

**ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM  
BOARD MEETING  
August 7, 2024, 1:00 p.m.**

**Research and Collections Center  
1011 East Ash, Springfield IL**

**Attending: Board Members** Leverne Backstrom, John Barker, Tamira Brennan, Wanza Davis, Mike Murphy, Jonah Rice, Beth Shadur, and Ashish Sharma; **Illinois State Museum Society** Board Chair Bryan Finn and Staff Member Jamila Wicks; **Illinois State Museum Staff** Amanda Bryden, Jenn Edginton, Meghan Lindstrom, Brooke Morgan, Jeff Nevins, Logan Pappenfort, Mel Pardi, and Bob Sill; **Department of Natural Resources** Director Natalie Phelps-Finnie and George Sisk.

**I. Welcome**

The meeting was called to order at 1:09 pm.

**II. Roll Call**

Meghan Lindstrom called the roll and a quorum was present.

**III. Approval of the Minutes of November 6, 2023**

The Minutes from the November 6, 2023 meeting were presented for approval. Leverne Backstrom moved to approve the Minutes, Tamira Brennan seconded, and the Minutes were approved unanimously.

**IV. New Business**

**Election of Chair**

Director Natalie Phelps-Finnie invited Board members to nominate a Chair. Tamira nominated Beth Shadur. Beth declined and recommended the Chair have a background in museum work. No further nominations were made. Director Finnie tabled the nomination of a Chair for another meeting.

**Orientation**

Board members were provided binders containing Illinois State Museum (ISM) staff profiles, a brief history of the ISM written by staff member Karen Everingham, the enabling statute for the Illinois State Museum Board and House Bill 4838 which proposes amendments to it, the Open Meetings Act (OMA), the OMA Frequently Asked Questions for Public Bodies published by the Attorney General's Office, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Illinois State Museum Society, the Ethics Act, and a Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) overview written by staff member Brooke Morgan.

Jenn Edginton briefly reviewed the ISM staff profile and history.

George Sisk directed the Board to review the provided OMA Frequently Asked Questions and confirmed he would inform the Board if it was ever updated. George also confirmed Board members would receive copies of the Ethics and OMA trainings via email.

George directed the Board to read the enabling statute outlining the makeup and duties of the Illinois State Museum Board. He described how House Bill 4838 would change the language of the statute and the duties of the Board once it was signed by the governor. George confirmed he would alert the Board once it was signed and became law.

Beth asked what prompted the change to make the Board advisory instead of governing. Jenn explained the recent history of the Board. Before the unionization of staff the Board functioned as a governing board. After the staff unionized the Board lost the right to approve new hires or award promotions and it was a governing board in name only. Former Museum Director Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko started working with Legal in 2019 to update the language of the statute to accurately reflect the current duties of the Board.

Mike Murphy joined the meeting at 1:45 pm.

Director Finnie shared that the Governor's Office is reviewing the statutes of many boards and the ISM is not alone in being revised.

Beth expressed concern that future governors may not be supportive of the Museum and an advisory board would be unable to fight against another forced closure. Beth and Tamira were also concerned that the Board had not been informed that the statute was being revised. Director Finnie apologized for not communicating with the Board. She explained that the Department and Museum have been navigating a difficult time which necessitated quick and strategic responses. She is speaking with the Governor's Office on this subject and invited Board members to provide feedback for her to bring back to those conversations.

George explained that neither a governing board nor an advisory board would have the power to stop a governor from closing a State-owned museum.

Leverne asked if there were term limits for serving on the Board. George stated he would take time to review the statute before providing an answer.

Bob Sill provided an overview of the Museum's deaccession agreement with the Central Management Service which allows the ISM to sell government property at auction. The ISM practices "active collecting" which means it accepts new donations while also evaluating current collections to determine if they still serve the Museum's mission. This could lead to collections or individual items being proposed for deaccession and, if approved by the Board, to be offered to other cultural institutions or sold at auction. All funds raised from such sales are used only to purchase new acquisitions or to support the care and upkeep of the current collections. This is handled by the ISM Society's accountant and there is a plan to move it to a protected State line, as included in the new MOA with the Society.

Jenn advised the Board that the ISM does not deaccession human remains. Instead, the Board will vote to approve the repatriation of any individuals or items subject to NAGPRA. This keeps the Board informed and serves as a final check of the ISM's NAGPRA efforts headed by Curator of Anthropology Brooke Morgan.

Brooke provided a summary of the NAGPRA document. The ISM has been working on NAGPRA compliance since the passage of the legislation and is actively reaching out to Tribes about repatriation. In 2020 Brooke reached out to 20 Tribes about the Dickson Mounds Museum site, which is the ISM's largest repatriation project. In January 2024 public notice was given in the federal register of all NAGPRA eligible individuals in the collection, which makes them all available for repatriation. Brooke cautioned the Board that NAGPRA compliance is a process, not an event, and more work goes into repatriation than just handing human remains over to Tribes. The ISM will continue to be the repository for human remains found across Illinois, commonly encountered during road construction projects by the Department of Transportation, so it is likely the ISM will always hold some human remains awaiting repatriation or reburial.

#### **V. Director's Report**

Jenn provided the Director's Report. She shared that elders from the Sac and Fox Nation had visited and toured the Research and Collections Center earlier in the week as part of their broader visit to Illinois.

### **Plumbing Project**

The plumbing project at the downtown museum location started on August 1<sup>st</sup> and the building had been closed with permission from Director Finnie and the Governor's Office. Jenn commended Museum and Society staff for their work covering exhibits, work locations, and the Play Museum to keep them protected during the demolition and asbestos abatement steps of the project. Staff have been relocated to the Research and Collections Center in Springfield. The Museum is scheduled to reopen November 1<sup>st</sup> but most staff will remain at the Research and Collections Center since there will still be no running water in the building as the plumbing project continues.

### **Exhibitions and events**

Museum staff will be present at the Illinois State Fair in the First Lady's Tent. After the State Fair concludes Museum staff will plan events at different locations around Springfield including the Governor's Mansion and the local farmers market. Also after the fair, the objects currently on display at DNR will be changed out to prints from the Museum's Works Progress Administration collection.

The *Noir* exhibit remains on display at the Dana-Thomas House State Historic Site.

The *Terra* exhibit originally planned to open at the ISM will instead be installed at the Lockport Gallery.

The very popular annual Day of the Dead event, run in partnership with the Hispanic Women of Springfield and the University of Illinois at Springfield's Diversity Center, will be hosted at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. The Department of Agriculture has allowed the Museum to hold the event at the Illinois Building free of charge. The Society has secured a grant for the event so that dancers, musicians, and artists could be hired to work at the event.

### **Dickson Mounds Museum**

In late July, Dickson Mounds Museum was damaged in a large storm that went through Lewistown. The second floor had multiple leaks through the roof and over 40 ceiling tiles fell. Museum staff acted quickly to remove objects that were close to the rain damage as well the damaged ceiling tiles. The damage was deemed an emergency by the Capital Development Board and DNR is working on a solution for the roof problem. Another rainstorm came through before the roof could be patched so the building had to close

to the public while CMS addressed the issue. The roof will be temporarily patched, then followed up with an emergency roof repair.

### **Accreditation**

The Museum's Accreditation evaluation has been postponed to March 2025 due to the transitions and being short staffed. Staff will need to reevaluate all policies, plans, and operations manuals. Two particularly important plans that need to be completed are emergency preparedness plans and the strategic plan. The Museum has used several temporary strategic plans but a permanent one needs to be created to maintain Accreditation. Jenn plans to have the new plan be driven by input from staff, partners, and the Board. Jenn would like to meet individually with all Board members to receive their input on the content and direction of the new strategic plan. Ashish Sharma recommended that Museum staff prepare small presentations at the next Board meeting about the art, history, and science collections and the visions of the curators for the collections. The Board could follow it with a brainstorming session about the collections and the strategic plan, with emphasis on how to make the museum more visitor-centric.

### **Deaccession Requests**

Melissa Pardi presented a collection of fossils collected in Minnesota for deaccessioning. The donor, John Ackerman, loaned the collection to the ISM in 2009 for identification and research purposes with the intention to later donate the collection to the Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM). John Ackerman attempted to work out an agreement with the SMM in 2012 but the SMM did not agree to the terms. John Ackerman halted the donation to the SMM and the collection remained at the ISM. During the 2015 closure the collection was officially donated to the ISM and accessioned to secure legal ownership over the collection for its protection. Ackerman's relationship with SMM has since improved and current SMM curatorial staff are agreeable to working with ISM and Ackerman to transfer the collection to the SMM.

Director Finnie asked for a motion to approve the deaccession request of the Minnesota fossils. John Barker moved, Beth Shadur seconded, and the deaccession request was approved unanimously.

Amanda Bryden presented a selection of coverlets for deaccessioning. Initially donated by Benjamin Hunter in 1948, the collection grew when the Museum received a similar coverlet collection also donated by Hunter from the Spurlock Museum at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1998. The collection was on display only once at the ISM in 1948 and it occupies a

significant amount of storage space. Most of the coverlets in the collection have no established connection to Illinois. If approved for deaccessioning, the coverlets with documented makers and users would be offered for transfer to appropriate local museums. The remaining coverlets, in addition to any that are declined for transfer, would be sold at public auction.

Director Finnie asked for a motion to approve the deaccession request of the coverlets. Beth moved, John seconded, and the deaccession request was approved unanimously.

**VI. DNR Report**

Director Finnie provided a brief review of the history and duties of the Department of Natural Resources. The Department had particularly struggled with staffing and funding while taking on the responsibility for more land and historic sites. She said she would provide a one-page brief of the department's duties to a future Board meeting.

Ashish asked about the operating budget of the Museum. Director Finnie confirmed the Museum's budget had come from DNR's budget since the 2015 closure when the funding lines were swept. The Museum's funding lines were finally reestablished last year around \$7 million including an acquisitions line that can be used to procure art and artifacts through the State.

**VII. Society Report**

Society Chair Bryan Finn presented the Society report. Jamila Wicks had served as the Interim Executive Director of the Society and was officially appointed Executive Director at the last Society Board meeting. This position was created to help keep oversight of the Society away from the State as agreed in the newly signed Memorandum of Agreement. The Society Board had filled several vacancies and is reviewing the Society's current bylaws. The Illinois State Museum Society continues its support of the ISM with funding, running the membership program, and planning bus trips and other events to increase the value and appeal of Society membership. Bryan and Jamila will share more about the work of the Society and the MOA with the State at future Board meetings.

**VIII. Old Business**

Director Finnie asked for old business. There was none.

**IX. Executive Session**

Director Finnie closed the meeting to the public, pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1)

to discuss the search for a permanent Museum Director.

Amanda Bryden, Jenn Edginton, Bryan Finn, Meghan Lindstrom, Brooke Morgan, Jeff Nevins, Logan Pappenfort, Mel Pardi, Bob Sill, and Jamila Wicks left the meeting at 2:55 pm.

Leverne Backstrom, John Barker, Tamira Brennan, Wanza Davis, Director Natalie Finnie, Mike Murphy, Jonah Rice, Beth Shadur, Ashish Sharma, and George Sisk remained.

The meeting reopened to the public at 3:14 pm.

Director Finnie stated that the Board had discussed the next steps for the director's search and the discussion would continue in a future Board meeting.

**X. Public Comment**

None present.

**XI. Adjournment**

Director Finnie asked for a motion to adjourn. John moved to adjourn, Jonah seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.