

**OLBRICH BOTANICAL SOCIETY**  
**Board of Directors Virtual Meeting Minutes**  
**November 17, 2020**

**Members Present:** Julie Rupert, Philip Bradbury, Renee Boyce, Mary Phillips, Bill White (via phone), Alnisa Allgood, Susan Goodwin, Kevin Hess, Laura Peterson, Tim Sherry, Moira Harrington, Brad Hinkfuss, Eric Knepp, Laurel Neverdahl, Roberta Sladky

**Members Absent:** Erik Lincoln, Dick Wagner, Betty Chewning, Liz Dannenbaum

**Advisors Present:** Jack Bolz, Jt Covelli, Dale Mathwich (via phone), Paul Williams

**Staff Present:** Jake Immel, Lisa Laschinger (Assistant Parks Superintendent), Katy Nodolf, Amy O'Shea, Kai Skadahl, Elizabeth Spry, Joe Vande Slunt

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

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Mr. Hess and seconded by Ms. Peterson to approve the meeting minutes of October 20, 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**

**Report from Olbrich's Community Engagement & Inclusion Working Group (CE&IWG) on *Breaking the Bias Habit Training*** - Ms. Sladky introduced two members of Olbrich's CE&IWG, Katy Nodolf, PR & Marketing Manager and Amy O'Shea, Horticulture Librarian. Ms. O'Shea explained how the Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> training titled *Empowering People to Break the Bias Habit: Creating Inclusion and Reducing Bias* came together and that 42 staff participated. She described how the speaker, Dr. William T. L. Cox, Principal Investigator of the Stereotyping and Bias Research Lab in the Department of Psychology at UW-Madison, has presented this training around the world and that the Olbrich Zoom training was in a seminar format with three breakout sessions. She noted that afterwards many staff responded with positive feedback and that the CE&IWG would be putting together an evaluation for staff that will show how Olbrich will proceed with implementing the lessons learned, personally and professionally. Ms. Nodolf added that Dr. Cox presented evidence-based points, used real world examples, and addressed many different biases and stereotypes. There was discussion about the role the OBS Board could play in facilitating any operational changes at Olbrich and that the CE&IWG would update the Board after staff evaluations were received.

V. **REPORTS**

A. **President's Report**

- a. **Introduction to Moira Harrington, new ex officio representative of the President of the Madison Park Commission** – President Rupert introduced Moira Harrington to the Board. Ms. Harrington expressed that she looks forward to contributing to the OBS Board and the organization.
- b. **OBS's Response to COVID-19 – Re-opening the Bolz Conservatory** – Roberta Sladky addressed the new emergency order that was issued on 11/17/20 by Public Health Madison & Dane County that bans all indoor gatherings. She noted that four weddings on the upcoming Olbrich schedule may need to cancel and that tours with potential new OBS Board candidates would be virtual. She explained that the re-opening of the Bolz Conservatory is going well with no lines forming and no crowding and added that the overall attendance to the Gardens has been low. Ms. Sladky discussed how some staff are able to work remotely and the staff that need to work on-site are able to keep distanced. She pointed out that

staff are working on contingency plans in the event that an entire department would need to be out for a prolonged time. Ms. Sladky spoke about the new virtual programs and online offerings that have been successful, how the material that is currently being developed for virtual programs will make our in-person programs stronger in the future, and how the pandemic has inspired a new level of collaboration between departments.

- c. **Board Engagement Process: Subcommittee Update** – Joe Vande Slunt introduced the Chairs of the three working group/committees that are currently in progress. Nominations Chair, Bill White, reported that the committee established who the next OBS Board Vice President would be (from our current Board) and five potential new Board members. He noted that more information would be shared with the full Board at the December OBS Board Meeting. Bylaws Review Chair, Phil Bradbury, explained that the committee plans to modernize the bylaws and make sure there is consistency between the bylaws and the Cooperation Agreement with the City of Madison. Gift Acceptance Policy Chair, Kevin Hess, is reviewing the documents and the working group's first meeting will take place in early December.

## B. Financial Report

- a. **September 2020 Financials** – Mary Phillips reviewed the September 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 \$82,000 above budget as of September 30. She noted that all departments were under budgeted expenses, according to the original 2020 budget. She spoke about the weekly cash flow spreadsheet, that is maintained by Rylee Schuchardt, which is an important tool in keeping a close eye on OBS's cash on hand. Ms. Phillips shared that Ms. Schuchardt met with OBS's new auditors, Baker Tilly, and the audit process is off to a good start.
- b. **Approval of 2021 OBS Operating Budget** – Roberta Sladky explained that projections show that 2021 would be less favorable than 2020, mainly due to the \$253K PPP loan that was fully forgiven and the \$55K grant from the State of Wisconsin that will be used to offset 2020 losses. Mr. Vande Slunt noted that December is typically the biggest month for year-end giving, and we won't know our exact 2020 budget shortfall until the beginning of 2021. They discussed that the revised 2020 COVID budget revenue number would not be reached since that number anticipated GLEAM revenue. Ms. Sladky shared that OBS would be taking \$200K from OBS's reserve fund at BMO to assist with cash flow in early 2021.

Ms. Sladky and Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the updated *2021 OBS Budget Development* presentation that was sent to the Board before the meeting. This version included information about the City of Madison's budgeting process and contributions. Ms. Sladky acknowledged that some programs could return, if Public Health increases the size of gatherings and conditions improve, but staff remains cautious.

Mr. Vande Slunt discovered an error on the 2021 budget that was included in the November Board packet. He explained that the OBS Foundation Board approved a disbursement of \$294,721 (not \$285,421), which changed the deficit to \$303,267 (not \$312,567.)

It was noted that the Executive Committee has given OBS staff maximum flexibility on programming in 2021 and staff will give the Board frequent updates so the Board can give guidance. It was decided that budget updates would be a regular agenda item.

A motion was made by Mr. Hess and seconded by Ms. Allgood to approve the 2021 OBS Operating Budget with the corrections discussed. Motion carried unanimously.

## C. Director's Report

**Staff Written Reports** – Ms. Sladky reviewed the staff reports. She highlighted that Olbrich had 112K visitors YTD in 2020, even though there were no visitors between March 17-June 16 (284K YTD in 2019). She mentioned the sustainable practices that the horticulture staff implement and teach and that the

new greenhouse will be fairly empty after the poinsettias leave, until seeding begins for spring & summer annuals. She talked about the 2021 online plant sale that will include more sustainable offerings - curated perennial trays mimicking the plant palettes of Olbrich's iconic gardens, bare root fruit trees, and veggie bundles. She noted that the gift shop will be sending a postcard to members announcing that member discounts are now being honored online with curbside pick-up and in person shopping will be appointment only. Ms. Sladky thanked Rebecca Benedict, Education Registrar, for her ongoing and thoughtful communication with instructors and participants about program cancellations and new virtual offerings.

**D. Development Report** – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the Development report. He emphasized that the year-end appeal is underway with an ask for support in the newsletter, GivingTuesday, and the year-end direct mail appeal. Mr. Vande Slunt reported that although membership revenue continues to decline and is down 17% since the pandemic began, membership raised more money in September and October 2020 than in 2019. He mentioned that there has been an increase in donors purchasing garden furniture throughout the Gardens, which is contributing to development's strong YTD performance.

**E. Marketing & Public Relations Report** – Ms. Nodolf reviewed the Marketing and PR Report. She described the new virtual offerings which will initially be posted on social media; however, videos will be posted to Olbrich's YouTube channel: 'Garden Gabs' once per month, bi-weekly 'Ask Amy' with Horticultural Librarian, 'Olbrich's Orchids' once per month, 'Garden to Glass' once per month, 'How to...' videos once per month, Member/Donor profiles, Gift Shop product features, and generally sharing beautiful photos from Olbrich between these offerings. She assured that staff are developing ways to notify the public in advance of the live virtual events.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS**

Lisa Laschinger, Assistant Parks Superintendent, spoke about the passing of the 2021 City Operating Budget which was favorable to Olbrich. She highlighted that the passed City budget retains existing staff and that the slight cuts were through the delay in hiring a Facility Maintenance Worker until 7/1/21 and a reduction in seasonal employee hours. She noted the furlough program that will impact all permanent City employees.

VII. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There are no announcements.

VIII. **ADJOURNED**

The meeting adjourned at 5:07 pm.