



The Douglas Henry State Museum Commission (DHSMC) met at 10:00 a.m. on October 12, 2020, via Webex, with Chairman Thomas S. Smith presiding.

### **Members Present**

Thomas S. Smith, Chair  
Nancy Baker DeFriece, Vice Chair  
Ambassador Victor Ashe  
Tina Hodges  
Walter Knestrick  
Chairman Susan Lynn  
The Honorable Steve McDaniel  
Deanie Parker  
Scott Price  
Laura Travis  
Chairman Bo Watson  
Eleanor Yoakum

### **Ex Officio**

David Fox, Tennessee Historical Society Chair  
Ashley Howell, TSM Executive Director

### **Member Absent**

Harbert Alexander, Sr.

### **Participating Guest in Attendance**

#### **Participating TSM Staff**

Sabrina Hooper, Deputy Director  
Lauren Amos, Director Operations  
Sharon Dennis, DHSMC Liaison

### **Call to Order**

Chairman Thomas S. Smith called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., proceeded with roll call, verified that a quorum was present via Webex and presided over the following business.

### **Welcome and Introduction**

Chair Smith welcomed everyone to the Webex Quarterly meeting and thanked commissioners for their patience in utilization of a new technology.

### **Approval of Minutes from the June 5, 2020 Quarterly Meeting**

Chair Smith entertained a motion to adopt the minutes from the June 5, 2020 quarterly meeting. Ambassador Victor Ashe moved to adopt the meeting minutes; Scott Price seconded the motion. There being no discussion, the Chair called for a vote and the motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.

### **Budget Report**

Chair Smith welcomed Deputy Director/Director of Administration Sabrina Hooper.

Ms. Hooper began by referencing the budget report from July 1, 2020 through October 2, 2020. The Agency has spent 19% of its State appropriated dollars over a three-month time frame compared to the previous year's 33% for the same period. The reduction in expenditures are due to implementing a "hold" on operational costs and some exhibition costs.

Nongovernmental revenue from collection boxes and intergovernmental revenue earned from store sales and venue rental is noted with three refunds processed for event rental due to COVID-19.

With all required documentation submitted to F&A, Ms. Hooper noted analysis of the proposed 12% budget reduction remains ongoing. Through the vacancy review, one position with partial funding has been returned. Of special concern is an increase in operational cost due to COVID-19 at the Military Branch Museum.

Director Howell reiterated a 12% reduction would drastically change the way the museum operates; specifically, due to the facility-use revolving fund for rent, security, and maintenance for both the Polk building and the Rosa L. Parks locations, and museum services and personnel.

### **Executive Director Report**

Director Howell announced the Tennessee State Museum is honored to have just received a prestigious award from the Urban Land Institute; the Nashville Chapter. This was an Excellence in Development Award in the Large Public Sector category. She then acknowledged the retirement of curator Jim Hoobler from the TSM with 32 years of service and Ann Toplovich from the THS noting her successor Jennifer Core.

### **Reopening**

The museum reopened to the public on July 1 with operations and program modifications in place to implement the necessary state and local guidelines for safe visitation such as mandatory masks, temperature checks and questionnaire compliance. In comparison to last year, there is a 76% decrease in attendance which is in line with museums throughout the state and country experiencing 20% to 30%.

Onsite modifications include increasing the level of service by having staff rotate shifts at the information desk in lieu of part-time employees, closing the children's gallery due to the high "touch" surfaces, removing "touch screens" in the exhibitions, and the suspension of tours for the remainder of the year while establishing on-line tours, digital exhibitions and digital learning. Past programs are now live on the museum You Tube channel.

### **Digital Learning**

The museum continues to combine onsite resources with digital programming thru Lunch and Learns, Panel Discussions, Book Club, videos, and programs for educators in the classrooms along with families; parents and caregivers in delivering Tennessee history, art and culture tied specifically to school standards for students state-wide. TSM Kids; Jr. Curators Blog, Tennessee Storytime Video, downloadable coloring pages and jigsaw puzzles, and the Weekly Wrangle Newsletter have served all who administer virtual learning. The museum is currently piloting programs for a pre-recorded tour and a live tour where one may interact with a staff tour guide while changes are being made in real time.

In terms of operations of the museum, the staff has been busy rethinking how to continue to serve the state during this trying time while redeveloping content delivery. The numbers of followers on all social media platforms have increased as programs and stories move to a digital format.

Commissioners recognized that with visitors touring the museum online, purchases from the museum gift shop should be implemented in order to complete the visitors online experience. With reference to previous discussions regarding state agencies requirements and software challenges with state IT technology even to solicit donations, it is understood there is a process to work through; however, Commissioners voiced profound interest in seeing this process move forward to fruition quickly. Commissioners also expressed interest in using foundation funds to produce a virtual 3-D tour for each of the permanent exhibitions.

#### Collections Storage Facility

The state building that was allocated and being designed and retrofitted for the future collections storage facility was destroyed by the March tornado. In caring for the collection, it is extremely critical that General Services continues to work with insurance on the tornado damage and that those funds are allocated for a proposed new site that has been identified on the campus of TBI. In real time, only last Wednesday, there was a water pipe leak creating a waterfall in all floors of the museum in the Polk building resulting in the evacuation of all staff in the entire building and two artifact/paintings sodden.

In actively working with General Services, what entails is not retrofitting an existing building, but revising plans for construction of a new concrete building which will help with any other potential natural disaster. The urgency to safeguard the collection of the State of Tennessee is eminent as to lose the collection would be catastrophic.

#### The Collection

With state purchases of artifacts suspended, the museum is very judicious about items coming in with a new focus on how the collection is organized, reevaluation of artifacts, shifting of artifact categories and deaccessioning.

#### Military Branch Museum (MBM)

The MBM reopened on July 1 as did the TSM. One of the differences between the MBM and the TSM is the MBM is a tenant in the War Memorial Building (WMB). As the only tenant accepting visitors in the WMB, the MBM is required to adhere to COVID-19 check-in procedures which requires an up-charge paid to the state amounting to \$4,600 per month. Since reopening, the

MBM has had 487 visitors in total to date incurring approximately \$15,000 in additional expense which is dramatically affecting the budget in a time when budget cuts are imminent.

Following discussion which noted the Governor's mandate for all state agencies to examine all aspects of the budget, Chair Smith recommended the closure of the MBM for the rest of the year with the exception to honor private group requests to be conducted by TSM staff adhering to all COVID-19 state requirements and deferred a motion on this matter to "new business."

The Chair thanked Director Howell for her report and moved on to the next item on the agenda.

### **Annual Conflict of Interest Forms**

Chair Smith announced the annual conflict of interest forms are normally collected in the July quarterly meeting; however, since the DHSMC did not meet in July, the Chair requested all members sign, scan and email the forms to Ms. Dennis.

### **Media**

As the discussion has previously covered the COVID-19 impact on the commission and the museum, Chair Smith noted the positive media coverage over the last ten months which included everything from Women's Suffrage to the Urban Land Institute award. He congratulated the entire team that was involved in the development, design, and implementation of this world-class building including Governor Haslam and Mark Cate.

### **Other Business**

The Chair recognized Commissioner Travis. Ms. Travis, the Carousel Committee Chair announced the tabling of the Carousel project until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the budget reductions and the immediate need to focus on the collections storage facility and the safety of the artifacts. She unequivocally stood by the steps for initial evaluations taken and thanked the commission for its support throughout the process.

Chair Smith thanked Ms. Travis for all her contributions noting none of the money spent came from state funds, and the evaluations presented a clear understanding of the costs involved in moving forward in restoring and resurrecting this artifact and called for discussion. As there was none, the Chair acknowledged the tabling of the Carousel project.

### **New Business**

Chair Smith called for a motion to close the MBM for the rest of this year, except by appointment only for groups, which will be supervised by TSM staff adhering to all COVID-19 state requirements. So moved by Chairman Lynn; seconded by Mr. Price. The chair called for discussion which stressed the importance of the MBM in telling the story of Tennessee's role in the military with the goal to resume visitation as soon as it makes budgetary sense as the added costs are a state upcharge for administering COVID-19 services.

Following discussion, the Chair called for a vote and the motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.

Chair Smith recognized Ambassador Ashe who moved to adopt a motion commending and expressing appreciation to James Hoobler for his 32 years of service to the State Museum and

to wish him well on his endeavors; seconded by Mr. Price. There being no discussion, the Chair called for a vote and the motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.

Ambassador Ashe then moved to pass a resolution commending Ann Toplovich for her work for the Historical Society and to wish her well in her future endeavors; seconded by Mr. Price. There being no discussion, the Chair called for a vote and the motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.

Chair Smith reiterated for the staff three items of importance discussed today:

1. The exploration of a virtual 3-D tour of the museum and the permanent exhibits
2. Implementation of online access to the gift shop and the ability to sell items online
3. Establish the process for saying “no” on items offered to the collection regarding storage.

Chair Smith acknowledged the Legislature approving the naming of the building the Bill Haslam Center and announced there is a commemorative event in the planning stages for mid-April. This gives time to work out the signage issues and hopefully, improvement in the safety of public gatherings. He proposed moving the quarterly meeting from Monday to midweek to coincide along with a possible reception the night of the meeting with the event the following day. He requested that Commissioners keep their calendars open.

### **Public Comments**

Chair Smith called for public comment. There was none.

### **Announcements**

Chair Smith announced the upcoming Quarterly meeting dates of January 11, 2021, the week of April 12, 2021, July 12, 2021, and October 11, 2021.

### **Adjournment**

Chair Smith entertained a motion to adjourn. Ambassador Ashe moved to adjourn, Chair Smith seconded the motion and adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

### **Main Motions Summary**

**Motion #1:** Moved by Ambassador Ashe to adopt the minutes from the June 5, 2020 meeting. Chair Smith called for a vote on the motion which carried unanimously with no abstentions.

**Motion #2:** Moved by Chairman Lynn to close the Military Branch Museum for the rest of the year, except by appointment only by groups which will be supervised by TSM staff adhering to all COVID-19 state requirements. Chair Smith called for a vote on the motion which carried unanimously with no abstentions.

**Motion #3:** Moved by Ambassador Ashe to adopt a motion commending and expressing appreciation to James Hoobler for his 32 years of service to the State Museum and to wish him well on his endeavors. Chair Smith called for a vote on the motion which carried unanimously with no abstentions.

**Motion #4:** Moved by Ambassador Ashe to pass a resolution commending Ann Toplovich for her work for the Historical Society and to wish her well in her future endeavors. Chair Smith called for a vote on the motion which carried unanimously with no abstentions.

**Motion #5:** Moved by Ambassador Ashe to adjourn the meeting. Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

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Thomas S. Smith  
Chairman Douglas Henry State Museum Commission

Approved