

OLBRICH BOTANICAL SOCIETY
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting Minutes
July 20, 2021

Members Present: Philip Bradbury, Alnisa Allgood, Renee Boyce, Mary Phillips, Julie Bernauer, Susan Goodwin, Bethany Ordaz, Laura Peterson, Juscha Robinson, Tim Sherry, Betty Chewning, Liz Dannenbaum, Laurel Neverdahl

Members Absent: Julie Rupert, Maurice Sheppard, Sandi Statz, Bill White, Moira Harrington, Brad Hinkfuss, Eric Knepp

Advisors Present: Jack Bolz, Jt Covelli, Barb Tensfeldt

Staff Present: Ava Copple, Sarah Ellis, Jake Immel, Lisa Laschinger (Assistant Parks Superintendent), Gustavo Meneses, Katy Nodolf, Kim North, Marty Petillo, Rylee Schuchardt, Kai Skadahl, Elizabeth Spry, Emmy Titcombe, Joe Vande Slunt

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

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Ms. Peterson and seconded by Ms. Allgood to approve the meeting minutes of June 15, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

IV. **OLBRICH STAFF PRESENTATION**

A. Meet Olbrich's Interns

a. Horticulture Interns: Ava Copple, Gustavo Meneses & Emmy Titcombe – Joe Vande Slunt noted how special this Board meeting is every year when the interns attend. He introduced the horticulture interns and asked them to share information about themselves and their Olbrich experience. Ava Copple shared that she is about to start her 3rd year at UW Madison studying Conservation Biology. She said that this experience has made her interested in learning more about conservation and botanical gardens. Gustavo Meneses shared that he is starting his 4th year at UW Madison studying Horticulture. He has found it interesting to learn how the horticulture staff communicate with the conservatory/greenhouse staff to grow the plants that are needed in the outdoor gardens. Emmy Titcombe shared that she is starting her last semester and will be getting a Master's degree in Landscape Architecture. She talked about planting white oaks in the Moonlight Meadow this summer and the impact that had on her, since they will be growing in the Gardens over the next century.

b. Education Intern: Mickenzee Okon – Sarah Ellis, Youth & Family Programs Coordinator, introduced Mickenzee Okon, who was unable to attend the meeting. She shared that Mickenzee would be graduating next spring with a degree in Wildlife Ecology. In a written statement to the Board, Mickenzee said that through this internship, she had discover a passion for informal environmental education.

B. New Website Update – Joe Vande Slunt reported that Olbrich's current website was developed in 2008 and needs an update. He explained how Olbrich had applied for a \$50,000 grant in support of a new website, part of the American Rescue Plan's funds, which would require the Society to match those dollars 1:1 and can include existing staff time, which would help offset costs. He added that we will know if we received the grant in October 2021 and if awarded, we would need to complete the work from November 1, 2021 to October 31, 2022. Katy Nodolf explained the new website project purpose and vision. She summarized that the purpose of the website is to advance the mission, brand, and messaging of the Gardens by providing relevant, engaging and timely information and content to our audiences. She noted that the redesign process offers an opportunity to evaluate our current website

and identify areas for improvement through new features, better functionality (both front end & back end), smarter user experience design, and an adjustment of overall site navigation. Ms. Nodolf described the vision of the new website project, including: effectively showcasing the beauty of the Gardens and Conservatory on a digital platform, being more user-friendly (including a program calendar), bringing the site up to date with current web standards of usability and accessibility across devices, bringing a stronger awareness of what Olbrich has to offer, fostering connections by making it easy for users to take immediate action, using the website as a tool to better harness storytelling opportunities, and reducing staff time spent on site maintenance and updates while also keeping information up to date.

- C. Gift Shop Update** – Joe Vande Slunt gave an update on the status of the gift shop. He explained how the new manager, Sarah Wilcox, was part of the interview/hiring process for the Retail & Hospitality Associates. He reviewed the reopening schedule. He noted that staff are painting/reorganizing, inventorying, remerchandising, training, and planning for the soft opening on August 2, and the Grand Re-opening August 6-8. He announced that the gift shop would be transitioning POS Systems from Gift Logic to Square. He added that staff are working on an updated cash flow projection that will include the gift shop being closed in July, putting a hold on hiring an Assistant Gift Shop Manager until Q4, and adding a 4th part-time Retail & Hospitality Associate.

V. REPORTS

A. President's Report

- a. OBS Recruitment Committee Update: participation in the recruitment of the next Garden Director.** – President Bradbury reported that the application deadline was reached at midnight on July 19. He summarized the timeline for the remainder of the hiring process: reviewing applications, initial screening interviews, final interviews, meet and greet with OBS Board and OBG leadership staff. Lisa Laschinger, Assistant Parks Superintendent, announced that around 30 applications were submitted and they are working on questions and benchmarks. She welcomed any Board members that would be interested in participating in the hiring process to reach out to her.
- b. Grand Opening Update.** – Joe Vande Slunt confirmed that there would be a donor reception (for donors \$10,000 + up) on Wednesday evening, September 15. He reported that the public grand opening of the Frautschi Family Learning Center and new greenhouses would take place on Saturday, September 18, from 10 am – 2 pm. He noted that Mayor Satya was confirmed to attend and will be part of opening remarks and a ribbon cutting. He added that once opening remarks were complete, guests would be free to move about the facility and the grounds and participate in activities throughout Olbrich.

President Bradbury asked the Board at what point should OBS Board meetings be in-person, instead of a virtual option only. Mr. Vande Slunt announced that he would circulate a questionnaire to Board members so that a decision can be made on how to move forward.

C. Financial Report

- a. May 2021 Financials** – Treasurer Mary Phillips reviewed the May Financial Reports. She noted that operating revenues and operating expenses remained favorable to budget. She reported that Development revenue was now \$11K over budget, since donations from the spring appeal were coming in. She recapped that YTD Gift Shop expenses were over budget due to Cost of Goods Sold (COGS). COGS had always been tied into Gift Shop actual expenses but that starting in June 2021, this summary report will separate Gift Shop actual expenses (wages, supplies, etc.) and COGS. Ms. Phillips noted that the remaining 2021 Cash Flow balance for the end of year still remains above \$300K.

D. Director's Report

Staff Written Reports – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the staff reports. He highlighted that attendance was continuing to rise. He noted that staff have reported multiple rusty-patch bumblebee sightings throughout the Gardens and that the milkweed soup tasting in the Indigenous Garden was well received. He talked about how the Home Garden Tour was a huge success, with double the average tour attendance. Mr. Vande Slunt noted that OBS did not apply for the Madison Foundation grant because we did not qualify.

E. Development Report – Mr. Vande Slunt reviewed the Development report. He announced that our Membership and Development Associate, Elizabeth Spry, would be leaving Olbrich. He noted that 23 people applied for her position and interviews for her replacement would take place on July 22 & 23, with the intent of having someone in place by mid-August.

F. Marketing & Public Relations Report – Ms. Nodolf reviewed the Marketing and PR Report. She noted that the PR & Marketing Department’s primary focus is currently on the new website project and marketing GLEAM, Art in a New Light.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

VII. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

President Bradbury reminded the Board that if they were interested in participating in the hiring process for the new Garden Director, to reach out to himself, Mr. Vande Slunt, or Ms. Laschinger.

VIII. **ADJOURNED**

The meeting adjourned at 5:02 pm.