



Elgin County Museum Advisory Committee Meeting

February 7, 2024

Elgin Heritage Centre

Present: Chair- Amanda VandenWyngaert, Vice Chair- Kim Teuscher, Joan Mansell (Secretary), Jennifer Beauchamp

Council Representatives: Mayor Dominique Giguère and Mayor Mike Hentz

Regrets: Charlie Jenkins, Donna Lord

Staff in Attendance: Brian Masschaele, Mike Baker, Ally Shelly (recording secretary)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:01 a.m. by Amanda VandenWyngaert, chair.

2. Election of Secretary and Confirmation of Member Terms

Election of Secretary

Joan Mansell has reached the 8-year limit to serve as secretary. Nominations were opened for the appointment of a new secretary.

Donna Lord was asked prior to the meeting if she would be willing to take on this role and has agreed to serve as recording secretary.

Jennifer Beauchamp moved a close to nominations and that Donna Lord be appointed as Secretary, seconded by Kim Teuscher. Carried.

Based on the election above, the following are terms of office for the current members of the committee:

Elgin County Museum Advisory Committee 2024 Members

- Amanda VandenWyngaert, Chair (3rd year of second 4-year term, 4th year as Chair) - Museum liaison member
- Kim Teuscher Vice-Chair (3rd year of second 4-year term, 3rd year as Vice-Chair) – Member-at-large

- Donna Lord, Secretary (4th year of first 4-year term) – WI member (west)
- Joan Mansell (3rd year of fifth 4-year term) – WI member (east)
- Jennifer Beauchamp (3rd year of first 4-year term) – Museum liaison member
- Charlie Jenkins (1st year of third 4-Year term) – Agricultural representative
- Councillor Dominique Giguère – County Council representative
- Councillor Mike Hentz, County Council representative

4. Additions to the Agenda

Moved by Mike Hentz to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Dominique Giguère. Carried.

4. Approval Minutes from October 25th, 2023.

Moved by Dominique Giguère and seconded by Kim Teuscher that the minutes from the October 25th, 2023 meeting be approved as presented. Carried.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes

a) Crane Plaque

Brain Masschaele provided an update on the Crane plaque issue.

The Committee reviewed a letter from Brian to the plaque owner's lawyer offering to accept it as a donation.

Mike Hentz has spoken with the property owner, and the Lower Thames Conservation Authority and has spoken with Crane family's advocate, Jim Crane. He reported that the Lower Thames Conservation Authority is ready to financially support a plaque project.

Committee members felt that the plaque could be installed at another Lower Thames woodlot plantation. If the plaque did come into collection, Mayor Giguere suggested it could be part of an exhibition around the history of conservation in Elgin County.

Brian will continue to lead efforts on this matter and will keep the committee informed should further developments arise.

6. Correspondence

a) 2023-24 Community Museum Operating (CMOG) Grant

A letter from the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries was received regarding the approval of the museum's Community Museum Operating Grant application

The contact information has been updated to Amanda VandenWyngaert.

b) Elgin County Heritage Centre Accessibility Plan Evaluation 2023

Each year the province selects an area of the Standards and requests a report on how the museums are meeting one or more of its requirements. In 2023 an accessibility plan

was requested. The museum's plan was evaluated and given a 9/10, the only missing element was the assignment of the action items to specific staff members.

7. Curator's Report

Mike Baker updated members on museum projects

Attendance Targets for 2024

The attendance figures for 2023 reflect an unusual year with the cycling exhibit garnering interest beyond expectations. People attending the booked tours and the event along with walk-ins during the run of the exhibition totaled about 1200.

With the addition of other program attendance, booked tours, school tours and facility bookings, the on-site attendance for 2023 was 2310.

Maintaining this number should be the target for 2024. Without a similar exhibit, achieving that number will have to come from a greater emphasis on programming. Additional traffic could also be generated by targeting specific groups such as scouts and guides as well as seniors' homes looking for outings.

2024 attendance to date:

Rug Hookers: 17

Booked Tours: Heritage Port - 26

Facility Bookings: Rogers TV - 9

Walk-ins: 53

Total: 105

Museum Programs

First booked tour of the year was on January 25. 26 members of Heritage Port attended and also conducted their Annual General Meeting.

The curator attended the launch in London, on February 3, of a virtual tour app - onthispsot.ca - containing content on approximately 40 Black History sites across southwestern Ontario. The museum coordinated the development of content for two of the regions: Elgin-Middlesex and Windsor-Essex.

The curator will present a talk at the London Heritage Festival on February 10 on how museums use their collections to interpret local history.

Family Day – Ally has planned a day of crafts related to the Port Stanley – “Coney Island” show – with a beach/water theme.

Spring Break – will offer the same craft making program as Family Day.

February 28, 2 pm, Paul Baldwin will present his research on the life and career of Tommy Reilly, harmonica virtuoso.

His father James Reilly, Bandmaster of the Elgin Regiment Band, organized and led a harmonica band at Elmdale School that won the Harmonica Band competition at the CNE 3 years in a row in the 1930s. His son went on to play professionally.

Vimy Lecture, April 9 - recommend that Blair Ferguson present the lecture again this year. He's been researching the names that will appear on the new Dutton-Dunwich Cenotaph and will highlight the seven Dutton-Dunwich men who were lost at Vimy.

April 19 and 20th – a play will be performed at the Keystone Complex about #4 Bombing and Gunnery – opportunity to put our collection on display – as with the production held there last year.

8. 2024 Project Updates

Mural project update with Oneida Nation of the Thames

Mike Baker provided an update regarding the mural depicting the settlement story of Oneida Nation of the Thames on the exterior of the Elgin County Heritage Centre. The mural has been transferred from the Oneida Cultural Centre to Perfect Signs for the anti-graffiti treatment application. Installation can be scheduled as soon as its ready.

4th Floor Service Planning

Brian Masschaele provided an update on service planning for the museum and archives.

A report will be going to council about the moving of services after the elevator project has been completed. Archives will move to the 4th floor, and a public space for researchers will be established.

The Heritage Centre has also seen some improvements with the installation of smart TVs, a microphone and sound system. A demonstration took place after the meeting.

Succession Planning

Brain Masschaele updated committee on the succession planning after Mike Baker retires in March.

Mike Baker's retirement celebration is tentatively set for March 28th, 2024.

Collection Review

Mike Baker provided an update on the collection review.

Everything at the Elgin Manor has been re-assessed except the chairs which had already been done. Much of the unprocessed material was moved from a very damp storage facility at the former museum location. As a result, they are not in great shape and will be hard to find a home for. Looking at rural heritage groups right now, for example, the Tri-County, north of London, who have been approached.

Fanshawe Pioneer Village have offered to take two items.

Items that have been redistributed from the Manor:

Court House material - two tables and two revolving book stands.

Other unprocessed material - a roughhewn table; large painting, c, 1970, to STEPAC

Display systems and exhibit furnishings:

10 cases, 2 display systems and one exhibit crate. One load waiting to go – Feb. 12

With the exception of the book stands, all of this material has gone to regional museum group members or other local non-profits.

9. Museum Partner Reports

Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives

Amanda VandenWyngaert provided an update on the Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives.

The museum is still operating two locations closed for the season, but are having pop up exhibits at both the new building and the old.

The museum had a busy fall with the pop up exhibit on the Second World War, *At the Going Down of the Sun: Aylmer and Malahide* created in conjunction with the publication by James McCallum's book of the same name. The exhibit was on for 3 weeks and was attend by 500 people.

100 visitors attended on Remembrance Day after it was announced at the cenotaph. Funds from the sales of the book are donated to the museum.

Upcoming Exhibits

Leaving Canada: The Mennonite Migration to Mexico

March 1, 2024 - April 30, 2024

This travelling exhibit was produced by the Mennonite Heritage Village from Manitoba. hosted by Mennonite Community Services of Southern Ontario, the Norfolk Community Help Centre, and the Mennonite Central Committee. The exhibit will be at the new

location on Talbot Street.

The Roaring Twenties: Flappers, Fashion, and Freedom

March 11 - November 29, 2024

This exhibit explores how the social and societal landscape of the 1920s was reflected in women's fashion. As the suffrage movement progressed and public perception of strict gender roles changed, the liberated woman celebrated her independence with short hemlines and sequins.

The museum hosted the Aylmer Tour of homes for the first year since the pandemic. This has always been the museum's most successful fundraiser, so it was great to have it back. The event broke the previous records for the events with 700 visitors and raising \$18000.

Elgin County Museums Update

Jennifer Beauchamp provided reports from the following museums, Sparta Church Museum and Cultural Centre, Port Burwell Marine Museum and Backus Page House Museum.

Sparta Church Museum and Cultural Centre

Sally Martyn reports.

We did some major work on drainage around our museum. Our fall visits were down this fall but our historical re-enactment dinner, November 11 was a real success with 80 attendees reliving 1925 with a live band, Buggsy Malone on the door and over 35 volunteers, including 8 teenagers. We have applied for grants from Canada Summer Jobs for two students and on March 2 we are hosting a potluck supper and crokinole tournament for anyone of any age at the Church Museum starting at 6:30. There will be other historic games for children and the adults who don't want to play crokinole. June 1 we will once again host our historical high tea and fashion show. Our changing show this year will look at the care of clothing from the 1790s up to the 1950s. We are planning to apply for a Trillium grant to make our washrooms accessible and add more climate-controlled storage for our hundreds of pieces of historical clothing and accessories.

Backus-Page House Museum operated by Tyrconnell Heritage Society

Angela Bobier, Executive Director, reports.

Autumn was lower than pre-pandemic for visitors, but our Heritage Farm Show and Christmas Dinner went well. The Archaeological Assessment Stage 4 is on hold until we can secure the \$200,000 in funding to cover the cost. Stage 1-3 have uncovered very interested artifacts with 1 being over 3000 years old. All artifacts will come to Backus-Page House Museum once it is completed.

Upcoming events:

February 19 - Winter Family Fun Day and Book Signing for Volume 2, The Early History of Dunwich Township

Mar 6 - Annual Meeting of the Members

April 8 - Solar Eclipse Watch Party

May 25 & 26 - Canadian Wartime Homefront - a brand new event featuring WW1 and WW2 era activities happening at home

May 25 - 1940s Wartime Dinner and Dance at South Dunwich Hall in Wallacetown
There will also be a Paranormal Investigation, date to be announced.

Gay Lea Dairy Museum & CEC (Co-operative Education Centre)

Craig Stevens, Manager, reports.

We hosted a couple of big events in October & December. Halloween at the Booseum & A Merrilea Christmas – Lights and Displays.

We had 5 different school groups come to visit our location in the fall. One of my favourite activities to do with classes is art in nature.

We are scheduled to open with official hours in May again, but as always we host some groups, by appointment, and hold some special events. We are planning to host people for the solar eclipse on Monday, April 8th at our site. This is a rare event and I remember experiencing it when I was in Grade school many years ago.

Port Burwell Marine Museum & Historic Lighthouse

Jennifer Beauchamp, Curator, reports.

The museum has embarked on a large project to bring the lifeboat currently located outside near our parking lot into the museum to reduce the weather damage it is undergoing. It will be located in the part of the gallery dedicated to marine safety. This will result in significant changes that have begun with the temporary shifting of the entire storage area away from the garage door, where the lifeboat will enter the museum. We are presently working on the procedure to move the lifeboat in and place it on permanent moorings. Then the museum can be put back in order.

The clearing of the area beside the garage door was accomplished in time to host Santa after the Christmas Parade. Usually he sits in the lighthouse and hands out cookies so he was invited to the museum, where crafts for the children were available. The Port Burwell Historical Society hosts the event and provided hot chocolate for all.

This year we must change our washroom facilities to become compliant with the latest regulations and that will take place after we close for the season next fall. It will require another shift of the storage area while work takes place.

11. Committee Member Reports

Joan Mansell shared a letter sent to Federated Women's Institute of Ontario president from Lisa Thompson Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs of Ontario.

The letter shared details on advocacy and sponsorship for Farmer's Mental Health support programs.

The province is providing eligible groups up to \$10 000 for two years to assist with publications or programs to advocate on this issue.

12. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held May 14th, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. at the Heritage Centre.

14. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:27 p.m.

Moved by Kim Teuscher.

All in Favour.