

**Friends of the Museums of Florida History, Inc.**  
MEETING MINUTES  
10:00 a.m., Thursday, June 11, 2020  
**By Conference Call Only**

**Participants**

**Directors:** Mr. Steve Birtman, Chair; Mr. Lester Abberger; Mr. John Boudet; Mr. Andrew Collins; Ms. Lena Juarez; Dr. Dennis D. Moore; Ms. Laura Rogers

**Staff:** Ms. Lisa Barton; Dr. Thomas Robinson; Ms. Kaitlin Silcox

**Guests:** Mr. Scott Hilton, Wells Fargo Advisors

I. Call to Order

Mr. Birtman, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

II. Introduction of Board, Staff, and Guests

Mr. Birtman welcomed all board members, staff members, and guests attending the meeting. Since the meeting was held by conference call, Mr. Birtman asked Dr. Robinson to call roll to see who was on the line. Mr. Birtman also asked if any guests would speak up and introduce themselves.

III. Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Birtman made a motion to adopt the agenda.

MOTION TO PROCEED WITH AGENDA: Mr. Abberger

SECOND: Ms. Juarez

MOTION PASSED WITH NO OBJECTION

IV. Chair's Comments

Mr. Birtman declined to make comments, saying he wanted to keep the meeting moving since it might be clunky to do the meeting solely by conference call.

V. Consent Items

Mr. Birtman inquired if there were questions about the minutes on the consent agenda. There were no questions so Mr. Birtman asked for a motion to accept the minutes.

Note: Consent items up for vote were provided to the Board in advance via email.

A. Meeting Minutes from March 27, 2020 quarterly board meeting

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MARCH 27, 2020 MINUTES: Mr. Abberger

SECOND: Mr. Collins

MOTION PASSED WITH NO OBJECTION

B. Financial Report through May 2020

Mr. Birtman asked Dr. Robinson to discuss any highlights from the financial report. Dr. Robinson stated that although the museum and building have been closed for several months now, expectations were exceeded for the year for the donation box revenue, as well as revenue from unrestricted donations. Because the building has been closed, expenses have also been down in many areas for the year.

Mr. Birtman opened the floor to questions. Mr. Collins asked for more information regarding why Dr. Robinson thought unrestricted contributions for the fiscal year were increased so much over previous years. Dr. Robinson stated that he believed better communication with members and donors has been a factor, as well as more activity on social media.

More information being sent out is likely leading to more contributions. Mr. Collins asked a follow-up question about whether the café was still open. Dr. Robinson stated that the café is still open for Department

of State employees who are working in the building. Dr. Robinson stated that since the building has been closed to the public, the café has not been charged rent and will not be charged rent until the building is open again.

Ms. Juarez asked Ms. Silcox if she knew why income for the spring of 2020 was so much less than the spring of 2019 for the History Shops. Ms. Silcox stated that typically school groups make up the bulk of the income in the spring and with COVID-19 school groups were canceled and that income could not be reproduced. Ms. Juarez asked Dr. Robinson if he could explain why expenses for Florida History Day were down so much in 2020 versus 2019. Dr. Robinson stated that with FHD being moved to a virtual event, some of the major expenses related to the event, such as renting out the Civic Center and providing lunch to judges, were not necessary. Dr. Robinson stated that expenses for FHD would probably be down by \$6,000 compared to previous years.

MOTION TO APPROVE FINANCIAL REPORT: Ms. Rogers  
SECOND: Mr. Boudet  
MOTION PASSED WITH NO OBJECTION

C. Budget for the Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Mr. Birtman asked Dr. Robinson to present an overview of the budget for FY 2020-2021. Dr. Robinson stated that staff have been very conservative when it comes to projecting income from visitation, such as donation box and parking income, or programs. Dr. Robinson said the good news is that because the FMFH received more unrestricted contributions than normal in FY 2019-2020, that money can be used to fill in some gaps due to the projection of less donation box income. Dr. Robinson stated that a lot of the FY 2020-2021 budget is rollover from the previous fiscal year because so many areas come in under budget or were not used at all because some events were canceled or postponed. Dr. Robinson added that the endowments will fill in some gaps, although, in consultation with Mr. Hilton, the amount of money being withdrawn from the endowments will also be very conservative. Dr. Robinson stated he would like to see the MFH and KHM both receive more sponsorships so that unrestricted money can be held back.

Mr. Birtman stated he had a few questions. Mr. Birtman asked if there was any discussion of when the building and museum would reopen to the public. Ms. Barton answered that there was no timetable for when the building and museum be open to the public again. Mr. Birtman asked if there was any thought in reducing programming to meet lower expectations of revenue. Dr. Robinson stated that he and Ms. Barton had discussed that topic and admitted that some programs may not happen because of crowd size or because they are not conducive to a virtual alternative.

Mr. Boudet asked about how Emancipation Day went considering it was made a virtual event. Dr. Robinson stated that he had recently talked to Bea Cotellis and Ms. Cotellis told him that the event was still very popular despite being moved online.

Before asking for a motion, Mr. Birtman stated that staff should consider reducing the budget if the building remains closed for an extended period of time.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021: Mr. Collins  
SECOND: Mr. Abberger  
MOTION PASSED WITH NO OBJECTION

D. Letter of Agreement between DOS and FMFH

Mr. Birtman asked Dr. Robinson if there were any changes on the letter of agreement from previous years. Dr. Robinson stated that the only thing that changed on the document were the dates. Mr. Birtman asked if there were any questions regarding the letter of agreement. There were none.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE LETTER OF AGREEMENT: Ms. Juarez  
SECOND: Mr. Abberger  
MOTION PASSED WITH NO OBJECTION

E. SB1194-Citizen Support and Direct Support Organization Renewal

Mr. Birtman asked if there were any updates to this document from previous years. Dr. Robinson stated that the three-year plan, which is on pages two and three of the document, gets updated each year. Dr. Robinson stated that most of the items listed for Fiscal Year 2020-2021 and Fiscal Year 2021-2022 remain the same from the SB1194 document that was passed at the June 2019 Board meeting. That being said, Dr. Robinson said that staff added goals for FY 2020-2021 including updating the audio tour, fundraising for *Spirits of the Passage*, partnering with the Florida Golf Trail to sell merchandise in the History Shops, and updating the History Shops website. Staff added a goal of fundraising for *Spirits of the Passage* for FY 2021-2022 as well. The section on FY 2022-2023 is completely new and Dr. Robinson said that might be the area to pay the closest attention to.

Mr. Abberger asked for clarity on the Florida Golf Trail partnership. Dr. Robinson stated that the Golf Trail falls under the Friends of Florida History and they have been looking into selling merchandise to fundraise for several years, but have no place to sell the merchandise. Dr. Robinson said that he spoke with Carol Bryant-Martin, the Development Director for FFH, about the partnership and the verbal agreement was that the Golf Trail would purchase the merchandise, the History Shop would carry the merchandise, and both CSOs would divide the profits. Dr. Robinson emphasized that no written agreement has occurred yet.

MOTION TO APPROVE SB1194 RENEWAL: Ms. Rogers

SECOND: Mr. Boudet

MOTION PASSED WITH NO OBJECTION

F. New Slate of Officers Starting July 1, 2020

Mr. Birtman introduced the new slate of officers with Laura Rogers taking over as Chair, Kathy Guilday as Vice Chair, and Andrew Collins as Treasurer. Mr. Birtman said he was excited about the new slate of officers and thought they would all do well.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE NEW SLATE OF OFFICERS: Mr. Boudet

SECOND: Mr. Abberger

MOTION PASSED WITH NO OBJECTION

VI. Business Items

A. Financials

1. Endowments Progress Report

Mr. Birtman asked Mr. Hilton to discuss the endowments. Mr. Hilton gave an overview of the current economic climate, stating that although unemployment is high the stock market has largely rebounded. Mr. Hilton said there are several reasons why the stock market has bounced back, including the stimulus programs from the federal government, interest rates remaining low, and some talk of the economy reopening. Mr. Hilton said he is cautiously optimistic that the economy will continue recovering, but everything is dependent on the pandemic.

In reference to the FMFH endowments specifically, Mr. Hilton pointed out that the portfolio has rallied since March. The James Knott Endowment was down 18.63% in March, but it has since increased by 15% and is only down 3% year to date. The Charles Knott Endowment was down 10.4% in March, but it has since increased by over 8% and is only down 1.3% for the year. The Cultural Endowment tends to be more stable because it is set up to preserve capital. It is up 2.1% for the year. Mr. Hilton said that if you add up all three endowments, the portfolio is up about \$8,000 for the year. That being said, Mr. Hilton stated that he expects volatility in the market through the election in November.

Mr. Collins stated he did not have a specific question, but an observation. Mr. Collins stated that due to the lack of certainty with the endowments, it is probably a good course of action to not take much money out of the endowments and he agreed with that aspect of the budget.

B. *Spirits of the Passage* Update

Mr. Birtman called on Ms. Barton to provide an update on *Spirits of the Passage*. Ms. Barton stated that work was underway in terms of fundraising for the exhibition and Dr. Robinson was working on a list of prospective foundations to approach while also being sensitive about fundraising in the current climate. A fundraising packet was also actively being worked on. Ms. Barton pointed out that the balance of the rental fee was due by January 2021 so that was the most pressing matter.

Mr. Birtman asked if Ms. Barton would give an overview of what the exhibit entailed for Dr. Moore, who is new to the FMFH Board. Ms. Barton provided an overview of the exhibit, including types of artifacts that are part of the exhibit and details of the contract with the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum, who travel the exhibit.

C. Other Staff Updates

Mr. Birtman asked Dr. Robinson and Ms. Silcox if they had any updates. Dr. Robinson stated that he had no updates to discuss. Ms. Silcox said that although online sales for the History Shop were slow, they were selling a lot of flags as part of that program and were trying to utilize social media to highlight specific merchandise. Ms. Silcox added that she was able to add new chip card readers. Mr. Birtman asked if he saw correctly on social media that the History Shop location in MFH had been painted. Ms. Silcox answered that Mr. Birtman was correct and the walls had been painted a more neutral color.

Mr. Birtman asked if Ms. Silcox was good with the partnership with the Florida Golf Trail. Ms. Silcox said that she was and she added that she was helping guide the Golf Trail staff on what types of merchandise tend to sell best.

Mr. Birtman opened the floor to any other questions. There were none.

VII. Other Business

A. Upcoming events

Mr. Birtman stated that since the Gray Building was closed and events were on hold, he would skip over this portion of the agenda.

B. Wrap Up

Mr. Birtman asked if there were any questions before he wrapped up. Mr. Abberger stated that he wanted to thank Mr. Birtman for his service and thought he did a great job as the Chair.

Dr. Robinson said that before Mr. Birtman adjourned the meeting, he wanted to thank Mr. Birtman for his service on behalf of the staff. Dr. Robinson stated that Mr. Birtman was always responsive, had great ideas, and asked tough questions, which was good for the staff.

VIII. Public Comment:

IX. Adjourn

Mr. Birtman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING: Mr. Abberger  
SECOND: Dr. Moore  
MOTION PASSED WITH NO OBJECTION

The meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

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Presented by Mr. Steve Birtman, Chair

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_