

OLBRICH BOTANICAL SOCIETY
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting Minutes
July 21, 2020

Members Present: Julie Rupert, Philip Bradbury, Renee Boyce, Mary Phillips, Bill White, Alnisa Allgood, Susan Goodwin, Kevin Hess, Laura Peterson, Tim Sherry, Liz Dannenbaum, Brad Hinkfuss, Eric Knepp, Laurel Neverdahl, Roberta Sladky

Members Absent: Erik Lincoln, Dick Wagner, Betty Chewning, Nancy Ragland

Advisors Present: Jack Bolz, Dale Mathwich (via phone), Barb Tensfeldt, Paul Williams

Staff Present: Milo Chiu, Samara Eisner, Mike Gibson, Jake Immel, Lisa Laschinger (Assistant Parks Superintendent), Katy Nodolf, Jess Okerblad, Marty Petillo, Rylee Schuchardt, Kai Skadah, Elizabeth Spry, Joe Vande Slunt, Chris Werch

Unknown Attendee: (608)620-3387 (via phone)

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

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Ms. Goodwin and seconded by Ms. Peterson to approve the meeting minutes of June 16, 2020. Motion carried unanimously.

III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no members of the public who wished to comment on items not on the agenda.

IV. **OLBRICH STAFF PRESENTATION**

- a. **Meet Olbrich's 2020 Horticulture Interns** – Samara Eisner thanked the Board for helping facilitate the intern program and introduced the interns that joined the meeting. The interns shared their backgrounds and education. Chris Werch grew up in Berlin, WI and will be a junior this year at University of Minnesota, majoring in plant and microbial biology. Chris shared that this internship has opened his eyes to how exciting public gardening can be, especially when the team is so fun to work with. Jess Okerblad just graduated from Northern Arizona University with a degree in biology. This internship helped show her that public horticulture is a great tool for education and has prompted her to work in early education this fall, using techniques she learned at Olbrich to help relate to the kids. Milo Chiu is originally from Kenosha, WI and just graduated from UW-Madison studying horticulture and botany. Milo shared that seeing how a public garden works behind-the-scenes has been very eye-opening by showing how dynamic and engaged with the community a public garden can be. Ms. Eisner talked about the two interns that could not join the meeting. Phil Daly graduated from the University of Florida with a degree in horticulture and has spent the past two years being a guide up in the boundary waters. Paige Wirth is currently a student at Texas A&M studying Environmental Geoscience with an emphasis in plant biology, conservation and ecology.

President Rupert noted how special this Board meeting is every year when the interns are introduced. She expressed that their flexibility, hard work, and passion are much appreciated and wished them the best in their future endeavors.

V. **REPORTS**

A. **President's Report**

- a. **OBS's Response to COVID-19** – Roberta Sladky thanked Re-Opening Task Force Chair Alnisa Allgood for helping review re-opening plans. Ms. Sladky announced that the Growing Gifts Shop is now open by appointment, and that the Bolz Conservatory and Schumacher Library cannot open until there are fewer

restrictions. She shared that overall, comments about the re-opening have been positive and visitors have been compliant with health department orders. The question was asked if Olbrich was worried about having to completely shut down again. Ms. Sladky stated that Olbrich would not close unless there was another stay at home order and that OBG is complying with the health department's capacity limits. Another question was asked about how the re-formatted Summer Concert Series was doing. Program Specialist Mike Gibson reported that the first concert went very well and that concertgoers have been complying with the safety rules. He also noted that the first two concerts sold out!

- b. OBS Budget Impacts and Mitigation Options** – Roberta Sladky, Joe Vande Slunt and Rylee Schuchardt put together a presentation for the Board titled 'OBS Budget Update: Year-to-Date Performance and What's Ahead.' Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the 2020 approved OBS Operating Budget, which is a zero-based budget for both revenue and expense. He noted that since 2005, OBS has met or exceeded its budget goals most years with some years reporting a net revenue averaging \$100K.

In the Year-to-Date recap, Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed that pre-pandemic (Jan-Feb), OBS was headed in the right direction after rolling out the first Annual Programmatic Theme, *Elements*, and the new Bolz Conservatory exhibit *Orchid Escape*. He explained that staff got creative after closing to the public in mid-March by developing alternate fundraisers, continuing to fundraise, receiving a PPP loan, keeping the plant collections in amazing shape, and heavily reducing expenses, which resulted in the budget holding mostly steady as of May 31. Olbrich's outdoor gardens re-opened to the public in mid-June and classes, concerts and re-formatted programming have been developed, but a majority of summer programming was cancelled.

In looking ahead (July-Dec), Mr. Vande Slunt explained that staff continue to plan for future programming, with much uncertainty. Ms. Sladky and staff developed a revised COVID budget for the remainder of 2020, projecting an \$80K+ loss after the PPP loan is factored in.

The Executive Committee requested that OBS staff develop three 2021 preliminary budgets to present at the Aug 11 Executive Committee meeting: Low confidence (based on Phase 1 of Forward Dane) with minimal programming; Medium confidence (based on Phase 2 of Forward Dane) with reduced programming; High confidence (regular capacity) with standard programming, standard budget.

A question was asked if there was a reason to think that regular capacity is equal to high confidence for at least early 2021 and who is making the low, medium, high decision. Mr. Vande Slunt explained that staff have been working on defining those low, medium and high confidence budgets, using best case scenarios, and would welcome any feedback. He noted that if the Board would like staff to temper those expectations for high confidence, the budgets can be drafted with that in mind.

Mr. Vande Slunt described that since impacts on the 2020 budget began developing in March, staff have already been working with the worst case scenario in 2020, and based on the current situation, there could potentially be a shortfall of \$350K in 2021. It was noted that there would also be the opportunity to adjust expenses expectations, as well as revenue, for 2021.

President Rupert noted that there have been successes with new types of sales, programs, and virtual learning that Olbrich is trying for the first time, and this has created different opportunities for raising revenue. She suggested that experimenting with these new revenue generating ideas for the rest of 2020 may lead to a higher confidence budget for 2021.

Campaign Task Force Chair Susan Goodwin suggested that the medium confidence budget be refined depending on when it would be phased in, since it cannot be predicted when the situation will change and medium confidence would be the most likely scenario for 2021. She noted that staff are working on

a more detailed outline of the fundraising that will be done to close the gap. This outline will be a standing item for updating the Board on fundraising progress and to get the Board's feedback.

- c. **City Budget Process and the Parks Submittal** – Parks Superintendent Eric Knepp announced that the small remaining capitol necessary to complete the project was borrowed. He reported that operationally, significant COVID related impacts to the 2020 budget are currently resulting in Parks being \$1,000,000 down in revenue YTD. Revenue is down \$600K for Olbrich, since the \$325K room tax fund is not anticipated to occur and there is very minimal income from room rentals. He noted that although the City is spending more on staffing resources for Olbrich due to hiring redeployed workers, Olbrich is not receiving the usual number of resource hours due to loss of dedicated volunteers.

Superintendent Knepp explained that the 2021 budget request was submitted on July 10 and was for the same amount of resources that allowed Parks to provide service levels similar to what was budgeted for in 2020 before the pandemic hit. He detailed that as part of the budgeting process, all agencies were asked to propose 5% reduction to their operating budgets which would impact programs and services. He noted that instead of taking 5% from each section within Parks, they felt it was critical to preserve core services in order to allow the continuation of providing safe usable spaces that meet the needs of the community. The reduction put forward for Olbrich was \$40K, which is roughly 2.5% of Olbrich's City Operating Budget, resulting in the Facility Maintenance Worker position being delayed until July 2021. He noted that the Parks Budget Request does not contain any reductions or change to services and that the \$325 room tax was taken out of the base request.

He described budget process: The Operating Budget was submitted to the Finance Committee July 10 then staff answer follow-up questions. In August, the budget request is presented to the Mayor. The Mayor then submits her budget in early October. The Finance Committee and Common Council will debate, modify and adopt the budget by the end of October. The adopted 2021 Operating Budget should be known by mid-November.

B. Financial Report

- a. **May 2020 Financials** – Rylee Schuchardt reviewed the May Financial Reports. She noted that due to the Pandemic and corresponding shutdown, the May 31 YTD results showed that all departments were favorable to budget in expense categories and were unfavorable to budget, with the exception of Development, in revenue categories. President Rupert thanked Ms. Schuchardt for her help with compiling budget information.

C. Director's Report

Staff Written Reports – Ms. Sladky reviewed the staff reports. She shared photos of the landscaping around the Learning Center and Tram Stop. Ms. Sladky highlighted that Marty Petillo has been staying engaged with volunteers and assisting with scheduling staff in the Lobby on Mondays and Tuesdays. She talked about creative ideas that staff are developing to engage with the general public. She noted that the gift shop is now open by appointment only and they just received shipment of Olbrich honey! She concluded with saying how appreciative she is for everything the staff are doing to keep each other, volunteers, the Board and the public engaged. President Rupert thanked the staff for their passion and commitment.

- D. **Development Report** – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the Development report. He noted that Kai Skadahl will be requesting information from the Board for the new Board Directory, which will be a helpful tool to identify the strengths and needs of the Board, build awareness among Board members, and orient new Board members. He asked the Board to watch for an email assessing individual interest in serving on one of three groups: updating Bylaws, 2021 Nominations, and reviewing Olbrich's gift acceptance policy. Jake Immel is working with PR & Marketing Coordinator Tom Fullmer on assembling a virtual program

for lifetime Circle members, which will be emailed to Circle members on Friday, August 14. He concluded by announcing that as of June 30, Membership revenue is up 1% over 2019, showing how loyal Olbrich's members are to the organization.

E. Marketing & Public Relations Report – Ms. Nodolf reviewed the Marketing and PR Report. She highlighted that staff are busy promoting the newly formatted summer programming. She shared photos of Board Advisor Jt Covelli's 'Garden Profile,' which is another garden tour-related initiative and is a month-long social media campaign that gives Olbrich's followers a look inside four private gardens. Ms. Nodolf added that, to connect with members who do not follow Olbrich electronically, a shorter 12-page, more frequently published print newsletter will be mailed to members for the rest of 2020, with the first one going out in mid-August.

V. NEW BUSINESS

There is no new business.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Board Advisor Jack Bolz shared that he is so proud of what the staff, Director Roberta Sladky, and Board have done to keep Olbrich up and running during this difficult time.

VII. ADJOURNED

The meeting adjourned at 5:06 pm.

DRAFT