

Friends of the Museums of Florida History, Inc.
Fundraising Committee
MEETING MINUTES
9:30 a.m. Thursday, September 27, 2018
Gallery for Innovation & the Arts (1st Floor)
R. A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Participants

Board Members: Mr. Peter Harris (on phone); Ms. Lena Juarez (on phone); Ms. Laura Rogers

Staff: Ms. Lisa Barton; Dr. Jeana Brunson; Mr. Thomas Robinson

I. Call to Order

Mr. Robinson called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. The first order of business was to name a Chair of the Committee. Ms. Juarez nominated Ms. Rogers to chair the Fundraising Committee. Mr. Harris concurred. Ms. Rogers accepted the nomination.

II. Introduction of Board, Staff, and Guests

Meeting participants introduced themselves

III. Business Items

A. Adoption of Agenda

As the newly appointed chair, Ms. Rogers motioned to pass the agenda.

MOTION TO PASS AND ACCEPT AGENDA: Ms. Rogers

SECOND: Mr. Harris

MOTION PASSED WITH NO OBJECTION

IV. Update on Fundraising Goals

Mr. Robinson stated that the intention of the agenda was to inform members of the committee of the projects and dollar amounts the CSO was attempting to raise. Mr. Robinson began talking about how the CSO wished to raise \$2,500 for the Surf's Up, Florida exhibit. Mr. Harris stated that he felt the committee was better served by not solely focusing on specific events or exhibits. He felt being too event oriented was a strategy that had gotten the committee in trouble in the past and did not keep them focused on potentially large corporate donors.

Mr. Harris argued that the committee should discuss overall fundraising goals. Mr. Harris thought the committee should discuss strategies to bring in "big dollar donors." Ms. Juarez and Ms. Rogers agreed with Mr. Harris. Mr. Harris felt the role of the fundraising committee was to bring in large, unrestricted contributions that could be spent however staff felt necessary, rather than raising restricted funds tied to specific events. Mr. Robinson agreed, but said he thought those types of donations were driven by Board members more than staff.

Mr. Harris felt the Board and committee should fundraise based upon the broader appeal of the Museum. Ms. Rogers agreed, arguing that the big picture support of the Museum in general should be the focus, driven by grants, foundation support, and large corporate donations. Ms. Rogers felt the exhibit and event-level donations could be taken care of by smaller dollar targets, such as local businesses or people who have specific interests related to specific exhibit topics.

Mr. Harris agreed, stating that local donors are stretched thin and the overall strategy should be to go to other parts of Florida to seek out donors who would provide funding that was not event driven. Ms. Rogers asked staff if there were any organizations that had provided big money grants. Ms. Barton indicated that Florida Humanities Council and Visit Tallahassee have provided large grants for the Living the Dream exhibit and Florida History Day. Dale Earnhardt, Jr. dealership provided sponsorship money for the racing exhibit. Ms. Brunson noted that most sponsorships and grants were event or exhibit driven.

Dr. Brunson stated that she thought the direction Mr. Harris was proposing, looking at state-wide donors, was a smart and necessary strategy. Going state-wide was important because the Museum of Florida History is the state's museum, not just Tallahassee's. Mr. Harris agreed, thinking getting large dollar donations would require looking outside the local community.

Ms. Rogers asked Mr. Robinson what grant writing looked like on the staff's end. Mr. Robinson indicated that grant writing tends to be collaborative and various members of staff have a role to play. Mr. Robinson further indicated that, especially after the financial crisis of the late 2000s, most grant-making organizations only provide funds for specific projects and do not typically offer unrestricted money, money for staffing, or money for things such as food. Grants tend to be very specific and will not give money for operating support. Ms. Rogers stated that a goal of the organization should be to go after more grants for annual events, such as Children's Day or Emancipation Day, and that would allow sponsorship money to solely be restricted.

Mr. Harris agreed with the assessment, stating that he thought big dollar donations could be used for the Museum in general. Ms. Rogers thought the next step forward would be to think about program costs for the next two to three years and then determine how to fund those projects. Mr. Harris agreed and argued that the committee could use that long-range planning to develop an independent source of funding.

Ms. Rogers argued the committee should start pulling together "where we want to be in three years." Try to put a dollar amount on what is needed in the near future. Attempt to put together a generic letter that would propose benefits to corporate donors. The committee also has to keep in mind what is restricted in terms of sponsor recognition and benefits. Ms. Barton agreed that recognition of donors was vital and the Museum of Florida History does have signage available that would allow permanent recognition in the Museum lobby. But, she agreed a structure needed to be put in place to determine how much needed to be donated in order to receive such recognition. Mr. Robinson added that he and Mr. Harris had discussed creating a corporate membership program. The benefit of such a program could be annual giving as well as the possibility of providing recognition to donors. Mr. Harris agreed and stated that businesses want to be "caught doing good." Ms. Rogers thought a corporate program was necessary and the committee should help develop a list of potential business donors. Mr. Harris added that the committee should help brainstorm a high dollar membership category for businesses and individuals to make them aspire to higher levels.

Ms. Rogers and Mr. Harris both felt the Museum to reach out to current vendors of the Museum of Florida History and Knott House. Both felt that those vendors should be annual donors to the CSO.

Questions regarding Sunshine Laws and how meetings can take place came up. Ms. Rogers asked if committee members could meet with potential donors individually? Dr. Brunson reminded everyone that committee members cannot email each other, but can email ideas to Mr. Robinson and Mr. Robinson can distribute the ideas to everyone. Mr. Harris thought the committee should report their findings to the larger Board in October. Ms. Rogers agreed and thought the Board members outside of Tallahassee could help with target markets throughout the state.

Mr. Harris pointed out that the Museum needs better signage and branding to let people know they are open on the weekend. The Museum also needs to let people better understand how the Museum is funding and where gaps exist.

Ms. Rogers stated that the next step should be each committee member sending Mr. Robinson ideas for strategies moving forward. Mr. Robinson would then combine those and send them out as one document to the whole committee. Ms. Rogers stated that the committee needed direction and this meeting was the first step. Ms. Juarez agreed and said that once the committee understood the parameters and a timeline, things should be able to move forward.

The committee discussed some issues with the Surf's Up, Florida exhibit. Mr. Robinson added that he thought the Knott House needed to be a focus of the committee because they don't generally get donations specifically for them. Ms. Rogers and Mr. Harris both thought that local businesses that surround the Knott House should be targeted as corporate Knott House donors. Mr. Harris argued that some of the businesses downtown that are statewide or national in scope, such as Ballard or CenturyLink, should be approached beyond the local level. Ms. Rogers agreed and felt the Knott House opened up possibilities for people who are interested in historic preservation.

Mr. Harris suggested that the committee meet once more before the full Board meets. Ms. Rogers inquired when the next Board meeting would be. Mr. Robinson indicated the next Board meeting would likely be October 17. Mr. Harris felt the committee had enough to go on to meet again in person before the full Board meets. Discussion ensued of potential dates, including October 5, 8, and 9. CSO staff reminded the committee that meetings had to be noticed seven days before the meeting occurred.

V. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

VI. Motion to Adjourn

MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 10:46 a.m.: Ms. Rogers
SECOND: Ms. Juarez
MOTION PASSED WITH NO OBJECTION


Presented by Ms. Laura Rogers, Chair

Dated: 11/19/18