D. Director's Report

Staff Written Reports – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the staff reports. He highlighted that July attendance numbers looked great, despite not having Blooming Butterflies, that the Horticulture Intern’s last day was August 13, poinsettias arrived and were getting potted, the Volunteer Ice Cream Social was a hit, and the Schumacher Library will be reopening on August 30. He noted that some expenses for this year’s GLEAM exhibit were paid for out of the 2020 budget and all of the artists scheduled for 2020 returned in 2021.

He shared that the annual Circle Reception was held on Friday, August 13 and 94 lifetime members attended, enjoying good food and company, and presentations from Jeff Epping and Kim North. He announced that Member Appreciation Week would be taking place September 7 – 11, with activities happening daily to say thanks to our members.

Mr. Vande Slunt mentioned that the PR & Marketing department are putting their GLEAM marketing plan into action. He also noted that the first, monthly, printed edition of the Isthmus had a large ad for GLEAM.

E. Development Report – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the Development report as part of the Staff Written Reports.

F. Marketing & Public Relations Report – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the Marketing and PR Report as part of the Staff Written Reports.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS**
There was no new business.

VII. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**
There were no new announcements.

VIII. **ADJOURNED**
The meeting adjourned at 4:53 pm.