

**Friends of the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum**  
**MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**Thursday, February 15, 2024 @ 10 a.m.**  
**NMFRHM – Education Classroom**

Present: Directors Sandy Kostelecky (treasurer), Steve Loring (president), Stan Morgan, Jean Olson (secretary), Russell Tether; Museum Director Heather Reed; Museum Governing Board Liaison Jerry Schickedanz; Office Manager Jessica Pochynok; Marketing and Event Coordinator Amanda Collier (arrived at 11 a.m.); Deputy Museum Director Naomi Terry; Members Bob Distlehorst, Suzanne Maddox, Sara Wagner.

Absent: Directors Patti Havstad (vice president), Fred Naranjo.

Loring called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Tether moved, Kostelecky seconded, to accept the resignations of directors Patti Havstad and Fred Naranjo. Passed.

A quorum was declared. Loring suggested that the Museum Director's report come first because Reed had another commitment. The Board agreed to the change.

Reed said Cowboy Days is coming up March 2-3, and any volunteers and help will be welcome. The WOW van will debut at Cowboy Days, after which it will tour the state of New Mexico. Reed explained the 250 Project, which will celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Museum Archivist Donna Wojcik suggested the initiative and will lead the planning, which will include programming and oral histories. She will reach out to Friends to find out how Friends may want to be involved. Reed reported that two new hires are now on board: public relations specialist Kelsey Silva and farmworker David Lucero. Lucero brings the South 20 to full staffing level for the first time in several years. Human relations specialist Randi Schmidt retired in January; instructional and outreach coordinator LuAnn Kilday will retire on February 29.

Tether asked if Fort Seldon has been asked to provide volunteers for Cowboy Days, given NMFRHM send eight volunteers to help them during Fort Selden Days. Reed said it is up to each partner museum to make that offer.

At Loring's request, Reed explained the financing structure of the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) and the Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum (NMFRHM), and how the Friends organization fits in. Pointing out that the current secretary handles finances for DCA differently from her predecessors, Reed said the Museum has input in the DCA's budgeting throughout the process. Working two years in advance, each spring the Museum puts together a report for the DCA Administrative Services Division (ASD) and the DCA Secretary and Deputy Secretary. That plan forecasts based on identifiable opportunities and threats. ASD then puts together recommendations that are sent up the bureaucratic ladder and returned with changes to DCA. From that broad guidance, Reed puts together a detailed budget. DCA reviews that, together with what the Museum has received and spent over the previous three years, and fits it together with needs of other DCA entities.

Reed compared DCA to a family – Mom, Dad, and several kids, including the NMFRHM. Everyone in the household contributes to the family income, and that income may get shifted around within the family, based on the kids' and parents' needs. For example, the \$250,000 that NMFRHM needed for a new fire suppression panel was unexpected; that funding came from other museums' budgets.

Admission revenues from DCA museums go toward things beside the kids' individual needs, for example, the DCA legal team, computer support, phone/communication system, and auditors. Admission revenues go back to DCA to pay the bills for the needs of the entire family so each kid doesn't duplicate expenses in certain areas. The State allocates for staff salaries, health insurance, and retirement. Personnel costs for the NMFRHM's 20 employees are \$1.6 million annually of an overall budget for the Museum of \$2.4 million. The Museum's revenues that go to DCA total about \$200,000. No DCA entity is self-sustaining, but no budget cuts are being called for at this point.

The allocation DCA gets from the State goes toward operating expenses for the Museum; the Museum's income is that annual allowance plus other sources of revenue, including the license plate fund and the enterprise fund, whose source is livestock sales.

In the family funding analogy, the Friends are the grandparents who help by contributing to cover unexpected expenses. Maddox asked how something like livestock feed would not be factored in as it would seem to be a necessity. Reed said that two years before COVID, when budgets were being drawn up for that period, no one anticipated that the cost of feed would soar exponentially, as it did. The decision

to request the Friends pay for feed rather than an unexpectedly high natural gas bill, for example, was made based on public relations and political considerations of where Friends money would make the most positive impact. Reed added that there was no risk of not feeding the animals, but the State could have ordered the sale of livestock.

Schickedanz commented that the current administration is a much better parent than its predecessors, saying that New Mexico State University (NMSU) dealt with similar livestock issues with the State in the past. NMSU negotiated with the State that livestock sales income would remain with the University; the Museum negotiated an agreement based on that model a few years ago.

Loring thanked Reed for the information, saying it is good to understand the economics of the Museum to help the Friends decide how to strategically help the Museum. This understanding helps as the Board makes plans to talk with legislators for upcoming allocations. Olson said this points to the importance of moving forward with a coalition with other Friends and Foundation groups to ensure the overall DCA allocation is as generous as possible.

Reed said while she can't confirm this session's capital outlay allocation because it is still under consideration by the Legislature and then will need the Governor's approval, she has been told the number being proposed for the NMFRHM is a good number. Nonetheless, because of where the Museum facilities are in their life cycle and maintenance needs, it will still require careful spending.

Kostelecky said she had heard unofficially from the DCA legislative liaison that six legislators had at least flagged NMFRHM for possible capital outlay funding.

Returning to the agenda order, Tether moved, Kostelecky seconded, approving the agenda. Passed.

Tether moved, Kostelecky seconded, approving minutes of the Jan. 9, 2024, monthly meeting and the Jan. 16, 2024, special meeting. Passed.

Loring reported that honorary memberships were awarded to retiring Museum staff Craig Massey and Randi Schmidt, in appreciation for their work at the Museum and the help they had given the Friends.

He said he didn't have much to add about the 2024 legislative session. Because of some confusion about dates when capital outlay requests were submitted, no one went to Santa Fe to meet personally with legislators, but he and Kostelecky communicated by email with key legislators and their staffs. He said the Board will plan to start making the case for Museum funding to legislators starting immediately and continuing throughout the upcoming year instead of waiting until the Legislature goes into session.

Loring virtually attended the NMFRHM Governing Board meeting, which was held in Santa Fe on January 29. It was a short meeting with updates on several issues, including the status of land acquisition. Museum admission prices were not reviewed.

A call for volunteers to help with the restoration of the greenhouse resulted in 13 volunteers. Loring said the greenhouse will focus on an educational component, in addition to raising plants for plant sales. For example, it will serve as a site for Ag Wagon activities. He reported that the volunteers have done a remarkable job. Regarding the gardens, Doña Ana County horticultural agent Jeff Anderson, who originally designed the gardens, will visit on Monday to assess the gardens and make recommendations.

Tether and Michelle Biehl-Tether have been spearheading this project. Tether said volunteers from many different groups are participating in this effort and are working to make the greenhouse a fun place to gather. Plants will be available for sale on Cowboy Days. He is planning a greenhouse open house at the next big event after Cowboy Days. He expressed thanks to Greg Ball, Jake Montoya, Curtis Clark, and David Lucero for their assistance and support. The long-term goal is to make the greenhouse a revenue source as well as an educational tool. Schickedanz said a conversation he had with an NMSU floriculture professor indicates that the biggest money maker for the NMSU Floriculture Club is potted plants. Tether said he will disseminate to Friends a wish list for supplies, including seeds and small plants (especially agaves). Morgan suggested displaying some plants at the Friends Craft & Farmers Market booth with information about when and where they will be available for purchase. Tether reported that volunteers have brought in equipment, which has led to the decision to require the supervision of a Museum staff or volunteer for access to the greenhouse. It will be open on Cowboy Days and at other Museum special events and for tours, providing added value to a visitor's experience.

Kostelecky inquired about liability concerns for volunteers. Reed asked that anyone volunteering fill out a volunteer form to be covered by the Museum's insurance, adding that any injury must be reported through the Museum's administrative staff. Tether said he hopes the greenhouse and gardens projects will be an avenue to bring in new members. Restoration of the Heritage Garden is already being discussed by the volunteers.

Kostelecky reported that the Operations Account balance as of February 15 was \$3,523.28; for the Programmatic Account, \$23,267.27, with most of that in the Education Fund. Upcoming expenses include payments to the accountant (being billed hourly) and marketing specialist (\$840); and an insurance premium, which will be about \$1,200. After months with no response from the previous insurer, the local agent recommended Gateway Specialty Insurance, with which Kostelecky is now working to establish coverage. She asked that any purchases be run by her before purchasing.

Accountant Craig McQueen continues working on the migration to QuickBooks and reestablishing logins and passwords that were lost when Merlin Stigge died. He and Kostelecky are working the IRS, whose policy it to speak only to the registered agent (Stigge). McQueen has done necessary filings with the State as a charitable organization. Friends is now using QuickBooks for payroll, and the OnPay subscription has been canceled. Paperwork is being completed to update Fidelity accounts to give access to Board members in addition to Dot and Larry Austin.

Kostelecky reported on the procedures for Museum staff to request funds from the Friends when the Museum's budget for materials and equipment is not available. This requires Museum forms that are signed off on by the staff member's supervisor and the Museum director. When that completed form is submitted to the Friends, the treasurer pays the invoice. If a commitment is made to pay for something to a staff member without going through the proper channels, that causes a problem. Starting now, every request must be made through the proper channels as negotiated by the Museum and Friends. This will avoid duplicate work if the Museum has already started the process through the State. In the future, any commitments made by Friends to purchase something outside of these procedures will be the responsibility of the person making the commitment.

Loring thanked Kostelecky, Office Manager Pochynok, and accountant McQueen, for their efforts to work through the account access issues.

DCA IT Tech Gowah Kettle reported that WiFi is completely down at the Museum and will probably be down during the ROCKS! event on the weekend.

Pochynok reported she will be out on Tuesday, February 13, and will be responding to emails from home. She has been working with Kettle to install Microsoft 360 on the two new office computers; they are now up and running. She has a handful of memberships to process; the in-kind (volunteer hours) report has been completed. She has been communicating with volunteers regarding Museum ROCKS! and will send an email to them, confirming their schedule. Olson requested that directors be provided with a monthly update on memberships, including the names of new members. Pochynok said until she figures that out on QuickBooks, she won't be able to provide that information.

Loring reminded that the strategic planning retreat is on Thursday, February 29, starting at 8 a.m. with light refreshments. Friends will provide lunch to the retreat participants. More details will be disseminated closer to the event.

Loring called for finalizing the new Friends membership levels so he can communicate with the membership about the new levels and plan to harmonize renewals to December 31 of each year. He said a question remaining is what benefits will accrue to the new Benefactor level. Already established are the benefits of the Family membership: unlimited admission for two designated members plus children; a 20% discount on Friends merchandise; a National Association of Reciprocal Museums membership; and a 10% discount on museum classes and at the gift shop. Loring asked what other benefits could be added for this level. Olson said she will disseminate the list of possible benefits she put together for the last meeting; Loring will put together a proposal from that list.

Pointing to a perception of a division between Friends and Museum volunteers, Loring proposed a category of Friends Associates for active Museum volunteers at no cost to the volunteer. He said this could be a factor in better coordinating between the two groups. If you're a volunteer, you are also part of the Friends family. Paid Friends members are voting members; associate members would not have voting privileges. His hope is that volunteers would become Friends. Tether and Kostelecky, who, like Loring, are both Friends and Museum volunteers, expressed strong support

for this idea. Members Wagner and Maddox expressed frustration at frequently not knowing with whom they are volunteering and called for better coordination of communication from the Museum volunteer coordinator and the Friends office when requesting people to volunteer.

Loring suggested acting on this in the future, after gauging concerns or questions. It can be discussed at the strategic planning retreat. He asked for other suggestions for getting past this division. Schickedanz said this perhaps shows a need to change the name of the Friends. Kostelecky explained that the Friends hosts one event (ROCKS!) and is planning another event (the chuck wagon dinner). The Friends organization is offering the Museum help with Museum events.

The Museum ROCKS! Gem and Mineral Show is Saturday and Sunday, February 17-18. Friends will have a table for membership and merchandise sales. Loring will be around both days to assist vendors and volunteers.

Maddox asked about the board vacancies. Loring said board composition is a topic on the agenda for the strategic planning retreat, and he would like to hold off seeking to fill Board vacancies until after that discussion.

The new golf cart will arrive in Los Angeles on February 25 and probably won't be on display at Cowboy Days. Loring will ask Curator Supervisor Nathan Japel if Museum Graphic Designer Connie Anaya could do a display to let people know about the gift. Terry reported that the old golf cart is repaired and working. Loring pointed out that the new cart will be an electric cart, giving a quieter ride and making the cart drivers' tours less of a strain.

Olson reported that Kilday's retirement puts into question the monthly Fiber Social. She volunteered to take over responsibility for that event, adding that she would call on regular participants to cover for her when she's traveling.

Olson reported the next Get to Know Your Museum Coffee will feature Museum Experience Supervisor Desirie Lara. It will be on Thursday, March 21, in the Education Classroom.

Collier reported she now has access to Facebook, thanks to Olson and former Board member Sharon Stanley, as well as access to the web site. She suggested that Board member emails be created based on the position rather than an individual to provide continuity as new people fill Board positions.

Seven vendors are confirmed for Cowboy Days, plus three about which Pochynok has information. One wants a double booth, two are food vendors. Terry said Lara might have more food vendors. Vendors have until February 20 to submit forms. Boot Boogie Babes will do 30-minute activities, including line dancing, throughout Saturday.

Collier said she will hand out ROCKS! 2025 vendor applications on Sunday morning. The 2025 Tucson show runs through February 16, so the 2025 ROCKS! dates are set for February 22-23, 2025 . She recommended considering raising table prices for 2025. The consensus of the Board was to keep the same prices during the transition between event planners. Collier reported that after being under the control of an Indonesian sports betting site, the domain was purchased in late January. She suggested bypassing a separate event web site and putting information about the event and for vendors on the Friends web site. That web site URL will be included on the 2025 vendor application.

Loring expressed the organization's thanks to Frank Parrish for sponsoring ROCKS!, adding that he hopes that relationship continues. Kostelecky reported the Museum has been paid \$1,000 for the rental of the facility for the weekend.

The next monthly Board meeting will be on Tuesday, March 12, 2024, at 10 a.m. The location will be announced soon.

The meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Olson, Secretary