

Dudley Observatory Board of Trustees
Dudley Board Meeting Minutes
April 16, 2007

Members present: Harvey Patashnick, Alan French, Sue French, Jim Comly, Lucy Comly, Mary Crone Odekon, Sam Wait, Dan Wulff, Steve Russo, Janie Schwab, Ellen Fladger, Heidi Newberg, Jean Sheviak and guests Kerry Orlyk and Neil Levine from the Schenectady Museum.

Old Business

The minutes of January 22, 2007, were moved (Sam Wait), seconded (Jim Comly) and accepted unanimously.

Janie Schwab introduced Kerry Orlyk, Executive Director of the Schenectady Museum, and Neil Levine, President of the Museum Board of Directors. They presented the Museum building and expansion plans for a NY Science Center which will have two aspects: (1) a collection of artifacts showing the innovations and technology of our area and (2) hands-on interactive exhibits.

Exhibit materials available include 9200 technical devices and inventions and 1.5 million photos that illustrate history, technology and invention. These include the GE story and the history of the electricity revolution and the transformative tech valley role. A key program will be the education services which will involve science and technology programs to serve classrooms, teachers and families; field trips and community services will be part of this effort. The building will include conference rooms and space for science clubs. Some 300,000 visitors per year are expected, including schools, tourists and repeat visitors.

The museum has a site identified in downtown Schenectady which should become available in 2009. Building, program and exhibition designers and advisors include Allen Freidman, former NY Hall of Science director. They are consulting other science museums in similar situations. The building will include 30,000 square feet of exhibit space, a large format theater, state-of-the-art astronomy planetarium, the Challenger Center and an observatory. Funds of \$60 million will be acquired from private and public sources (NY State and Federal). The Museum has lobbyists and consultants to help build collaborations with GE and educators.

Neil Levine noted that the history of the area is a key element. They would like to have both hands-on and classroom education, including the best astronomy education (planetarium, Challenger Center, Dudley). What they need from Dudley is the following: (1) an agreement to identify issues and what we could provide (they will provide the platform and business relationship); (2) our assistance in fund raising. Neil noted that individual efforts going after the same sources of funding are less effective. Orlyk noted that a certain percentage of the funds would go towards their endowment and a certain percentage towards the building. Levine noted that \$70 million is a realistic figure. All 18 museums interviewed raise 10-35% of costs each year plus use endowment earnings.

Levine noted that the funding opportunities include economic development and Empire zone funds and brown field use. There is a 20% tax credit for the building. These sources constitute \$25-30 million actually raised.

Harvey and Jim asked what were the lessons learned from failed science centers and what happens if the funding goal is not met. Orlyk stated that if the government funding sources fell short, Plan B would be developed. The timing includes 18 months to 2 years for fund raising before construction begins. It may require 2-3 years to obtain legislative funding. The presentation was to be discussed later by the Executive Committee.

Janie Schwab presented the Director's report. She noted that we have reached a \$2 million endowment level and are reaching more markets through the Rising Star program, the archives, the library and historical societies (oral history project). Outside people are coming in to help but we need to re-do the Board committee descriptions to provide new participants with an exciting picture and places to work, such as fund raising. We need to identify job descriptions in order to get people involved. Janie noted that although we have several successful programs and reach new audiences, Board support and participation is needed along with financial expertise. Nancy Buxton is helping identify funding sources. She noted that the website identifies programs like the upcoming library poster session on local resources. Harvey commented that we need visible programs that the public can relate to in order to attract funding.

Harvey gave an update on the University at Albany potential affiliation. He reviewed the discussions with Messitt and D'Andraia (library), the reasons for joining Albany, the scholarship proposed and the difficulties encountered. He noted that some limited access library space may be available. Harvey has made clear that the University had to negotiate as one voice and not have separate negotiations; Messitt is pursuing this. The current lease can be renewed one year at a time with a small increase in rent; the owners would like to keep us here.

The question was raised whether we should still have some affiliation with Albany if the proposed arrangement does not go as planned. Harvey will put an informal query to Sue Lehrman at Union. RPI might also provide use of their telescope.

Ellen Fladger reported for the Library Committee and the asset disposition subcommittee. Sue French and George Wise have helped identify some books that might be de-accessioned. Periodicals and observatory publications are harder to assess. These publications need to be compared to other on-line listings held elsewhere. Sue French volunteered to check our holdings against ADS but consultants may be needed.

Alan French reported for the Education Grants Committee. There will be an awards ceremony in early May at the Henry Hudson Planetarium in Albany for the Hessberg Campership and the Rising Stars.

Jim Comly reported for the Gala Committee. The Gala is scheduled for November 16 at the Albany Institute of History and Art. The main program begins at 7:00 PM. A caterer

will provide hors d'oeuvres, wine, beer, and sodas; LeGrande Serras will be the auctioneer. The galleries will be open. Events will include a silent auction, a 50:50 raffle and telescope observing. The committee is reviewing PR proposals, honorary chair and committee members, and possible auction items.

Jim Comly reported for the Finance Committee. The Endowment continues to grow better than the assumed 5% because of better market conditions; we are on budget.

New Business

Alan French noted that it would be nice to re-implement the Skywatch lectures. Harvey noted that some affiliation would be needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM. The next Board meeting is scheduled for July 16, 2007.

Respectfully submitted,
Lucy T. Comly, Secretary