

OLBRICH BOTANICAL SOCIETY
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting Minutes
June 15, 2021

Members Present: Philip Bradbury, Alnisa Allgood, Renee Boyce, Mary Phillips, Julie Bernauer, Susan Goodwin, Bethany Ordaz, Laura Peterson, Juscha Robinson, Maurice Sheppard, Tim Sherry, Bill White, Betty Chewing, Liz Dannenbaum, Moira Harrington, Laurel Neverdahl, Roberta Sladky

Members Absent: Julie Rupert, Sandi Statz, Brad Hinkfuss, Eric Knepp

Advisors Present: Jack Bolz, Jt Covelli, Kevin Hess, Barb Tensfeldt

Staff Present: Jeff Epping, Jake Immel, Lisa Laschinger (Assistant Parks Superintendent), Katy Nodolf, Kim North, Marty Petillo, Rylee Schuchardt, Kai Skadah, Elizabeth Spry, Joe Vande Slunt

I. **The meeting called to order at 4:00 pm.**

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Ms. Peterson and seconded by Ms. Goodwin to approve the meeting minutes of May 18, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

IV. **OLBRICH STAFF PRESENTATION**

- A. **A Gardener's Call – Virtual lecture series re-cap.** – Kim North gave a program overview of the 5-part virtual lecture series that Olbrich hosted between January – May 2021. She noted that over 900 people participated from 2 countries, 15 states and 59 cities. Ms. North shared that because the first virtual lecture series was so successful, Olbrich will be including it as an annual virtual program offering. Jeff Epping summarized the final webinar of the series, *Answering the Call – Gardening for a Better Life*, that was presented by Olbrich's very own Jeff Epping, Katey Pratt, and Erin Presley. He explained how the goal of their presentation was to inspire people to access all concepts learned throughout the series to support healthy ecosystems through mindful gardening practices, just as Olbrich has been doing for years.

V. **REPORTS**

A. **President's Report**

- a. **OBS Recruitment Committee Update: participation in the recruitment of the next Garden Director.** – Joe Vande Slunt announced that the Garden Director position was posted on June 14 and would be closing on July 5. He noted that he and Katy Nodolf created a "position profile" to complement the City's Garden Director job posting.
- b. **Capitol Project Update.** – Roberta Sladky shared that a meeting would be taking place on 06/18/2021 with City Engineering and the contractors to work out what still needs to be completed. She reported that recognition signage was being installed throughout the Frautschi Family Learning Center and that containers were being planted around the FFLC. She confirmed that Randy Wiesner, from City Engineering, would give a final presentation to the Board when the project is complete.

- B. **Demographic Study Group.** – Joe Vande Slunt summarized the purpose of needing a Demographic Study Group. Roberta Sladky described how she met with John Stevenson from the UW Survey Center to talk about the demographic data that Olbrich wants to collect. She reported that Mr. Stevenson

suggested that focus groups might be a better and more achievable method of collecting information on demographics and where we need to improve, and mentioned the possibility of the facilitators and participants getting paid for their time. He advised that a full-scale on-site survey may be too expensive and time consuming. Mr. Vande Slunt requested the help from two Board members to lead this study. He anticipated that work would start on this before a new Garden Director starts and that it would be an 18-month project. It was noted that focus groups and reaching out to the community has been happening frequently in the area, most recently the Pinney Library, and that this new Board study group could reach out to them. Mr. Vande Slunt added that he would send a recap of the Demographic Study Group information to the entire Board after the meeting.

C. Financial Report

- a. **April 2021 Financials** – Treasurer Mary Phillips reviewed the April Financial Reports. She noted that YTD remained favorable to budget for revenue and expenses. She explained that Development revenue was slightly under because the spring appeal was scheduled to drop in April, but was behind schedule and would be dropping soon. When reviewing the OBS 2021 Projected Cash Flow Statement, Ms. Phillips noted that the remaining projected balance for the end of year was still over \$300K. She announced that an offer was made to a candidate for the Gift Shop Manager position.

D. Director's Report

Staff Written Reports – Ms. Sladky reviewed the staff reports. She highlighted that attendance was continuing to rise. She noted that with the drought conditions, staff were doing a lot of watering to protect our plant investment. She talked about how Olbrich will continue celebrate pollinators this summer with a StoryWalk featuring the children's book, *Señorita Mariposa*, and how this book fosters consciousness about protecting pollinators and our planet.

- E. **Development Report** – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the Development report. He announced that the Horticulture Department would be receiving a donation of \$4,000 to purchase a variety of electric lawn equipment, as Olbrich works to phase out small-cycle gas engines that aren't environmentally friendly. He gave an update on plans for fundraising for the Bolz Conservatory's 30th Anniversary later in 2021.

- F. **Marketing & Public Relations Report** – Ms. Nodolf reviewed the Marketing and PR Report. She shared that there would be an Instagram takeover for Summer Breeze from a staff member from the Cap Times. Ms. Nodolf noted that she recently gave tours to the State Dept of Tourism and to Destination Madison, as more people are starting to travel.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Resolution honoring retiring OBG Executive Director Roberta Sladky

The OBS Executive Board recommends approval of the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Roberta Sladky has worked as Olbrich Botanical Gardens' Executive Director since April 12, 2006, and,

WHEREAS, Roberta Sladky will retire from Olbrich Botanical Gardens on June 25, 2021, and,

WHEREAS, Roberta Sladky has been an invaluable counselor to this Board of Directors and to the management and leadership of the employees of Olbrich Botanical Gardens, and,

WHEREAS, Roberta Sladky led Olbrich Botanical Gardens through unprecedented program growth, a major facilities expansion, and a global pandemic, and

WHEREAS, Roberta Sladky has helped Olbrich Botanical Gardens grow into one of the nation's premiere botanical gardens and a top state tourist attraction, and,

WHEREAS, during her tenure, Roberta Sladky contributed to serving the following:

9 OBS Board Presidents (Dennis Birke, Gene Henry, Dan Matson, Janet Loewi, Tim Sherry, Kevin Hess, Bill White, Julie Rupert, Phil Bradbury)

31 OBS Board Advisors

61 OBS Board Directors/Officers

132 Olbrich Staff Members

135 OBS Interns

4,007,404 Olbrich Visitors!

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of Olbrich Botanical Society wishes to honor and express its gratitude to Roberta Sladky for her service on the Board of Directors, and for her dedication and effectiveness to support the work of Olbrich Botanical Gardens.

A motion was made by Ms. Goodwin and seconded by Ms. Boyce to approve the resolution. The Motion carried unanimously.

Roberta Sladky presented a PowerPoint titled "My Last Board Meeting" where she talked about future needs for Olbrich, including: needed repairs on the Thai Pavilion, a structural and systems review of the Bolz Conservatory, turning the next ten acres adjacent to the Thai Pavilion into garden space, and the need for a comprehensive interpretation plan. She noted that she will miss working with the high quality staff and OBS Board members.

VII. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

VIII. **ADJOURNED**

The meeting adjourned at 5:02 pm.