

Friends of the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, January 16, 2024 @ 10 a.m.
NMFRHM – Education Classroom

Present: Directors Sandy Kostelecky (treasurer), Steve Loring (president), Stan Morgan, Jean Olson (secretary), Fred Naranjo, Russell Tether; Museum Governing Board Liaison Jerry Schickedanz; members Bob Distlehorst, Caroline Palmer.

Absent: Director Patti Havstad (vice president), Museum Director Heather Reed.

Loring called the meeting to order at 10 a.m.

Loring announced that Patti Havstad has resigned from Board, effective on Jan. 14, 2024.

Loring reminded the Board of the three items on the agenda for the special meeting: reviewing the contract with 360 Events LLC, owned by Amanda Collier, to provide marketing, promotional and event planning services; discussion of revision of the Friends membership levels; and discussion of The Museum ROCKS!

Kostelecky made the following suggestion on the proposed contract with 360 Events LLC:

Paragraphs 2 and 2(c) must make clear that Collier is working only for Friends in. Naranjo and Tether suggested striking out all references to Museum staff in those paragraphs.

In Paragraph 2(d), instead of “hosting by the association,” change “association” to “organization.”

Paragraph 2(h), which is about Collier’s onsite presence for set-up and breakdown, Collier should provide written notice with as much lead time as possible when she cannot be present.

Palmer asked for a summary of why contracting with Events 360 LLC is being proposed. Loring said the purpose is to get assistance with event planning, and marketing and promoting activities to ensure that notice of events gets out to the community via media and other means, as well as assistance in planning events and executing those plans. The goal is to increase participation in activities and events across the board.

Palmer asked if anyone else was contacted about this possibility, e.g., Staci Mays and Helping Hands.

Loring said that Mays was not considered because of concerns about her effectiveness and relationship with Friends relating to the Museum ROCKS! event. Tether pointed out that Collier worked with Mays in the early years of ROCKS!, when it was a project managed by Helping Hands (a company that ceased to function c. 2015). Loring said that experience will make it easier for Collier to assume responsibility for ROCKS!.

Kostelecky explained that Friends is planning to intensify its efforts in fundraising, which will involve new activities for which professional assistance will be helpful.

Loring said Tether was instrumental in making the contact between Collier and the Friends. Tether said he was impressed with her track record and the assistance she provided *pro bono* with setting up media exposure for Farm La-La, getting placement on four radio stations. Loring said the Board's consensus is that her professional services will be helpful and necessary.

Distlehorst questioned whether the group can afford \$9,600 per year.

Kostelecky said the money will initially have to come out of the Fidelity investment funds. Loring said the one-year contract is a trial to see if Collier can increase awareness and revenues generated enough to justify continuing the relationship. He reported a conversation with long-time Museum ROCKS! sponsor Frank Parrish, who was very concerned about insufficient advertising for the 2023 event.

Tether said the group needs someone who understands and can target a younger audience using social media tools. Olson explained that historically the Friends web site and Facebook page were managed by member volunteers. While encouraging everyone to follow the Friends on Facebook and share the posts, she said it is not appropriate to expect Board members to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining those online media presences. She also opined that Collier's rate of \$25 per hour (a monthly fee of \$800 calculated at 32 hours per month) is extremely reasonable for professional services.

Tether moved, Morgan seconded, to accept the contract for one year with changes as noted during this meeting. Distlehorst asked if the vote was only for board members and was told it was. Passed.

Loring will communicate with Collier, Mays and Parrish to inform them that Friends will transition to 360 Events LLC for the management of The Museum ROCKS! Gem and Mineral Show for 2025.

Olson proposed changing the order on agenda to discuss Museum ROCKS! next. The Board agreed.

Loring reported that he and other Board members are unhappy with with communication with Las Cruces Event Planning and its performance on ROCKS! Mays has proposed a three-year contract, which would commit Friends to continuing in a relationship that is not optimal. As currently contracted, the bulk of ROCKS! revenue remains with Mays. Recognizing that this is a community event in addition to a fundraising activity, moving forward with Collier, it will be made clear that this is a Friends event with the financial benefit from the considerable effort required to put it on each year accruing primarily to the Friends and, by extension, to the Museum.

Palmer asked if there will be problems with vendors and the switch. The fact that many return year after year indicates that they're pleased with the experience. She said she was pleased as she arrived at the Museum to see the ROCKS! window banner in the lobby and poster on the rock wall. Olson reported that the banner would be mounted on the Dripping Springs Road fence on Tuesday or Wednesday. Loring said notice also will go on the Museum calendar, which didn't happen last year.

Distlehorst asked about advertising rates in print publications such as New Mexico Magazine. Olson said she was placing notices on free Facebook and online calendars, including KRWG Community Calendar and Visit Las Cruces, run by the City tourism bureau. Tether reported that a full-page black and white ad in New Mexico Magazine costs \$3,600. Both local daily newspapers, the El Paso Times and the Las Cruces Sun-News, are owned by Gannett and offer limited local coverage. Olson said the event is posted on the free El Paso Times online calendar; it can be promoted on that venue at a cost of \$189. Kostelecky questioned the value of investing in advertising to the El Paso market.

Schickedanz affirmed the importance of social media, telling about a business owner who spent \$60,000 annually on traditional advertising. He transitioned to social media, spending half as much money and seeing his business double in the first year. Distlehorst affirmed that a small number of people use print.

Consensus of the Board is that ROCKS! will continue under the management of 360 Events LLC. Loring said that he believes this will ensure that the group's participation in making decisions about shaping the event, as well as in more active promotion of the event.

Loring reviewed the pro-rating schedule established at the Jan. 9, 2024 monthly meeting for the transition year to harmonize membership renewals to all take place on January 1 of each year: new memberships and renewals during Quarter 1 (January-March) – 100 percent of fee; during Quarter 2 (April-June) – 75 percent of fee; during Quarter 3 (July-September) – 50 percent; during Quarter 4 (October-December) – the full-year rate with membership being valid through December 31st of the following

year. The same pro-rating schedule will be used for new memberships for upcoming years beyond the transition year.

Requiring presenting the membership card to get benefits is a policy that will continue to be enforced, relieving the Museum front desk staff from verify memberships some other way.

After lengthy discussion, the membership levels and membership rates proposed are –

Individual, which covers unlimited admission (except for special events) to the Museum for one designated member for the membership period. Annual fee - \$40. Benefits in addition to unlimited admission include 10 percent discounts on Museum education programs and at the Museum gift shop, a 20 percent discount on Friends merchandise.

Couple, which covers unlimited admission (except for special events) for two designated members. Annual fee - \$60. Benefits in addition to unlimited admission include 10 percent discounts on Museum education programs and at the Museum gift shop, and a 20 percent discount on Friends merchandise.

Family, which covers unlimited admission (except for special events) for two designated members and children presented as members of their family, when accompanied by one of the designated members (except for special events). Annual fee - \$100. Family will be required to list children on the application form, which will serve as a reminder that the admission is for members of the designated family. Additional benefits include 10 percent discounts on Museum education programs and at the Museum gift shop, a 20 percent discount on Friends merchandise, and a National Association of Reciprocal Museums (NARM) membership.

A new level – Benefactor – will be established to replace the existing Pioneer and Legacy levels. It will include unlimited admission (except for special events) for two designated members and children presented as members of their family, when accompanied by one of the designated members; 10 percent discounts on Museum education programs and at the Museum gift shop, a 20 percent discount on Friends merchandise, NARM membership. Annual fee - \$200. Additional benefits will accompany this level; suggestions on benefits to include were passbooks covering admission for other adults or children.

A Small Business Membership will be established, appropriate for family-owned businesses that want recognition of their business as a supporter, with an annual fee of \$250. This level includes unlimited admission (except for special events) for two designated members and children presented as members of their family, when accompanied by one of the designated members; 10 percent discounts on Museum education programs and at the Museum gift shop, a 20 percent discount on Friends

merchandise, and NARM membership, along with passbooks covering admission for other adults or children, for the business to distribute as they wish to suppliers, customers, or others with whom they have a relationship.

Lifetime memberships will be eliminated as a category. Current Lifetime members will continue to receive the benefits that accrued to that membership level when they joined as Lifetime members.

A separate donor package will be created for Corporate members, appropriate for large businesses who wish to serve as general or event-specific sponsors or underwriters.

Points still to be clarified:

Special events are not included in the free admission benefit. Currently, all Friends pay to attend Home Grown and Farm La-La, which are Museum-hosted events, and The Museum ROCKS! Gem and Mineral Show, a Friends-hosted event. While members at the Family and higher levels currently receive one carload pass to Cowboy Days, a Museum-hosted event, requiring payment at all levels for that event and all others to harmonize the policy and to encourage people to volunteer to help with the events (volunteers receive free admission) was suggested.

Kostelecky questioned if the NARM benefit, which costs Friends \$200 annually to offer and can only be offered for levels costing a minimum of \$100, is worthwhile. Olson strongly recommended keeping the benefit, saying she knows a number of people who bought a higher-level membership than they otherwise would to get the NARM benefit.

Other benefits suggested to distinguish the levels include –

- Art photo posters by Mike Groves (donated by Picture Frame Outlet & Gallery)
- Series of four small art prints by Ann Peck
- A display acknowledging benefactors, small business members and corporate members, perhaps in the niche outside Friends office and/or the Heritage Garden board
- Display of the logos of small business members, perhaps on the Heritage Garden board
- Listing in any programs or similar materials for Friends events
- Signage for event-specific donations from individuals, small businesses and corporations displayed at the event

Olson asked if there is any issue with giving out passbooks, given they are equivalent to a Museum admission and may be revenue that should go to the Museum and the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA). She asked that this be clarified with Museum leadership. Loring said that it would seem to be the same as Friends selling memberships that give free admission. Schickedanz reported that admission income

goes to DCA, while Friends revenues stay local; this was a primary reason for the establishment of the Foundation and then the Friends. Kostelecky suggested that passbooks could be used by Board members or other Friends members who encounter entities or individuals whom they want to encourage to become familiar with the Museum.

Palmer said that giving free tickets is an effective way to get people into the Museum and can lead to continued support. She suggested recognizing any corporate sponsors or underwriters as supporting all events, which would be a good selling point for their support.

Tether and Naranjo emphasized the importance of coming up with a plan for corporate sponsorships and underwriting. Olson added that a plan for distinguishing between event-specific and general sponsorships is desirable.

Loring announced that a wire transfer was made on Tuesday for the eight-passenger electric golf cart so tours can be resumed. The estimate is it will be delivered in six to eight weeks.

A strategic planning retreat will be held on Thursday, February 29. Loring is communicating with a person to possibly serve as a facilitator.

Fred Naranjo is resigning, effective immediately, from the Board. He wished to Board success in future endeavors.

The next monthly meeting will be on Feb. 15, 2024.

The meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Olson, Secretary