



Wyoming State Historical Society

**Executive Committee Meeting
September 9, 2022 – Wheatland, WY and Zoom**

Executive Committee:

Present	Name	Office	Present	Name	Office
X	Leslie Waggener	President	X	Cheryl O’Brien	NW Rep
X	Jane Gebhart	2nd V. Pres. AL	X	Cindy Brown	Secretary AL
X	Sandy Holyoak	Treasurer NE	X	Alena Wagner	SE Rep
X	Jonita Sommers	SW Rep	X	Vickie Zimmer	1st VP, AL
X	Bud Alley	Out-of-State	X	Linda Fabian	Exec. Secretary

Others: Brigida Blasi, Michael Bond, Charlene Busk, Jessica Flock, Lynn Houze, Heidi McCullough, Tom Rea, Rick Robbins, Donna Kinney

Call to Order: Leslie Waggener called the meeting to order. Rick welcomed the group to Wheatland, led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked those attending. Leslie expressed great appreciation to the Platte County Chapter for hosting the meetings. She also thanked those attending in person and online.

President’s Report: Leslie Waggener encouraged people to read the last two issues of History News. Please let her know if anyone has comments. She would love to hear them.

Minutes Approval: Charlene Busk made a motion to approve the minutes as written, second by Jane Gebhart. Motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report: Sandy Holyoak introduced the proposed budget for 2022-2023. The Finance Committee includes Vicki Mickelsen, Alena Wagner, and herself. Leslie explained that the budget was impacted by a major cut in the State’s biennial pass through grant from \$90,000 to \$70,000. The grant funds are to be used specifically for publishing Annals and support of History Day. It required drastic changes to the budget. The cost for publishing Annals could not be adjusted, therefore History Day was impacted. Generally, \$13,300 out of the pass-through grant is dedicated to the AHC for the state coordinator’s salary. The Finance Committee had to adjust that to \$3,500. ~~The History Day funds are used for the salary of the History Day coordinator.~~ But there is a line lower in the budget with \$8,000 of the Society’s money allocated to History Day. Linda explained that the \$8,000 is the Society’s donation directly to History Day

to be used at the discretion of the state coordinator. ~~These funds are generally not used. She suggested that instead of earmarking the \$8,000 for that purpose, it could be added to \$3,500 bringing up the contribution to the coordinator's salary to \$11,500. e they can help mediate the cut and go towards the coordinator's salary.~~ Charlene commented that with the drop in the market, there may not be disbursement funds from the Foundation at the end of the year. With less dues collected, the WyoHistory.org budget line is also impacted by \$10,000. Tom responded that this year, the WyoHistory.org expenses were low; he had been hoping to increase content next year. Linda answered that the budget number could be revised, but where would the money come from? Alena commented that the committee was being optimistic when it determined the dues income line. **Vickie Zimmer made a motion to accept the proposed budget as presented and recommend it for approval at the general meeting tomorrow, second by Jane Gebhart. Motion carried.**

Leslie affirmed that all of the formal committee reports will happen tomorrow, to avoid repeating information. But if something needed to be discussed today, she encouraged those attending to mention it.

Hilltop Bank Report: Christian Jorgenson reported on the Hilltop Bank account. The state of the economy was poor at the start of the year. There have been two quarters of negative GDP growth, which will probably continue. The manufacturing and service industry new orders were declining at the beginning of the year have turned around. The supply chains have been improving. Unemployment job numbers are good. The unemployment rate increased a little bit. Most importantly, the inflation rate had month of good data. It has dropped from 11.3% to 9.8%. There has been a downslide in consumer indexing and energy prices have dropped. The Federal Reserve is focusing on inflation. They are not looking at avoiding recession and will continue to raise interest rates to try to get down to their 2% goal.

The Historical **Society's investments are** a little over -10% down. Christian does not think it will recover by December, but hopes it will not get worse. It is possible that markets may readjust by the end of the year. In response to Leslie's question whether if any changes are recommended, Christian thinks the Society is well positioned and recommended keeping things where they are at. **Sandy asked when the cds are due. Christian will check and email the information later.**

Foundation Report: Charlene Busk reported that the Foundation met in August. They are still working on promoting the Wyoming History in Art book. The sales have gone well. The Foundation is planning a non-event fundraiser in the fall. They have been getting good responses. She reiterated that the Foundation may not have any money to distribute. The account balance value has dropped approximately \$60,000. But unless the Foundation sells stocks, nothing is actually lost.

Charlene explained that those people who are reaching the age where they are required to start pulling money from their retirement accounts can arrange for donations to go directly to the Foundation. Then the people will not need to pay income tax on the donations disbursed **directly** from their retirement accounts (**Qualified Charitable Distribution**). The Jenson trust payments are back up to approximately \$100 per month. They are receiving approximately \$180 per

month from Contego mineral royalties, but she does not know who set it up. The Foundation will be holding a drawing **where name of donors will be put into a hat and the winning name where the winany person** can pick whichever Paulley print they would like as an incentive to send a donation during the fall fundraiser. It can be printed it on demand by the American Heritage Center, who will split the \$225 collected with the Foundation. It costs \$125 to print and mail.

Pinky Ellis has resigned from the Foundation due to health reasons; ~~One Foundation board member has resigned~~ and two new board members will need to be nominated for voting at the general membership meeting tomorrow. Leslie encouraged Charlene to bring up the planned giving/distribution information tomorrow. Every board member is supposed to make a donation to the Foundation. Cindy suggested that others like her may have received a percent pay raise. Perhaps they should consider adding the same percent increase to their donation.

Executive Secretary Report: Linda Fabian reported that only two legislators belong to the Historical Society, Ogden Driscoll and Albert Sommers. The Society gave Senator Driscoll a complimentary membership when he hosted lunch at the Trek last year, but he has not renewed at this time. In an effort to recruit additional legislative members, she **and Leslie** sent a mass mailing to the legislators and strategic board members. There was no return whatsoever. It cost over \$500 to mail it to approximately 150 recipients. Leslie commented that it was an attempt to get the Society on their radar. Heidi suggested that perhaps it would be better to wait until after the election. In response to Cindy's question, Linda confirmed that every year the legislators are given the historic calendars during the session. The only year it didn't happen was during the session impacted directly by covid. The distribution has to be sponsored by a legislator. Leslie feels a grass roots approach would work best. The Society may need to ask the local members reach out to their legislators. Bud suggested that the Society should think about local/city officials as well. He mentioned that Tennessee has a History Lobby Day.

When the Wyoming Art in History book came out, a favorite print was selected which will be raffled off at the Annual Meeting with the proceeds going to the Society.

Award Committee Report: Jane Gebhart reported that the committee reviewed Mike Jording's suggestion to set up a writing award similar to how the Homsher Award is a research award. She has not heard back from one of the committee members, and another did not want to proceed. Linda mentioned that Mike recommended that the implementation should be referred to another committee, possibly the Homsher Committee. Linda questioned where the funding for the award would come from. Leslie agreed that the Society may not be able to afford it at this time. Linda suggested that perhaps it could be started without money, just publishing it for the first year or two. Leslie recommended picking a theme which does not have a lot written on it. Vickie commented that only \$3,000 in Homsher Awards was awarded this year, but \$7,000 was budgeted. Perhaps \$1,000 of it could be used to fund the writing contest for now. Leslie agreed. Linda recommended that perhaps it would make sense to refer it to the Publications Committee. Charlene suggested if supplied with a theme – companies could be approached to help sponsor the award with credit given for anything related. Heidi agreed that it would be a great way to easily develop content for Annals or WyoHistory.org. Brie liked the idea, as Director of the Sweetwater County Museum, she oversaw an essay contest. The number of the entries varied

from 1 to 100. She suggested that perhaps a team of museum volunteers could help. She would also like to see new non-monetary awards created. For example, the best articles in the Society's own publication, or the best WyoHistory.org article. Brie expressed interest in serving on the Award Committee. Lynn suggested that perhaps a sub-committee or team of people could help with the contest. Leslie mentioned that the Projects Committee is only busy in March and April. Perhaps the deadline could be set up in August to spread the work out. Tom liked the idea of outside sponsors as long as they do not want to control content. Leslie answered that a University Department may be willing to sponsor the contest. **Vickie suggested that the idea of the writing contest should be pitched; perhaps someone would be willing to endow it. Charlene, Linda and the First Vice-President will work on the idea and report back at the next meeting. An email vote can be held if it becomes necessary.**

Leslie recommended that the Awards nomination forms be available online – that way all the committee members can review them. Even though some items will still need to be circulated; Jane feels it is a great idea. It will help with problems reading handwritten nominations, but it may increase how much Steve will need to be paid. Charlene responded that fillable forms are easy to create. **Leslie asked Tom to speak to Steve about developing the online fillable forms for the Awards Committee.**

Constitution and Bylaws Committee: Sandy Holyoak reported that the Committee needed a motion to recommend that the general membership vote to disband the Collections Committee at the General Membership Meeting tomorrow. **Alena Wagner made a motion to recommend that the general membership vote on the dissolution of the Collections Committee, second Jane Gebhart. Motion carried.**

Old Business:

The 2022 Trek was wonderful. Leslie thanked the Fremont County Chapter. They even received a grant funding the Trek from the lodging board.

The Society's website needs to be updated from Drupal 7 to Drupal 9. It is the platform the website is built on. She just heard back from Stave Foster and he could have the website ready by the end of the year. But a lot of decisions still need to be made; design, color, content, and new content links, including chapter resources. Tom feels the Society's updated website should be up by the first of the year with the WyoHistory.org page to follow in March. Tom will have the mock ups in a week or two.

New Business:

The 2023 Trek will be held in Star Valley and the 2023 Annual Meeting will be held in Park County.

Membership Task Force: Cheryl O'Brien, Heidi McCullough, Jessica Flock and Mike Jording have met several times over the three month period to discuss the decline in membership and

came up with six short term and three long term focus items. A report is included in the attachments.

To summarize, the short term items include rebranding with updated image design and developing a new message to broaden the scope and inclusion of history. They recommend a more eye catching logo for use on new marketing materials. Include more diverse groups in communications, leadership, programs and events. Which will involve making historical events more family friendly, kid focused or interactive; inviting government groups or organizations to join the membership; even inviting local or state officials to provide opening remarks or take part in recognition programs or contests at events. Promote membership recruitment drives, update resource guides, speaker lists and statewide marketing. This will include sharing resources, such as digital resources available to local Chapters; and figuring out which Chapters are struggling. Identify new partners in other similarly minded organizations to share activities to help increase awareness of the Historical Society. This will involve exploring partnerships with local museums and libraries on events, and programming; reaching out to youth groups for volunteers to help and possibly create future relationships.

The three long term plan focus areas include developing an overall plan to increase membership, reviewing the dues structure to determine if changes could be made to streamline joining the Society; examine paid and unpaid staffing needs to determine the most effective model whether it may include an Executive Secretary, Executive Director, Regional Ambassadors, etc. to help encourage communication and increased membership.

The task force recommends jumping right in on the short term suggestions. The Society or Chapters could possibly hold fund raiser events. Heidi mentioned that Mike found that the Society began conducting a similar survey in the 1990s on many of the same issues, but the work was interrupted by the change in the relationship with the state. In other words, the concerns are not new. In Douglas, an historic preservation group is organizing a cookie walk downtown. The Converse County Chapter is planning to coordinate in the event by providing tea. It's a way to get the Chapter's message out. Charlene commented that the Campbell County Chapter is hosting a local official meeting and giving away copies of their cards with calendars and a membership brochure. Leslie appreciates that the Chapters are looking for opportunities; she is also worried about Chapter leadership burning out. Heidi encouraged that if the Chapters can even get two to three more members a year, perhaps it will help. In response to Vickie's question about how local Chapters will know what is happening, Charlene suggested giving the information to Linda for use in the newsletter. **Linda offered to send emails out to the Chapter Presidents.** Cheryl encouraged reaching out to specific Chapters on specific projects to focus on, coming up with fun ideas, for example "Run for History." Leslie commented that the Chapters should make sure that people know that you are a partner, for example the Main Street Program. Brand the work for the Historical Society. Tom mentioned that in Natrona County they are trying to encourage communication between the different historical groups. Alena responded that they tried to, but it did not work out well, because each group wanted to do their own this. Cindy provided a view from the other side; the State Archives would like to share credit on our projects it shows community buy-in. Brie agreed that they need to look at their approach sharing vs. competition. Heidi answered that in Converse County they have partnered with the County Library, each has presented programs for the other.

Leslie thanked the task for their report. **Now it is time for the Executive Committee to look at it more closely and decide how to act.** It brings to mind strategic planning. There is a lot of meat in the report and the History News articles; she does not want them to fall through the cracks. She brought up the example of the various prices for chapter memberships. It will need to be addressed to be able to use a click on membership and join button on the website. A plan will help determine what to do first. Linda suggested that the strategic planning could be referred to the Management and Oversight Committee. Vickie commented that if the local Chapters can streamline their dues, then they will not need to send their own dues reminder. **Vickie Zimmer made a motion to recommend at the general membership tomorrow that the Society as a whole standardizes the membership dues; second by Jane Gebhart. Motion carried**

Leslie asked those attending to take a look at the displayed proposed logos. She reminded them that they were first drafts and may need more color to pop. Charlene recommended that people keep in mind the various types of reproduction. Vickie felt they looked like logos for a lot of different organizations, none of them were unique. She prefers the logo with the quill/feather, but it should include an image of a man. One of the most requested items in the Homesteader Museum is the John Hunton Diaries. She is not saying his photo should be used for reference, but perhaps someone and the use of a quill with someone writing. To be more unique it could have streams/mountains. Heidi commented that when she looks at the logo “Wyoming” is at the forefront. She does not see history. Perhaps the word “History” or “Historical” could be larger. Lynn suggested that being the Equality State, perhaps use an image of a woman. Brie recommended shying away from figures. Linda answered that the graphic designer is willing to work on the designs. **Leslie commented that the Committee will not reach a consensus today, but the logo with a circle and the buffalo was the most popular. She just needs to let the general membership know we are working on it.**

Discussion ensued on changing the name of the Wyoming State Historical Society by leaving State out, resulting in the Wyoming Historical Society. This could be accomplished right away by spending ~~\$100~~ \$25 to **update our records** register with the Secretary of State’s Office. Then the Society can start using it right away. Charlene added that the Foundation does not use the word “State,” in its name. Linda checked with an attorney and in order to change the corporate name, it will need to be voted on by the membership – which with the advertisement requirements cannot happen until next year at the earliest. **Charlene Busk moved that the President Linda be authorized to register the trade name, “Wyoming Historical Society,” with the Wyoming Secretary of State, and to file all necessary forms and submit all required payments in the registration thereof, and to take such actions as soon as possible, second by Alena Wagner. Motion carried.**

Tom mentioned his hopes to recruit Kylie McCormick to help with WyoHistory.org. She has a master’s degree in history and two related bachelor degrees. She is especially interested in Grace Raymond Hebard. She would help move WyoHistory.org into this century. Before the budget information, Tom was considering having her help with editing, planning and redesign. Becky will continue to produce the newsletter and work on special projects. He would like to hire Kylie

for up to 20 hours per week at \$25 per hour. Tom thought he could use his remaining budget for the year. He would like to use the contract fees for service to support WyoHistory.org and wants to get back to four new articles per month production, but would need money and the Society's support. In response to Leslie's request for clarification on the future cost, Tom answered approximately \$36,000 per year. Kylie has provided great programing to some of the groups and is a Homsher grant recipient. Leslie responded that the budget will need to be beefed up for Kylie to come on board. Tom suggested that perhaps the Society could recruit underwriters. Leslie commented that the Society values WyoHistory.org, but it will need to be creative with the budget. It is all really about the membership drop.

Jonita Sommers and Vickie Zimmer will be leaving the Executive Committee. The new members will be announced tomorrow. Leslie thanked them for all their hard work and service on the Executive Committee and then adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Brown, Secretary