

**ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM  
BOARD MEETING**

January 10, 2022, 1 p.m.

WebEx meeting

**Attending: Officers:** Chair Donna Sack, Secretary Sarah Doherty; Board members Tamira Brennan, Andrea Carlson, Graham Peck, Beth Shadur, Roger Taylor, and nikhil trivedi; Illinois State Museum Society Board Chair Cinda Klickna and Society staff member Jamila Wicks; Museum Staff Members: Jennifer Edginton, Erika Holst, Meghan Lindstrom, and Robert Sill.

**I. Welcome**

Chair Donna Sack welcomed attendees and the meeting was called to order at 1:11 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

Meghan Lindstrom called the roll and a quorum was present.

**III. Approval of the Minutes of September 13, 2021**

Secretary Sarah Doherty presented the minutes for approval. Beth Shadur moved to approve the minutes, Tamira Brennan seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**IV. Chair's Report**

Donna thanked museum staff for their diligence in keeping the museum open and moving forward despite the challenges of the last two years. She commended them for successfully transitioning to virtual programming, adding to the collections while simultaneously trimming them with necessary deaccessions, and maintaining basic operations and onboarding new staff while facing the difficulties brought about by the pandemic.

**V. DEAI Committee**

Andrea Carlson shared that the Diversity Equity Access and Inclusion (DEAI) committee members had been given a tour of the Dickson Mounds Museum. nikhil trivedi said he appreciated the opportunity to visit the museum for the first time since joining the Board. They noted many changes that were still needed at the site such as the removal of offensive imagery and displays that contain stereotypical, harmful caricatures. Another concern is the south wing of the museum. Ancestors were once viewed through the floor and, while the area was covered and no longer on display, the wing is still over the burial site. Andrea recommended that the Board consider moving the museum and making the current location a 'site of conscience.'

Andrea shared that there are obvious vacancies in some of the displays following the removal of all Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) eligible objects. Robert Sill said the removal was prompted when a visitor stole a sacred object from a display case over the summer. All NAGPRA eligible objects were removed from the exhibit at Dickson Mounds and transferred to the Research and Collection Center in Springfield.

Andrea reminded the Board that she had previously mentioned the concern that Dickson Mounds had developed a relationship with the Peoria Nation to the exclusion of others. The museum's land acknowledgements will need to address all Native Peoples of Illinois. It is likely that multiple acknowledgements will have to be made for the different locations of the museum system as well as one for the whole state. Native Peoples will be included in the formation of the land acknowledgements and not just brought in for approval of the final product. Andrea also recommended that the land acknowledgements be translated into multiple languages and displayed prominently at each museum site.

A draft of the DEAI committee charter was presented to the board for approval. Graham Peck recommended the removal of the term 'right to exist.' Tamira Brennan commented that the scope of the charter was very vague and lacked direction. Donna recommended that the committee finesse the document further and present a more defined charter at the next board meeting.

VI. **Museum Director's report**

Robert Sill gave the museum director's report on behalf of Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko. He shared that a new Society employee had just started at the Research and Collections Center. Hayat Zarzour, who recently completed her degree in anthropology, is now the Society's Digital Assets Manager and Research Associate.

Sarah asked if there was any progress in hiring for key positions. Bob reported that the department's Personnel Authorization Request (PAR) system is still down and without the PAR system no new jobs can be posted. Once the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) fixes the system, new museum job positions will be submitted to the department for approval.

Bob said that the strategic plan discussion originally scheduled for this meeting will be held at the February board meeting instead.

Elizabeth Bazan reported on the use of the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant money. The education department was awarded \$179,000 for equipment and services to be used to improve their work with teachers and school programming. The funds have been split between equipping and technology. The equipping side includes training with Dina Bailey on topics like centering equity and anti-racist thinking. Elizabeth said the Education Department is also working with teachers to determine their needs and conducting a statewide survey. Donna noted that her institution, Naper Settlement, recently conducted a national teacher survey as part of an IMLS grant and has available data. Another project is to create a teacher advisory group. Elizabeth is currently accepting applications from teachers and asking them to commit to a year. On the technical side, the education team has bought several new devices including two more mobile video units complete with laptops, cameras, and lighting equipment. These are being used by curators to build up a library of around fifty short videos. The largest purchase was a research-grade scanner that can capture items in color.

Elizabeth provided a demonstration of the new scanner by scanning a bobcat skull using FARO RevEng reverse engineering software. She shared that the education team plans to scan a wide variety of objects from the collection and create an online database for teachers. nikhil asked about the scope of the project. Elizabeth said it is only limited by the time it takes to complete the scans and choose a database. Donna asked if the database would be free and not fee based. Elizabeth confirmed that the database would be free to access. Jamila Wicks thanked Elizabeth for the demonstration and the Board for their support to help the museum get grants to fund programs and purchases like these. Grants help the museum to operate without charging fees to visitors.

Erika Holst presented a deaccession request for 169 cast iron pitcher pumps. The items were all part of one person's collection that he purchased from all over the state. However, they are redundant, do not have much potential for research, and no meaningful background stories. None of the pitcher pumps have ever been on exhibit and there is no plan to do so. Graham Peck commented that the reasons given to deaccession the collection were the same reasons once given by the donator to return the items to him. He asked if there was a way to return the items to the family. Erika confirmed there was no legal way to return the items to the donor or his family. All rights to objects are signed away by donors and there are tax implications if donations were written off. Bob added that all donated items become state property. Bob said that the board is only voting to deaccession the pitcher pumps, not

to dispose of them because that is a state property issue. Donna confirmed that collection items cannot be offered back to donors or their family unless it was explicitly written into the deed of gift when the donation occurred. Tamira asked if deaccessioned items could be donated to other museums. Erika said that legally the items can be donated to other institutions like museums but not to private individuals. However, it is unlikely that all 169 pumps would find a home at another museum, so an auction is likely. Graham asked if deaccessioning would be common practice for the museum. Erika confirmed that efforts were being made to deaccession more from the collection to weed out redundancies and items unlikely to ever be put on exhibit. nikhil said that more should be done to educate donors about the donation process so they are aware that donating signs away all legal rights to the objects. Erika confirmed that many donors have poor understanding of museum practices, and that research and exhibitions only happen when opportunities arise. She also said that all need to understand that deaccessioning is a regular practice of a healthy museum, and more requests will be made to the Board.

Donna asked for a motion to deaccession the pitcher pump collection. Andrea moved and Beth seconded. Motion passed, with a 7 to 1 vote.

**VII. DNR report**

Robert Sill presented the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) report on behalf of Kristin DiCenso, Chief of Staff.

IDNR currently has a headcount of 1,165 but over 30 retirements had occurred by the end of 2021. IDNR's hiring focus is on human resources and fiscal positions as nothing can be accomplished without both areas fully staffed.

IDNR's DEAI committee completed the first round of trainings with participation of 125 employees. The next round of trainings has been scheduled and half of the agency will be trained by July.

IDNR leadership is keeping an eye on the omicron variant as COVID cases continue to rise across the agency. Most programming has gone virtual until the end of January and those who can are working remotely.

IDNR is focusing on the upcoming budget and legislative session. The current session was paused due to omicron.

**VIII. Illinois State Museum Society Report—Cinda Klickna**

Cinda reported on the new museum shop. The opening night reception drew a good crowd and there was a lot of excitement in the community. Cinda wanted to acknowledge that the new shop would not have been possible without a very generous donation from George Rabb, a past chairman of the Illinois Museum Society Board and the former Director of the Brookfield Zoo. He left no restrictions on his gift, which the Society was able to use to hire new staff and fund the creation of the shop. Cinda hoped that the ISM Board members would be able to visit soon.

Cinda shared that the Society now has seven paid staff members and a new ISMS staff manual is being written.

The ISMS Board is currently focused on advocacy. They had been scheduled to meet key legislators, but the plan fell through when the legislative session was cancelled. A society committee will soon reconvene to determine next steps. They still hope to host legislators at the museum, but the society must work around the legislators' schedules.

Cinda warned the board that society membership has fallen. Many members have not renewed. She hopes the ISM Board can help keep the museum and its events in the public eye to attract new visitors and members.

**IX. Old Business**

Donna called for old business.

**X. Public Comment**

None present.

**XI. Adjournment**

Donna asked for a motion to adjourn. nikhil moved to adjourn, Beth seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:59 p.m.