

Friends of the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum
MINUTES
Tuesday, January 9th, 2024, @ 10 a.m.
NMFRHM – Education Classroom

ATTENDING: Patti Havstad (vice president), Sandy Kostelecky (treasurer), Steve Loring (president), Stan Morgan (director), Fred Naranjo (director), Jean Olson (secretary), Russell Tether (director); Heather Reed (Museum Director). Deputy Museum Director Naomi Terry; 360 Events LLC owner Amanda Collier; members Suzanne Maddox, Angie Morgan, Lynn Unangst

ABSENT: Jerry Schickedanz (NMFRHM Governing Board Liaison)

Loring called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Kostelecky moved, Naranjo seconded, to approve the agenda as presented. Passed.

Havstad moved, Kostelecky seconded, to approve the minutes for the November 28, 2023. Passed.

Loring expressed his thanks to organizers of and volunteers at the December Culture Series presentation, which more than 100 people attended, and Farm La-La. Farm La-La featured visits by the Grinch, courtesy of the New Mexico State Police; Santa Claus; and Amigo Man, thanks to Visit El Paso. According to Reed, around 1,000, people attended. Loring thanked sponsors of the event and said thank you notes were being prepared. Enlisting sponsors will be a focus for next year's event.

He reported that preparations for the 2024 legislative session, which is about to start, are underway. He and Kostelecky will travel to Santa Fe to represent the Friends on behalf of the Museum. Working with Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) Legislative Affairs Liaison Jessica Greenspan, they are putting together a list of legislators to visit. He invited others to join them. Kostelecky reported that she is preparing the materials they will give to legislators, including highlights of 2023 and capital outlay request information. She encouraged others to join, saying she had a great experience last year. Havstad asked if the Friends will give a gift to legislators. Kostelecky said Greenspan is checking on the legal limit on value of gift to legislators, but the plan is to present a Museum pen and pencil in a Museum bags. Unangst approved, saying that pens and pencils are useful items.

The Governing Board meeting will be in Santa Fe on January 29 at the State Library. Loring will join virtually, unless the Friends visit to the Legislative session coincides.

Loring reported that thanks to a generous donation from Friends member Susan McIntyre, an 8-passenger electric golf cart to replace the current cart will be finalized, with delivery expected within 10 weeks. Many thanks to Susan for her generosity.

Tether and Loring were going to speak to a Lion's Club tomorrow, but the meeting was postponed. Loring encouraged the Board to identify community organizations that might be interested in such a presentation. Tether suggested creating a Power Point presentation to provide a structure for such talks. Loring said his hope is to tailor the presentations to each individual organization's missions and priorities.

Loring pointed to the recent communication with Staci Mays/Las Cruces Event Planning regarding Museum ROCKS!, scheduled for February 17 and 18, that was sent to Board members. He said a call should go out to Friends members to volunteer to man the Friends table and help with set-up and tear-down. Mays has proposed an extension of her contract for three years.

Kostelecky reported that she and Loring met Finance Committee members Dot and Larry Austin to review Fidelity accounts; there is around \$150,000 in Fidelity (\$135,000 in Operations and \$15,000 in Programmatics); \$1,689 in the Citizens Bank Operations account and \$23,000 in the Programmatic account. Accountant Craig McQueen is reviewing all records and accounts and cleaning up the QuickBooks (QB) Online account. His review revealed that the migration of the Operations account last June was incomplete. After exploring options, a second subscription to QB Online with the addition of the payroll function was purchased. McQueen reported he has successfully migrated the Operations account to the new QB subscription; the first subscription will be canceled after reviewing the migration, which will result in a credit.

As McQueen reviews accounts and transactions, he will create templates so all entries will be done consistently, accurately and efficiently. Kostelecky reported there were year-end issues with OnPay; McQueen is clearing those up. There are IRS and tax matters pending, including a tax filing due in November. McQueen is working on updating contact information with the IRS, identifying him as the group's accountant. He has established a Friends accountant email (acct2024.friends@gmail.com); email account information will be on file in the Friends office.

Kostelecky told the Board that her goal is to improve communication with the Board. To that end, she will distribute information monthly on upcoming extraordinary expenses, together with account balances. She distributed policies and procedures on the basics of making account deposits and requesting reimbursements, with sample forms and guidance on how to submit them; she will also issue a series of memos regarding other basic procedures. Citizens Bank will issue two credit cards for each of the two Friends accounts, which will provide fraud protection not provided by the current debit card. She asked everyone to be prompt in their requests for reimbursements, reminding that checks exceeding \$500 require two authorized signatures and expenses exceeding \$1,000 require Board approval.

Kostelecky reminded Board members that if they need a key to the Friends office, she will have one made for them. She said she and Olson will be organizing the office on Thursday.

Reed expressed appreciation for everyone's help with the Fall events. The Cowboy Days event is coming up (Friday, March 1, will be primarily for school kids; Saturday and Sunday are open to public; admission is \$20 per vehicle). Reed confirmed that this is a Museum-hosted event and Friends is being asked to assist. Friends members at Family level and above get one free vehicle pass. Reed asked for an updated membership list for use at the reception desk, and Pochynok said volunteers get free admission to the event.

The Museum Exhibits Team is working on fitting out the WOW van. That new exhibit will premiere at Cowboy Days. The van has dedicated staff, so Museum staff will not accompany the van. A new public relations specialist will begin working soon, as well as a new farm worker, pending completion of DCA's hiring requirements. The Museum is waiting for DCA approval of an events planner position. Staff is getting ready for the legislative session and a governing board meeting on January 29.

Maddox asked why bathrooms in north hall are closed and if there was a timeline for their reopening. Reed said they are undergoing modifications for conversion to unisex bathrooms and should be open soon.

Loring added that the WOW van schedule is still unknown. Once that schedule is known, perhaps Friends members would like to combine an outing to show up with the van to amplify opportunities to support the Museum as well as learn about the Museum.

Reed said she has a February 2nd meeting with NMSU Dean Flores regarding continuing the Museum's partnership with NMSU.

Pochynok reported she is processing approximately 20 new memberships and renewals, including one lifetime, 10 new, and five gift memberships. She reminded everyone that volunteer hours are due for the October-December 2023 period are due, adding that many members had hours for Farm La-La and the Culture Series. Computers are ready to be installed.

Loring introduced Amanda Collier, owner of 360 Events LLC, who offered her services to help meet the needs of the Friends to help the Museum, specifically in fundraising and event planning. Citing her experience in publicity and marketing, she identified the goal of encouraging attendance, sponsorships, and participation in general. Loring affirmed the need for these activities as the group moves toward doing substantive fundraising.

Amanda's experience includes working at Helping Hands Event Planning through 2011-2015, during which she worked on Cowboy Days and the early Museum ROCKS!, along with other events at the Museum. Her current business, 360 Events, LLC, represents the New Mexico Wine Growers Association and the New Mexico Pecan Festival. She noted that the Western Pecan Growers Association is taking place at the same time as Cowboy Days and provides great opportunities for cross-marketing with 5,000-6,000 people attending in past years. She currently maintains web sites, designs publicity graphics, and generates social media ads for 24

events annually. With experience with a wide range of groups, she believes she would be an asset to the Board and the organization. Noting the good participation from volunteers and the Board, she said she can offer help planning and promoting events. Services can run a spectrum –marketing only (with good contacts throughout the Las Cruces and El Paso media community, she is effective at media placement, as well as social media) and web site design (her assessment of the current page is that it is very broad and doesn't communicate what the organization is about; she would tailor it to target each upcoming event). Using the example of Museum ROCKS! as a high-expense event/low-revenue event, she said publicity should be circulating about this event by now. Her marketing and event planning services could assist with the chuck wagon dinner, as an example. Event management involves taking ideas and implementing them, using a production schedule; budgets and monitoring expenses; fundraising, including procuring sponsorships and vendors; setting up and breaking down events; procuring entertainment for events; onsite management; and event wrap-up. She proposed a one-year retainer contract, which entails a monthly fee starting at \$800 for 32 hours; a 3% commission on net profit of event, and additional hours charged at \$25/hour. She currently works alone and is contemplating hiring a part-time office manager.

Loring, who received the draft contract from Amanda the morning of the meeting, said he believes it is important to get her on board to elevate the group's efforts. With time and effort being invested in Friends activities, we must expect a return. Amanda said that everything in the draft contract is negotiable; she is willing to be flexible. Amanda said that once under contract, she would be willing to try to recruit sponsors for Museum ROCKS!. She clarified that the retainer would be paid monthly, and the first contract as presented would run through December 20, 2024. She is willing to try a six-month contract – January to July – but said she would work on events during that period only. Either party can terminate the contract with 30-day written notice.

Tether said he believes this is the most important thing this Board can vote on at this time, citing that people don't know about events or even the Museum. He added that Friends needs more members to volunteer, and marketing could help alleviate that need by convincing people to volunteer. Reed emphasized that Amanda's services are only for the Friends, and she would work in coordination with Museum staff, as required by union policies given the Museum will have an events planner and a marketing specialist on Museum staff. Unangst pointed out that a professional knows how to do what the Board wants to do. Amanda confirmed she would do graphics for flyers.

Kostelecky said she was originally skeptical about this idea because of the expense, but after meeting Amanda and hearing the extent of her abilities, she is willing to put her concern about the cost – \$9,600 for the year – on hold to give this a try. She pointed out that the group doesn't have that money in the Operations account, and the funds would have to come out of Fidelity investment accounts. Maddox asked if it is reasonable to expect that Amanda's activities will produce enough revenue to justify her position. Kostelecky replied that we don't know what the Friends can accomplish, but a \$10,000 investment to see what we can do may be worth it. The goal would be to recoup Amanda's expense and bring in more revenue than that.

Amanda said she has experience writing grants but does not consider herself an expert. Olson pointed out that event income generation does not accomplish what the Friends need to do for the Museum to accomplish its goals. Loring said he is experienced in grant-writing but needs the time to dedicate to it. His hope is that Amanda can take over tasks to free up the Board to do the planning and other activities required to accomplish goals.

Amanda used an example of finding volunteers to help with the greenhouse project, saying she will find external groups to help with that.

Kostelecky moved, Tether seconded, to hire Amanda Collier/360 Events LLC to be the Friends' marketing specialist with details of her contract to be reviewed and negotiated. Passed (6 ayes, 1 nay).

A special meeting to approve a contract with 360 Events LLC to be held on Tuesday, January 16, at 10 a.m. in the Education Classroom.

A discussion of the transition to having all memberships renew in January of each year ensued. Pochynok asked that this be made as simple as possible for the membership, saying she currently does not know how to explain it. Points made included that a renewal campaign is an essential component in the process. Consolidation to one renewal date facilitates the notification process for renewal and makes membership money available at the beginning of the calendar year. Expectations of the part-time office manager must be realistic, recognizing that during December and January, she will be totally dedicated to membership renewals and may require overtime compensation. However, during the other 10 months of the year, the office manager may be more available to help with other needs of the Friends.

To process new and renewed memberships during 2024, pro-rating was suggested, with Jan-March at 100 percent; April – June at 75 percent; July – September at 50 percent; and October – December at 25 percent plus a full 2025 membership. A discount for early payment of 2025 dues was suggested. A message to the membership, explaining what is going on is necessary.

Membership levels and benefits were discussed next. Olson summarized information from other DCA museums regarding levels, costs, and benefits. She pointed out that all museums offer unlimited admission to the member in the case of student and individual memberships or members in the case of all other levels of membership. Passes for companions are above and beyond that basic benefit. Reed reported that at another institution, family memberships included the possibility of adding one person at \$10 for unlimited admission to accommodate babysitters or a grandparent who might accompany children to the museum instead of a parent.

Consensus was reached on the points that it is appropriate to have an individual category at one price and a couple category at a higher price. Also, for family memberships, the number of children should not be restricted.

Kostelecky questioned the concept of passbooks, saying she found it confusing. Tether explained that the goal of passes would be to bring in people not included in the member's category and that it would be particularly useful in recruiting corporate members. For now, we should keep the current levels and pricing until the Board agrees on new categories, prices and benefits to be offered. That discussion will be added to the agenda for the January 16th special meeting. Loring and Tether will put together the information first presented in October regarding membership levels. Reed said she hopes that the primary motivation for becoming a Friend is a desire to support the Museum. Pochynok asked that a message be created to give members an early heads-up that changes will be made and to stay tuned for the new scheme.

Loring reminded the group that he wants to hold a strategic planning retreat in February. Olson will canvas the Board to see when they cannot be available for an extended meeting, and a date will be determined based on that information.

Kostelecky gave notice that she will work with the Farmers Market booth initiative through December 2024. After that, someone else will need to take over the responsibilities, which include recruiting and scheduling volunteers, transporting the booth materials between the market and the Museum, setting up and tearing down the booth (or ensuring people are available to do that), meeting and greeting passersby and people seeking information, assisting with AgWagon activities at the booth, updating materials, etc. She and museum volunteer and Friend Liz Higgins have done this for three years. Loring expressed the group's appreciation to both Sandy and Liz for their work on this initiative.

A special meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 10 a.m. in the Education Classroom. Agenda items include (1) review, discuss and establish terms of contract with 360 Events LLC / Amanda Collier for marketing, event planning and related services; (2) discussion regarding revising Friends of the NMFRRHM membership levels, rates, and benefits; and (3) discussion of Museum ROCKS!.

The next monthly meeting will be on Thursday, February 15th, at 10 a.m. in the Education Classroom.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Olson, Secretary