

OHIO HISTORY CONNECTION
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 18, 2025 – 1:00PM
Octagon

Trustees Present:	Charles Moses (President), Ann Bair (Vice President), Melody Young (Treasurer), Jon Elsasser, Alex Hastie (Secretary), Chief Billy Friend, Rich Hillis, Guadalupe Valasquez, Anthony Joseph, Jan Allen, Kathleen Russell, Jen Miller
Trustees Absent:	Bob Roach, Steve Coon, Betty Montgomery, JB Hadden
Trustees on Team:	Alex Hastie (Secretary), Renu Ramankutty, Christopher Gillcrist
Ex Officios Present:	Gary Cates (Designee for Chancellor, Ohio Department of Higher Education, Julie Kirk, Designee for Director, Ohio Department of Development
Ex Officios on Team:	Megan Wycuff, Director, Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board
Staff & Others Present:	Megan Wood, Steve George, Jerry Dannemiller, Jen Aultman, Ann Ruege, Kevin Boehner, Stacia Kuceyeski, Theresa Hopewood, Brenda Estes, Wesley Newhouse, (General Counsel), Amy Kuhlman (Legal Counsel)
Staff on Teams:	Jillian Ramage

I. Call to Order

President Charles Moses called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Mr. Moses recognized Julie Kirk, from the Department of Development, for being at the meeting. Mr. Moses shared that Chief Friend's last board meeting is today and thanked Chief Friend for everything he's done during his tenure and his travels getting here. Mr. Moses mentioned that this is the first meeting since Tom Chema passed away. He shared a story the pastor shared about Tom during his eulogy at the funeral and how it was fitting to honor Tom. Mr. Moses expressed his wish to honor everyone in the room for the work they do and the commitment in being with us today.

Executive Director's Report

Mrs. Wood welcomed everyone to the last quarterly meeting of FY25.

Items on the dashboard that are Green are on track, Red are off track, and yellow are in between.

Mrs. Wood shared a presentation on our organizational dashboards referenced in the board packet, which Mr. Ward passed out to everyone. The two dashboards reference our strategic initiatives and operational initiatives.

- Increase operational efficiency- Goal to implement project management and was done through the work of Stacia Kuceyeski, COO
- Reach more broader audiences – Goal was to increase visitation at our sites that excluded the Ohio History Center. Because of the construction in the village, we naturally have a decline in visitation, and we looked at increasing it at 4.5% over the last fiscal year. Final numbers will be compiled in July
- Provide high quality experiences - Focus on creating organizational wide expectations and a process around creating programs and visitor experience. There was a group between marketing and our folks that do programming in the Ohio History Center that put together an organization wide process so that we understand what we mean around a high-quality visitor experience.
- Increased organizational support – Focus was on the GRF request.
- Increase awareness of the entire organization - We shot for a 5% increase this year of site awareness among Ohio adults in the broader population.

Mr. Dannemiller shared a presentation around organizational awareness and the three takeaways on the strategic plan.

- There was a goal of a 5% increase in overall awareness, and that goal was achieved.
- Up 5% growth across a broad audience.
- Awareness of OHC as an organization as well as individual site awareness in general.
 - There was a survey at eight sites and across the state, with the exception of Serpent Mound, all of those were trending towards an increase in awareness.

Ms. Miller inquired if we are directly taking care of Fort Ancient.

Mr. Dannemiller replied OHC have put a concerted effort behind building the brand behind the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks.

Ms. Bair added the 23-28% on the previous slide is a 22% increase of

all the people who are saying yes.

Mr. Hillis inquired if that increase would be maintained for next year.

Mr. Dannemiller replied that it is our goal to keep that number moving forward.

Mrs. Wood shared about our major project updates identified in our strategic plan. These projects are looked at on a regular basis by Mrs. Wood's and her executive team. Each project has a project lead and an executive sponsor. Stacia and Brenda meet regularly with project leads and coordinators.

Buckey PAST – (Green - On track) Stacia Kuceyeski is the executive sponsor; Diana Welling is working very closely on this as well. Project is funded with state capital dollars.

Campus 2.OH – (Yellow) OHC received \$22million capital funds. OFCC is the project manager; taking a little longer to reach the established TimeLine is why it is yellow. Schooley Caldwell is doing this project as well. Ann Ruege is the executive sponsor.

Ohio Expo Center – (Yellow) A brand new building located in the Ohio Showcase building being built as part of the Expo project. This is a \$400 million project happening at the State Fairgrounds. OHC will have a permanent location where there will be an exhibit about Ohio history and a multimedia program. Mrs. Wood is the executive sponsor on the project. This is yellow because there is content reviews coming from the governor and waiting for technology feedback. It will open in 2026.

Ann Bair inquired will the content switch out.

Mrs. Wood replied that it will stay the same for a five-year period. Rich Hillis inquired if the Expo center is paying for our exhibit or is OHC.

Mrs. Wood replied that this is all in the project for the Expo center. OHC has some relatively small costs to take on. Project lead is Bill Mahon.

Mrs. Wood recognized Bill Majon for his years of service and significant impact on Ohio History Connection. Today is Bill's 35th work anniversary. Bill is transitioning into his next opportunity, retirement from OPERS. Bill's last day is June 27th. He has been granted Emeritus status.

Ft. Laurens (Green) – Doing some enhancements of the site. The tomb of the Unknown Patriot, the museum and archaeology have started. Project will continue into 2028. Diana Welling is the Executive Sponsor.

ORM – (Yellow to green) – Did a groundbreaking in April; construction is starting. During some excavating work, some draining problems with the city that might make change the status to yellow. Finalized with the Department of Agriculture on our grants. Jeff Ward is the executive sponsor.

Poindexter Village – (Yellow) - Important timelines coming up; working on early fundraising projects. Lots of development happening and should be able to share more about some architects that have come on board and other advancements of the project. Jerry Dannemiller is the executive sponsor

Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks (Green) - Jen Aultman, Chief History Site Officer, Brad Lepper, Senior Archaeologist for World Heritage and Sarah Hinkleman, Site Manager for Newark will share more about content and the significance of HCE. Ms. Aultman Timeline – Management plan developed for Newark Earthworks was first put in writing in 2003 and inscribed on the World Heritage list September 19, 2023. It was 20 years from the first time it went in writing until the inscription happened.

Core partners – UNESCO, National Park Service and tribal partners, Chief Friend, and Chief Glenna Wallace and so many others. There are eight sites on the World Heritage property. OHC runs three sites, the National Park Service runs the other five. Additional sites are always being added. There are now 1223 World Heritage sites worldwide and in Ohio.

Ms. Aultman introduced Sarah Hinkleman, who is the Site Superintendent at Newark Earthworks. Sarah's team has worked hard in getting the place up and running every day; taking a former Country Club and turning it into a visitor center.

Ms. Hinkleman shared a few changes made in Newark in the last six months.

- Welcomed over 200 school children to the Octagon for field trips
- Welcoming conference groups from all over the world
- On the structural side, we'll have more exhibits and materials that visitors can come and learn more about. Most of that will take place on the first floor as exhibit space.
- The second goal for this space is to continue to have community gatherings. Spaces for community groups and organizations to rent out the space, More opportunities for programming, lectures and workshops will be something that this space will provide.

Mr. Lepper shared there are eight components of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks sites.

- Newark Earthworks

- Octagon
- The Great Circle

Mr. Hillis inquired if other people could hear the presentation we give in any form.

Mr. Lepper replied there are versions on YouTube that have been recorded doing one thing or another.

Mr. Moses inquired about how all the noise about the Park Service, how that might impact what we're going to do with the sites that they manage.

Mr. Lepper replied I don't have the answer to that with the political situation and what's happening in Park Service. We want to do our best to support them and stand up for them and to include them in our interpretation. They still have staff there, they're still doing their jobs, and we hope that continues.

II. Consent Agenda

Mr. Moses entertained a motion to approve the minutes from March 5, 2025, board meeting, May 14, 2025, executive committee meeting, and the action items included. The motion to approve both minutes and action items was unanimously approved.

Budget Update

Mr. Boehner shared the General Assembly is in the middle of conference committee. The committee heard from the OBM and the Legislative Budget Office. Both gave presentations, fielded questions. The projections for the current remainder of the fiscal year are still above where they were projected in December. They're a little less favorable in the next two fiscal years, which we'll deal with moving forward.

III. Committee Reports

Governance Committee

Mr. Elsasser – The committee has an action item. Mr. Joseph and Mr. Newhouse did work, with some changes to the bylaws. This is part of the changes to change it to a main code of regulations. Mr. Newhouse did all the final work on it, and we're also presenting a change to the Constitution later this afternoon at the Annual meeting.

Mr. Newhouse shared the committee met a few times and exchanged a lot of changes in the drafts of the change in the bylaws. One of the principal changes is the role of the Governance Committee. A lot of the functions were spread out among different committees. Part of the effort was to try to consolidate that and to give the Governance Committee

more control over the governance of the organization. It also changed the onset of the term of office of trustees. It used to be that the trustees' terms began at the next meeting after the meeting of the annual meeting. It is being changed so that a trustee can begin as soon as you're elected. We clarified a few things. The Development Board is now the Development Committee. We elaborated a little bit more on the evaluation process for the Executive Director and the decisions about compensation and it gives this board the ability to reject gifts that might be offered to the organization in the event that some of those gifts might be controversial for some reason.

Ms. Miller inquired about Article 6, section one, that only board members can serve on these standing committees. Previously it was discussed having some non-board members on the Standing Committee. This would be a way of bringing diversity.

Mr. Newhouse replied he didn't think we discussed the inclusion of non-board members on these committees.

Mr. Joseph replied the committee did discuss in at least one or two of the Governance Committee meetings and decided that non-board members could be on ad hoc committees.

Mr. Hillis replied to the non-board members. Don't have the fiduciary responsibilities that board members do.

Ms. Miller replied that she would encourage a different term than ad hoc to be used.

Mr. Moses thanked everyone and entertained a motion to approve the action items from the governance committee. The items were unanimously approved.

Historic Sites and Real Estate Committee

Mr. Hastie shared the committee met a few weeks ago. The new historic sites line came out in the budget and we're still pushing through that. We discussed Octagon and some old business.

Ms. Aultman shared the grant visitor center is proceeding in a different direction through the Appalachian Community Grant program. The Grant visitor center as far as us buying an adjoining property. We made an offer at least have a limit on an offer and the owner of that property seems to be going in a different direction.

Ms. Aultman shared the committee met and discussed a couple of items. She was communicating with Chief Barnes at the Shawnee tribe, and they are still interested in probably procuring that themselves. Some of them will be in town this week.

Ms. Aultman also shared that she just received a text update from the archaeologist in the field. They found their first Fort era artifact today. It's a piece of buckshot.

Finance Committee

The finance committee is asking for the board to approve continuing resolution to fund the operations of the organization. Along with the 3% increase so that OHC can get to August and then present the board with a full budget.

Mr. Moses entertained a motion to approve both. Both motions were unanimously approved.

FY2026 Budget Review

\$43.4 million total operating revenue with an additional \$3.0M in Foundation donations, giving us an operating surplus of \$1.1M. GRF is a big increase of \$19.4 million. Line 402, World Heritage, was an increase of \$3.26 million. As of last week, however, the Senate version came out at \$2 million in year one. There's a \$257K increase in line 501 and was the same in both House and Senate versions. Line 502 in the House had a \$750K increase. And as of last week the Senate version was a \$1.25 million increase in 502. Lines 504 for SHPO, line 505 for NAAMCC and line 509 for Outreach, are the same in both the House and Senate versions. The SHPO line has a \$227K increase being recommended by both Houses of the legislature. NAAMCC is flat funded so there's no change from FY25 to FY26 in either House or Senate versions. 509 for Outreach has been zeroed out.

The America 250 Commission – there's a big increase being discussed. This will be the last biennium for America 250; part of the FY27 is still in calendar year 2026. July 4th is in FY27.

We've also put in zero dollars federal grants.

Mr. Elsasser inquired what's the implication of that. What are we not going to do, or what doesn't happen.

Mr. Ward replied the biggest impact is with SHPO. It is 60% of their operating funds.

Mr. Elsasser inquired to Ms. Welling, what does SHPO do or not do with \$1.4 million less.

Ms. Welling replied they had a layoff of 12 employees. The two hardest hit departments are National Register, who went down from having 7 to 3 employees. National Register take about 9 to 10 months to go through the process. That timing is going to probably double. We also lost four

people in our Section 106, which is federal review state reviews. That review time is going to be delayed. We have an average response time of about 21 days. We're back to 30-45 days before we can respond to those submissions from our federal and state. We also had an employee who was working on the underrepresented communities Grant, a federal grant and we were identifying places throughout the state. Significant African American history, getting the nominated for National Register. All that work has stopped.

Ms. Miller inquired how the increase that we may get from the state helps stabilize SHPO or not.

Mr. Ward replied it's an increase of \$227K from one year to the next. We lost \$1.4 million. It does not fill the gap.

Contributions, we're planning on \$3 million, which includes \$400K for the annual fund. It does include support from GCAC, that is the Greater Columbus Arts Council. We've had that in place for a handful of years now. It's in there at \$637,500. We've also added a contingency here of \$295K. Salary and benefits make up 70% of our total operating costs. We've included a 3% cost of living, same as the State of Ohio and healthcare benefits are up about 10%.

Ms. Bair inquired about GCAC. Do we submit and request a specific amount of money or specific grants, or do we get 8.2% of the total amount they generate?

Mr. Ward replied they have a vast pool, and they allocate it out to the various entities.

Mr. Ward continued with the financial update for FY25; total support is \$22.5 million. Our operating expense is \$23 million. We're off about \$1,000,000 on the bottom line. There are two components of the revenue shortage, \$4.5 million is with capital which has no positive or negative effect on the bottom line. The main issue is on the revenue side is that we are short year to date on donations by \$932K.

Fundraising Committee

Ms. Ruege shared that the committee met a couple of weeks ago. The committee worked with Mr. Newhouse to create a donor recognition policy. We need a motion from the board to approve.

Ms. Ramankutty inquired is there an opportunity to highlight the donors in Echoes magazine.

Ms. Ruege replied we are doing that now. OHC recognizes folks at a higher level in every quarterly issue.

Ms. Russell inquired what percentage of donors return to donate.

Ms. Ruege replied there is have a fairly decent retention rate.

Mr. Moses entertained a motion to approve the policy. The motion was unanimously approved.

IV. New Business – None

V. Executive session

Mr. Moses requested a motion to recess into Executive Session, the meeting convened in Executive Session at 2:55 p.m.

The board emerged from Executive Session at 3:17 p.m.



7/17/2025

Alex Hastie, Secretary

Date

Charles R. Moses, President

Date

Prepared by Theresa Hopewood