

OLBRICH BOTANICAL SOCIETY
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2014

Members Present: President Tim Sherry; Fred Anderson, David Ahrens, Julie Herfel, Kevin Hess, Eric Knepp, Tricia Perkins, Mary Phillips, Susan Derse Phillips, Roberta Sladky, Michelle Taschek, Sue Thering, Dick Wagner and Bill White

Members Absent: Jennifer Curliss, Carolyn Gilb, Dan Lauffer, Janet Loewi, Laurel Neverdahl, Erin Ogden, and Marsha Rummel

Advisors Present: Jack Bolz, Jt Covelli, Sandy Dolister, Elizabeth Ogren Erickson, Jeff Levy, Emanuel Scarbrough and Barb Tensfeldt

Staff Present: Christine Blau, Cindy Cary, Kelsey Dodson, Natasha Fuller, Katy Morgan-Davies, Marty Petillo, Katy Plantenberg, Kai Stanecki, Cindy Sullivan, Nancy Vidlak and John Wirth

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Hess to approve the meeting minutes of September 16, 2014, with a correction on page 2: Ms. Covelli reported that the Development Committee met last month (not last week). 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. UPDATES IN THE BOLZ CONSERVATORY. Curator John Wirth presented a colorful and information-packed PowerPoint presentation on the past year in the Bolz Conservatory: Dylan Jordee, a part-time employee and student at UW Madison, was successful in soliciting architectural lighting for the pyramid as part of a business entrepreneurship class project. The \$7,000 in-kind donation from Blizzard Lighting, Milwaukee, was installed by Mr. Jordee and Olbrich's Maintenance Mechanic II, Don Saunders. Mr. Wirth commented on an article in the last Gardens newsletter, saying the programmed light show brings a whole new dimension to the Bolz Conservatory at night. The LED lights are set on timer providing limitless colors and various types of sequences including popular Wisconsin sports teams color themes.

Mr. Wirth then covered details of the water tempering system. City water enters the system at just 50 degrees, requiring tempering of the water through a 120 gallon water heater to increase the temperature to the 75 degrees needed to water plants. Mr. Wirth and city staff are looking into replacing the water heater next year with one powered by solar energy. This new system will lower the cost to temper the approximate 2,000 gallons required each day.

Mr. Wirth's presentation wrapped up with photos of the new bamboo trellises, replacing 20+ year-old bamboo stalks, and planting new tropical plants – and their flowers and fruit –in the wake of the construction project.

Accompanied by applause, Mr. Sherry thanked Mr. Wirth for his presentation.

V. REPORTS

A. President's Report

President Sherry re-arranged the order of the President's Report items to accommodate Alder David Ahrens need to leave by 4:30.

d. Executive Committee Statement Regarding Admission Fee

Alder and OBS Board Member David Ahrens addressed the OBS Board about his proposal to charge an admission fee to non-Madison residents. He stated that he is sorry that it seemed to have come from out of nowhere and he recognized that it was upsetting to the institution as well as to individuals. His belief is that the practice of having free admission is a great tradition but it is a tradition that the city as a whole can no longer afford. Feedback from his colleagues has been that he shouldn't introduce this as a budget amendment, but that it should be a larger discussion with the Parks division and the OBS Board and therefore he is not pursuing the budget amendment at this time.

President Sherry called on Eric Knepp, newly instated Superintendent of Madison Parks and asked for his comments. Mr. Knepp expressed pride to be associated with Olbrich. He agreed with Mr. Ahrens that his proposal be discussed by city policy-makers and that all aspects of city operations, not just Parks or Olbrich Gardens need to be evaluated. It's a fair discussion to have but a different process exists for the discussion. Mr. Knepp also pointed out that what happens at Olbrich Gardens is much more than what the \$1.2 million from the City – OBS is critical to the process. Growth and development has come from OBS capital campaigns and growth of OBS programs over the years. Mr. Knepp is pleased to work with Mr. Ahrens on the process in its entirety to make appropriate choices so that the entirety of the story is told and the Gardens are preserved.

Mr. Sherry stated that the economic impact the Gardens has on the neighborhood must also be evaluated.

Mr. Scarbrough stated that the process must be vetted and the Gardens' future must be secure.

Mr. Wagner stated that Olbrich Gardens is an important civic institution and has become such because of the financial support of the community since the 1990's. The history must not be forgotten and the way the Gardens contribute to the City must be recognized.

Ms. Sladky state that, when Milwaukee County auditors visited Olbrich recently (as part of a study of Boerner Botanical Gardens), she told them that Olbrich Gardens has

always striven to stay true to the culture and vision of the institution, its history and the community.

Susan Phillips stated that the Executive Committee, Board and City should look at the proposal with caution. Be careful what you wish for. Having raised lots of money over the years, organizations assume that an institution will by gain by charging a fee. The reputation of Olbrich Gardens, its place in the community and where they money comes from must fit into the equation. An assessment of what's happened when other organizations have taken this step must be evaluated. Often revenue decreases when admission is charged.

Ms. Sladky drew Board members' attention to the handout from Kelsey Dodson of membership which is a list of 'why they are members of Olbrich' provided by members who join or renew online.

Mr. Wagner concluded the discussion by stating that a different process than budget should be utilized to evaluate the proposal.

A motion was made by Mr. Hess and seconded by Ms. Derse Phillips to approve the following resolution originally approved by the OBS Board Executive Committee on October 7, 2014.

Olbrich Botanical Society Executive Committee Statement on Olbrich Botanical Gardens Fee Proposal The Olbrich Botanical Society (OBS) Executive Committee acting on behalf of the Board of Directors respectfully asks that the City of Madison not institute an admission fee for Olbrich Botanical Gardens as part of the 2015 budget.

The OBS Board of Directors has not had the opportunity to review the proposal. The present partnership between the City of Madison and OBS has worked well to provide a world class garden for Madison as part of Madison Parks. OBS's success in annually raising \$1.5 million to support our public garden is a key factor in the gardens operation.

A review of our partnership and the financial structure that supports Olbrich Botanical Gardens is the only appropriate way to evaluate any changes and OBS would be happy to cooperate in such a process.

The motion carried unanimously with the exception of Mr. Ahrens who abstained.

a. Poinsettia deliveries

President Sherry asked Ms. Vidlak to report on plans for December poinsettia deliveries to top donors. She circulated a sign-up sheet with 125+ names and asked Board members interested in signing up as "Elves" to choose names of those to whom they would like to make deliveries. At the November meeting, Ms. Vidlak will let members know whose names they 'won', and confirm procedures on picking up the wrapped and tagged plants.

b. Social Media Policy

A motion was made by Mr. Hess and seconded by Ms. Herfel to approve the Social Media Policy first presented by Ms. Morgan-Davies at the September meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Privacy Policy review

Ms. Sladky reported that the Executive Committee would like to improve OBS' Charity Navigator rating. The Gardens' website and payments are hosted by the City of Madison which privacy policy is referred to in OBS donor privacy policy. OBS' privacy policy will go on the page that links donors to the online site. Please make any comments/corrections/additions to Ms. Sladky before the November meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Hess and seconded by Ms. Derse Phillips to approve the resolution unanimously approved by the OBS Board Executive Committee on October 7, 2014.

Olbrich Botanical Society Executive Committee Statement on Olbrich Botanical Gardens Fee Proposal

The Olbrich Botanical Society (OBS) Executive Committee acting on behalf of the Board of Directors respectfully asks that the City of Madison not institute an admission fee for Olbrich Botanical Gardens as part of the 2015 budget.

The OBS Board of Directors has not had the opportunity to review the proposal. The present partnership between the City of Madison and OBS has worked well to provide a world class garden for Madison as part of Madison Parks. OBS's success in annually raising \$1.5 million to support our public garden is a key factor in the gardens operation.

A review of our partnership and the financial structure that supports Olbrich Botanical Gardens is the only appropriate way to evaluate any changes and OBS would be happy to cooperate in such a process.

With an abstention by Mr. Ahrens, the motion carried unanimously.

President Sherry reported that US Bank will not be sponsoring US Bank Eve at Olbrich Gardens this year due to budget cutbacks. Ms. Sladky said that the Gardens would stay open a bit later than usual to welcome families who may not have heard of the change in schedule. Ms. Taschek volunteered as a counter for the 2013 event and reported that 700 people attended in a two-hour period in 2013.

Ms. Sladky also said she'd send a schedule of 2015 meeting dates to Board members.

B. Financial Report

Ms. Phillips noted that we're even with budget with a variance of just \$57! Some discrepancies are due to timing. Revenue remains \$72,000 above budget YTD. Of that, Special Events are still \$30,000 ahead of budget even though advertising expenses are earlier than expected. Membership is also affected by timing. There are some one-time expenses in Development and Administration

C. Director's Report

Ms. Sladky reviewed staff reports and noted that every day she comes in to see staff and volunteers potting up tropicals and taking cuttings. Fall colors are very lovely but we're

nearing the end of the season for water. The last pool is being drained and staff are working on draining the irrigation system.

Staff is nervous about the potential for another polar vortex. It was such a weird winter for what survived and what didn't. She said staff did a lot of replacements this year and are nervous about yearling perennials.

Marty's report looks back and forward. I hope you read the volunteers' comments. (Tim: Marty you do a great job!)

Ms. Sladky also asked Ms. Petillo to circulate her evaluation on the impact of charging an admission fee. When the Bolz Conservatory fee was raised from \$1 to \$2, the revenue only increased by 25%, not the 50% that might be expected.

Cindy and Gift shop beat budget by \$57.00 for October and is \$25,000 over budget year to date.

Ms. Nicholson is working on the new exhibit in conservatory which opens in a couple of weeks. It is about how nature inspires human invention.

Mr. Bolz asked that Mr. Knepp be more properly introduced to the Board by giving some of his personal background. He has a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Evansville and a masters degree in public administration from Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs. Mr. Knepp came to Madison Parks from Finance and was the Assistant Superintendent and Finance Manager before being named Superintendent. His goal is to get out into the community and make relationships like this one that works!

President Sherry asked board members and staff to introduce themselves.

D. Development Report

Ms. Covelli reported the Circle solicitation letter went out last week, though it should have been mailed in May.

Ms. Morgan-Davies confirmed a signed contract with campaign consulting firm McDonald-Schaefer. The first meeting will be Wednesday afternoon.

Ms. Covelli said it took us 50 years to build Monona Terrace. We've done an amazing job getting people to come together on the Gardens.

E. Marketing & Public Relations Report

Ms. Covelli reported on successful Special Events: CRACKLE beat everything we've done so far. Thai Fest, though not a fundraiser, had a tremendous turnout. It honors a beautiful garden representing a gift of the UW, City and state.

Ms. Morgan-Davies reported that Olbrich Gardens won a social media program, Class Words, valued at \$2,400. As it gets underway, Ms. Morgan-Davies will teach us more about it, and how it creates poetry and publishes it.

June 20, is the date for next year's Rhapsody in Bloom. The theme will be *Through the Looking Glass*.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

President Sherry stated that as the Capital Campaign moves forward, the steering committee will be making plans. In 30-60 days, a report will be made to the board on specifics. Members were encouraged to contact Ms. Sladky if they wish to volunteer during this early stage of the campaign.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Elizabeth Ogren Erickson thanked Mr. Wirth for his presentation. "You did a tremendous job."

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Ms. Dolister and seconded by Mr. Hess to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:04pm.