

May 15, 2024
Abita Springs Trailhead Museum
Minutes

The meeting of the Abita Springs Trailhead Museum Board was held and called to order by President Lauren Crout on May 15, 2024 at 5:01 p.m.

Members were present: Lauren Crout, Stewart Eastman, Jason MacFetters, Niki Mendow, Keitisha Young, Melissa Smith, and Kimberly Irizarry. One board member absent Felicia Walker.

Members emeritus Martha Gruning and Ron Blich were present as was Docent George Long.

Secretary Kimberly Irizarry sent out the minutes from the April 2024 meeting prior to the May meeting. There were corrections made to those minutes. The minutes were read aloud to the board with the changes/corrections with explanations of each correction/change. Keitisha Young made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected; it was seconded, motion carried.

Stewart Eastman made a motion to make all board votes moving forward roll call votes to add accountability and clarity. After a discussion and a second from Jason Macfettters the motion was carried with a unanimous vote of the board.

Niki Mendow presented and handed out copies of the financial report for the month of April. She discussed the account activity for the month. It entailed the final totals for En Plein Air and she will follow up the town about payment to the artists. She made and gave out copies of the report for the board.

Old Business -

Summer and Fall Programming:

Jason MacFetters started the update with that he reached out to the St. Tammany Art Association to assess if there was interest within the local art community to work with the Abita Springs Trailhead Museum to create summer art opportunities. There was but it was too late for this summer as event calendars were already set. He suggested creating a subcommittee for those interested in exploring ideas for special programs for summer 2025.

He is still looking for a program/event for the fall around October for families in town with children between Abita FallFest and Halloween. Nothing huge like a festival but maybe a pumpkin decorating contest that the town can vote on and that could be on display during those 2+ weeks. Lauren asked if there were those who would like to express interest now for fall programming. Several gave their names to Jason for the subcommittee.

The discussion continued when Kimberly Irizarry raised the idea of arranging day trips for the community to visit other museums in the area. The goal being to get continued community interest for the ASTM, as well as, get New Orleans museums to refer their guests to the ASTM who are looking for a nice day trip out of the city to spend on the Northshore/Abita Springs area.

George Long brought up the idea of possibly making this a benefit or thank you for docents. Melissa Smith suggested a state museum to expand on the docents' knowledge of the greater area of New Orleans/ Louisiana. Discussion continued about other ideas to thank our docents with types (private vs. State run) of museum, themes, etc. also the logistics of transportation to and from an event would need to be taken into account. Lauren and Melissa suggested starting as a docent thank you and if it is possible to replicate then consider adding a community component.

Rotating local artist:

Lauren discussed how we could use the blank space/open cases in the museum. With the interest she received, she had areas to discuss with the board about our next steps to bring this concept to fruition. Questions like; What is our criteria? How to vet local artist? Could the En Plein Air vetting procedures work for this concept? What would be our uniform process to follow? For larger exhibits would we need to hire a curator with a possible opening reception? Would the exhibits be monthly or quarterly? Exhibition vs having an event with sales? Would we need to get town hall involvement for sales? The board then gave input for the artist and the exhibits.

Criteria ideas:

- live in Abita Springs (set geographic boundaries)
- handmade/original art (vetted)
- Case size compatibility (but not limited)
 - ceramics
 - jewelry
 - photography

Thoughts on geographical boundaries? Abita Springs proper or Northshore area? Start with Abita Springs and then branch out as we proceed.

Aiming for monthly but could be a quarterly event based on volunteer needs and artist interest.

As for vetting, Ron shared that with En Plein Air the artist vet other artists. Niki suggested having only 3 different artist at a time then 3 more creating, in essence, a waiting list. Lauren will put together all the criteria for the artist, how we vet items, artist items available to show, and will those items be available for the full time etc.

Next step past this would be to discuss with the town to explore selling the art.

Members of the board that were interested volunteered for the subcommittee.

Stewart expressed concern about selling art all year round. Possibly taking away from the museum's established focus. Others gave their opinions and thoughts about how sales might occur while displaying different artists in the cases. Having a set window for sales of featured artists, artists have a QR code or Venmo, if there are sales adding information/training for docents on how to carry out those sales, as well as, discussion with the town on the proper way to conduct the sales. Lauren and the committee are aiming for September/October for the first displays.

Digitization Project:

Melissa Smith discussed action items for June and July. Members on that committee will include Jason, Kimberly, George, Melissa. Lauren mentioned John Preble and Mary Davis from the community are also interested in joining the project and Gina Slay, who is a librarian, might also be a possibility for the subcommittee. Melissa will put together an email and is looking to have a committee meeting in the next several weeks.

Cajun Dance update:

Lauren asked Lynnette to take inventory after it closes to have an idea of the needs for month/quarter in advance. George brought up that if anyone is thinking about a long term ask from larger donors like Abita Springs Brewery then there would be a need for a letter for donations to give to the donors. This would be on our letterhead that has our tax ID number, value of amount etc. Lauren will ask the town to make sure this documentation doesn't already exist and if it doesn't then she and Keitisha will draft one.

New Business:

Planting trees for beautification project: Ron brought up that in the past the museum planted trees in town. Got a bit complicated due to the fact that each of the trees had to be approved by the town. But there is a gentleman, who is opening an Airbnb in town, who would allow us to plant trees in the town right away. This was part of our mission to improve life in Abita.

Revitalization/Improve the Docent Handbook: Material and Procedures:

Just open the discussion about how the material can be presented: cheat sheet style, executive summary, how to navigate different digital pads i.e. audio pad, t.v., training docents, update information with correct/current phone numbers/emails, as well as, what does it mean to be a docent?, what to look for in a docent?, vet docents?, docent recognition, etc.

Northshore Traditional Music Society:

Lauren wanted to give us a heads up on this group. The town will be working with the them to bring more live cultural music to the community. This may be a possibility/opportunity to work with the group in the future. Lauren will keep us updated and if need be can reach out to the person in charge of the group, Christopher Talley.

Meeting time revote:

Stewart Eastman made a motion that the time of the ASTM be moved from 5:00 p.m, to 6:00 p.m., the motion was discussed that the 5:00 meeting time can be difficult to make due to work constraints and traffic congestion and Melissa seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Melissa - yes

Kimberly - yes

Stewart - yes

Keitisha - no

Niki -yes

Lauren -no

Jason - no

Motion carried 4-3. The ASTM will be meeting from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. starting in August.

Keitisha made a motion to adjourn and Kimberly seconded the meeting at 6:13 p.m. Vote was unanimous.