

OLBRICH BOTANICAL SOCIETY
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
January 17, 2012

Members Present: Janet Loewi, Tim Sherry, Dick Wagner, Jennifer Curliss, Dan Matson, Fred Anderson, Kevin Briski, Julie Herfel, Kevin Hess, Erin Ogden, Laurel Neverdahl, Tricia Perkins, Marsha Rummel, Roberta Sladky

Members Absent: Susan Canty, Mark McFadden, Larry Palm, Emanuel Scarbrough and Susan Stein

Advisors Present: Paul Williams

Staff Present: Nancy Vidlak

I. **President Loewi called the meeting to order at 4:02pm.**

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Mr. Wagner and seconded by Mr. Anderson to approve the meeting minutes of December 18, 2011. Motion carried unanimously.

III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

IV. **REPORTS**

A. **President's Report**

1. President Loewi welcomed and introduced the new Board members: Julie Herfel and Kevin Hess. Carolyn Gilb, the third new member, will be introduced at the February meeting.

2. Mr. Wagner provided an overview of the Ad Hoc Committee on Space Needs for the 21st Century. He summarized by saying the past 20 years have been focused on building the beautiful Gardens; now it's time to work on the facility. Building upon the success of the public-private partnership, the Park Commission approved a similar resolution at their December meeting.

Ms Rummel suggested a modification to include mention of the Feed Mill's status as a local landmark which is incorporated in the resolution:

RESOLUTION

Whereas the Olbrich Botanical Gardens facilities were designed for an annual visitor-ship of 100,000 and annual Garden visitor-ship now exceeds 250,000, and

Whereas a Committee of Olbrich Gardens professional staff and Botanical Society volunteer members have studied space needs and have defined a new visitors center and education facility adjacent to the current Botanical Center as a prime requirement to support present and future operations, and

Whereas, to develop these concepts further, professional design services are required to develop conceptual plans and estimates, and

Whereas the city's recent study issued on the Garver building potential with complete or partial demolition raises questions about storage space and Garden Support Facility needs of



the Olbrich Botanical Gardens, and the city study recommends a consultant to refine estimates for an alternative to be chosen, and

Whereas the ongoing lack of decision on Garver's future and the current vandalism has stymied support for rehabilitating and reusing this City of Madison landmark structure, the community's enjoyment and use of lands north of Garver for low impact recreational purposes, and the overall planning for garden facilities, and

Whereas Olbrich Botanical Gardens are operated as a partnership with both the City of Madison and the Olbrich Botanical Society supporting the gardens,

Now therefore, the Olbrich Botanical Society requests the City of Madison through the Parks Commission to enter into a partnership for the services of design consultants to prepare facilities plans and concepts for Olbrich Gardens to address space needs.

The plans shall explore the new space required for visitor services including meeting current accessibility standards, new education facilities and garden support spaces. The new space should be designed at the conceptual stage for a very green building that can relate to sustainability principles used in the gardens. The plan shall consider the options of using the Garver Core area with minimal work, not restoration but stabilization, as a Garden Support Facility with storage and a maintenance shop or a newly built Garden Support Facility. The Olbrich Botanical Society offers to financially share in splitting cost of the Facilities Design Plan.

A motion was made by Mr. Wagner and seconded by Mr. Sherry to approve the resolution as modified during the discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

President Loewi thanked Mr. Wagner for all the time and effort he has dedicated to this project.

B. Financial Report

Ms. Curliss reviewed the Financial Report and commented that final numbers point to a great year. The new accounting system allows for good reports which can provide more detail and make it easier to track events.

Mr. Sherry emphasized that a \$90,000 surplus at year's end is "Wonderful"!

President Loewi thanked the members for all their support over the last year. The preliminary numbers are very promising; much better than the last couple of years.

C. Director's Report

Ms. Sladky briefly reviewed some highlights from the staff's written reports.

D. Education Report

Mr. Anderson said the Education Committee will meet with OBS Director of Education Jane Nicholson in February to discuss future programming and to compare Olbrich tours with those offered by other non-profits. Adult classes are reaching their minimum requirements.

E. Development Report

President Loewi reported on the recent Development Committee meeting at which Special Events Coordinator Missy Keegan provided spreadsheets with information on previous and

current sponsorships for all special events at the Gardens. Rhapsody in Bloom is doing well with 17 of 28 prospective sponsors confirmed. Additional sponsors are still needed for Blooming Butterflies because some long-time sponsors are opting out this year.

She also reported that the Holiday Show did well and reminded the board of the upcoming "Cocktails in the Conservatory" on Friday, January 27.

Director of Development Vacancy: President Loewi and Ms. Sladky thanked Ms. Perkins and Ms. Dolister for their assistance in screening the 45 applications submitted for the Director of Development position. Of that total, four were identified as the top contenders, with seven more in a reserve category. The remaining 34 were not deemed suitable. If an outstanding applicant is identified and hired by the end of January, the goal is to have the new director in place by the first of March. If the interview process does not identify a suitable candidate, an interim director may be needed.

Membership Report: President Loewi remarked on the "amazing numbers" of memberships this year, with memberships totaling 6,267 households.

F. Marketing & Public Relations

President Loewi briefly touched on several projects, including great publicity in the local media plus promotion through the New York Times Frugal Traveler blog. "The city needs wonderful things to report, and we give it," she said.

V. New Business

There was no new business.

VI. Announcements

Ms. Rummel proposed creating a City Council Resolution honoring Ms. Bean's service to the Gardens. Ms. Sladky will ask staff to contribute anecdotes to help complete the resolution.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56pm.

