

**OLBRICH BOTANICAL SOCIETY**  
**Board of Directors Virtual Meeting Minutes**  
**May 19, 2020**

**Members Present:** Philip Bradbury, Renee Boyce, Mary Phillips, Bill White, Alnisa Allgood, Susan Goodwin, Kevin Hess, Laura Peterson, Tim Sherry, Betty Chewning, Liz Dannenbaum, Eric Knepp, Laurel Neverdahl, Nancy Ragland, Roberta Sladky

**Members Absent:** Julie Rupert, Erik Lincoln, Dick Wagner, Brad Hinkfuss

**Advisors Present:** Jt Covelli, Julie Herfel, Janet Loewi, Barb Tensfeldt

**Staff Present:** Katy Nodolf, Marty Petillo, Rylee Schuchardt, Kai Skadahl, Joe Vande Slunt

**I. The meeting called to order at 4:01 pm.**

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Ms. Goodwin and seconded by Ms. Neverdahl to approve the meeting minutes of April 21, 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. **Board member engagement survey** – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the summary of the survey that was sent to the OBS Board of Directors to assess Board performance, Board understanding of key components of OBS, and the Board's effectiveness overall. He described how the intention of the survey was to capture key baseline data to help set the agenda for the Board in the future.

Mr. Vande Slunt listed some of the reoccurring themes in areas that need better understanding: Orientation, onboarding, strategic planning and the future. Vice President Bradbury noted that he thought the survey results showed a need for more Board involvement in some matters, a more in-depth orientation to Olbrich, and taking full advantage of Board member's strengths.

Discussion followed where Board members expressed that they would like to know more about each other's areas of expertise, brought up the possibility of a "Cocktails in the Conservatory" program for Board members/staff to socialize, would like to break into smaller groups (task forces) and have the opportunity to know OBS on a deeper level.

Vice President Bradbury summarized that the common themes voiced by the Board were to rethink the process of selecting new Board members, assign tasks to Board members without overwhelming, and get the full benefit of each member's skills so they can help OBS continue to be a successful and effective organization.

- b. **Board engagement recommendations going forward** – Mr. Vande Slunt explained that a Board expectation form is being developed and will be used to meet with each Board member annually to check in and to see where they would like to get involved. He noted that this would be where OBS staff would share a list of needs and ask Board members if they would like to have a role in helping with specific goals.

- c. **OBS's Response to COVID19** – Mr. Vande Slunt announced that since Olbrich's closure in March, two immediate tasks need involvement by Board members that would be a benefit to the organization. Ms. Sladky and the OBS Executive Committee approved creating two Task Forces focused on the "campaign" (continuing to raise funds, create programs, and connect with donors and the community) and re-opening (creating a safe environment for our staff, visitors and volunteers.)

He described that each Task Force would have a staff lead that would help organize meetings, be mindful of deadlines, report to the OBS Board, and keep conversations moving between meetings. In addition, each Task Force would have a Board Chair that would help advise and advocate for the staff from a high-level: Campaign Task Force Chair will be Susan Goodwin and Reopening Task Force Chair will be Alnisa Allgood. It was assured that there would be many opportunities for the Board to be involved once there is a framework.

Vice President Bradbury commented that Olbrich staff have done a phenomenal job of keeping the organization operating during the pandemic.

Ms. Sladky added that staff are keeping close track of our expenditures and she working on the budget, OBS's revenues and expenses, going forward through the rest of the year.

- d. **Gift Acceptance Policy** – Ms. Sladky explained that the gift acceptance policy was developed in 2011 because OBS was offered of a gift of gas wells, which OBS did not accept, but realized that it would be important to have a policy in place. OBS recently received gifts of stock and mutual funds, but because of the pandemic and the market not being in a good situation, OBS asked the Board to temporarily suspend the Gift Acceptance Policy, review the policy like was done in 2015, and see if it should be modified in case of a future economic crisis. Ms. Sladky expressed that it may be better for OBS to hang on to the stock and mutual funds until it is better understood where the market is going, rather than sell immediately upon arrival at the brokerage firm like the current policy dictates.

Original motion:

WHEREAS, Olbrich Botanical Society Board of Directors adopted a Gift Acceptance Policy on October 18, 2011, and,

WHEREAS, Olbrich Botanical Society Board of Directors updated the Gift Acceptance Policy on March 17, 2015, and,

WHEREAS, the economic situation caused by the pandemic may delay sales of stock and mutual fund gifts,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Olbrich Botanical Society Board of Directors will suspend the Gift Acceptance Policy until it has been reviewed and an update approved.

A motion was made by Mr. Hess and seconded by Mr. Bradbury to move the motion in order for the Board to discuss an amendment to the Gift Acceptance Policy resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

There was discussion about the relationship between the Olbrich Botanical Society and the Olbrich Botanical Society Foundation. Ms. Sladky stated that OBS had always relied on the investment strategy of OBSF and that OBS does have an account with stocks and bonds at BMO Harris Bank.

After further discussion, there was agreement that the motion had to be more targeted. Mr. Vande Slunt reiterated that there are two things that would no longer apply, everything else in the policy would remain: 1-The Board moved a motion in June 2018 to hold on to bequests and wait and see how the capital campaign would turn out. Those bequests are sitting in a separate savings account at Monona Bank. 2-Making it policy that staff does not immediately sell stocks or mutual funds received in OBS's Merrill Lynch account, like the current policy reads.

It was decided that the Board would suspend the requirement of the Gift Acceptance Policy that publicly traded securities be sold immediately, that they instead may be held until there is a more favorable market, with the advice of our investment advisors.

The OBS Board approved the following amended resolution:

WHEREAS, Olbrich Botanical Society Board of Directors adopted a Gift Acceptance Policy on October 18, 2011, and,

WHEREAS, Olbrich Botanical Society Board of Directors updated the Gift Acceptance Policy on March 17, 2015, and,

WHEREAS, the economic situation caused by the pandemic may delay sales of stock and mutual fund gifts,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Olbrich Botanical Society Board of Directors will suspend the requirement of the Gift Acceptance Policy that publicly traded securities be sold immediately, that they instead may be held until there is a more favorable market, with the advice of our investment advisors.

A motion was made by Mr. Hess and seconded by Mr. Sherry to approve the Gift Acceptance Policy resolution with the amended terms from the discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

## **B. Financial Report**

- a. **February 2020 Financials** – Rylee Schuchardt reviewed the March Financial Summary Report and noted that the Conservatory had a new revenue account titled ‘Conservatory Orchid Exhibit Revenue’ since they worked together with the Gift Shop to sell orchids after the Orchid Escape exhibit, bringing in \$3,800.00 in orchid sales. She also explained that the March financial statements do not reflect the credit card refunds that the education department issued because of classes were cancelled, since they first have to be reconciled through the City, therefore the refunds for payments made by credit card will appear in the April financial statements.

## **C. Director’s Report**

**Staff Written Reports** – Ms. Sladky reviewed the staff reports. She described how difficult it has been on many staff working through the pandemic plus maintaining their own lives at home and how impressed she is with how well everyone is doing and their commitment to continuing their work. Ms. Sladky announced that Camela King, Growing Gifts Manager, resigned last week and staff are working on a plan to move forward. She noted that we do not see the store opening in the early phases of Olbrich opening public, so less of an issue now, and that work is being done on an online store that is navigable and with curbside pickup.

She talked about staff’s enthusiasm for working on a plan for a safe re-opening and how volunteers have expressed their eagerness to come back to the gardens. Ms. Sladky welcomed our five horticulture interns that started on Monday, which are funded by a grant from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust. She pointed out that education staff are doing a lot of work revising how they may have to offer Explorer with new guidelines and talking about offering online programs that would bring in revenue. Overall, OBS is doing things differently and will probably keep some of the new practices as we move into the future.

Ms. Sladky concluded by explaining how all of the staff are watching spending and that most of the money being spent is related to fundraising or was ordered earlier in the year for planting now. She also noted that the City has enacted spending controls and will possibly enact required furlough days.

Parks Superintendent Eric Knepp informed the Board that they may see reports on the City’s financial condition referencing Room Tax concerns and issues. He noted that this is important to Olbrich because approximately \$325K of the operating budget that is funded from Room Tax is directed to Olbrich. He

assured that there are no plans that Olbrich, or Parks, would have to have to absorb or break-even with this loss of revenue and that this is a real loss of revenue for the entire City, but work is being done to solve this across all City departments. Mr. Knepp also spoke about furloughs and recognized that it is not only painful to take home lower pay, but it also limits the ability to come to work and deliver the services that we provide to the community. He concluded by saying that, as Olbrich's building project comes to a close, he is confident that there will be no exceedances of any expected expenses (from OBS's perspective) on the project

**D. Development Report** – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the Development report. He talked about the strong response to the Spring Appeal and that the total raised was currently \$45,300, in addition to being aware of a couple of larger gifts that would be coming in. He noted that Development staff are expecting to hear more from members about extending their membership expirations, due to programs like Blooming Butterflies being cancelled for 2020, and that they are working on a survey to send to members to gauge their expectations.

**E. Marketing & Public Relations Report** – Ms. Nodolf reviewed the Marketing and PR Report. She highlighted that there are interesting articles listed that were written by staff over the past year. She explained that the silver lining on only being able to connect with our audience online is that it has forced staff to focus work on Olbrich's online presence, which is something staff had been wanting to accomplish. She noted that they are writing announcements about summer programming changes and the fundraising campaign that the Campaign Task Force is working on.

V. **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

VI. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There are no announcements.

VII. **ADJOURNED**

The meeting adjourned at 5:09 pm.