

OLBRICH BOTANICAL SOCIETY
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting Minutes
October 20, 2020

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

Members Absent: Erik Lincoln, Tim Sherry, Dick Wagner, Nancy Ragland

Advisors Present: Jack Bolz, Jt Covelli, Dale Mathwich

Staff Present: Lisa Laschinger (Assistant Parks Superintendent), Katy Nodolf, Marty Petillo, Rylee Schuchardt, Kai Skadahl, Elizabeth Spry, Joe Vande Slunt

I. **The meeting called to order at 4:02 pm.**

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Ms. Peterson and seconded by Mr. Hess to approve the meeting minutes of September 15, 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. **REPORTS**

A. President's Report

- a. **OBS's Response to COVID-19 – Re-opening the Bolz Conservatory** – Roberta Sladky explained that staff implemented a very soft re-opening of the Bolz Conservatory. She noted that the first weekend it was re-opened, there were around 150 visitors each day with a substantial number of those being Olbrich members. She explained that Olbrich is following Public Health Madison & Dane County guidelines, including a rule that masks are mandatory, with the accommodation being to visit the outdoor gardens if a mask cannot be worn. She reported that capacity, which is set at slightly less than 25%, had not been reached on any day at the time of the meeting. Ms. Sladky and Katy Nodolf acknowledged the mixed feedback that has been coming in through social media and explained that staff are waiting to address any positive or negative comments until strong feelings subside.
- b. **Board Engagement Process** – Joe Vande Slunt recapped that there are three working group/committees that are currently in progress. Two will be starting to meet soon: the Bylaws group and the Gift Acceptance Policy review group. He noted that the Nominating Committee is off to a good start. Past President Bill White commented that the committee has met twice and they have been successful in finding new recruits for Officers and Directors and are feeling optimistic.

B. Financial Report

- a. **August 2020 Financials** – Rylee Schuchardt reviewed the August Financial Reports. She explained that due to the pandemic and corresponding cancellations, all departments were below budgeted revenue with the exception of Development which was \$54,000 above budget as of August 31. She noted that all departments were under budgeted expenses, according to the original 2020 budget. Ms. Schuchardt announced that the third quarter inventory in the Gift Shop was complete and minimal adjustment was needed to inventory and cost of goods.
- b. **2021 Preliminary Budget Presentation** – Roberta Sladky explained that after discussions with staff and the Executive Committee, it was decided that OBS would develop a 2021 operating budget under a “modified medium” confidence. This budget reflects that OBS does not expect a full return to normal in

2021 and assumes that the first half of the year would be challenging with the hope that some larger scale programs, exhibitions, classes and workshops would resume in fall 2021. She talked about how OBS is anticipating passing a 2021 budget with significant deficit as this budget would keep all existing regular staff, which is the primary objective of the OBS Executive Committee. She explained that to fund the 2021 loss, OBS would first need to draw from OBS reserves. She offered gratitude to past and present Board members for their years of fiscal responsibility. If these reserves are depleted significantly, the three options would be 1) seek support from OBSF; and/or 2) take out a line of credit; with a last resort of 3) furloughing staff, which current budget projections do not indicate would be necessary.

In an overview of the 2020 COVID budget and 2021 'modified medium' proposed budget, Ms. Sladky described that the 2020 bottom line showed a potential loss of \$58K (after figuring in the \$253K PPP loan) and the 2021 bottom line showed a \$311K potential loss. She noted that both income and expenses were conservative and that the cost of many of the expenses are fixed and could not be cut without harming programs or staff. Wages & benefits alone are 69% of OBS expenses and 31% are necessary costs of maintaining the business.

A copy of the full updated presentation is attached to these minutes that includes City staff and support. It was also discussed that the 2021 budget would be revisited monthly.

Mr. Vande Slunt noted that the OBSF would formally be meeting on 10/21/2020 and the OBS Board would be updated on the outcome of that meeting at the November OBS Board meeting.

C. Director's Report

Staff Written Reports – Ms. Sladky reviewed the staff reports. She mentioned the positive feedback that had been received over the past couple of months from people that are grateful for the gardens being open. There is a new interpretation in the conservatory that highlights select plants and animals called "The Sinister Side of Paradise" that was a collaboration between multiple departments, that Ms. Petillo, Ms. Kessenich, and Ms. Tubbs are working together to support the new cashiers in the lobby. Education staff are working on the Jan-May 2021 catalog with 50% virtual and 50% in person classes. She also reported that winter hours for the Bolz Conservatory, outdoor gardens and gift shop will be 10 am – 4 pm daily.

D. Development Report – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the Development report. He noted that the Drive-In Member Movie Night was very successful and well received by Olbrich Members. He also noted that the 'Hope Blooms Here' Fall Appeal is in homes and the initial response has been strong. He reported that staff are waiting to hear back about a grant with the Wisconsin Department of Administration's COVID-19 Cultural Organization Grant Program, which could replace lost income from program cancellations. Mr. Vande Slunt highlighted the recent community partnerships with Ian's Pizza Garver, Madison Originals, and Working Draft Brewing Company.

E. Marketing & Public Relations Report – Ms. Nodolf reviewed the Marketing and PR Report. She noted that the next newsletter will be mailed at the end of October/early November. She mentioned that staff are waiting to hear back from The American Horticultural Society about the Sustainable Gardens Award that was applied for in early October. Ms. Nodolf thanked Tom Fullmer, PR & Marketing Coordinator, for his help with keeping people connected to the Gardens through digital communications.

V. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There are no announcements.

- VII. **ADJOURNED**
The meeting adjourned at 4:48 pm.

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