

h e a d l i n e s

Charting the course

A day-long conversation by Heritage Hall Museum & Archives board members and staff affirmed what's been happening at the museum in recent years and helped set the agenda for the months and years to come.

Led by Joshua Hofer, a community vitality field specialist with the South Dakota State University Extension, the April 22 strategic planning exercise explored strengths and weaknesses to identify opportunities and help set goals. The four-member staff and nine of the 11 board members gathered both in person and remotely at the Prairie Arboretum Interpretive Center for a structured discussion. It began at 8:30 a.m. and continued to 4 p.m.

The exercise explored four themes:

Discovery – What is the best of what we are doing at HHM&A?

Dream – Think big; reach for the stars. What could be?

Design – Think a bit more “reasonably” – what should HHM&A focus

on?

Destiny – What will be? How do we put that into action?

The process, which included large and small group discussions, noted the improvements in exhibits, community engagement and positive spirit at the museum in recent years. But the primary objective was to narrow more than a dozen goals to three priorities:

- Establish an endowment fund to strengthen long-term financial viability.
- Strengthen security to protect the artifacts and documents that have been entrusted to our care.
- Expand technology infrastructure to enhance storytelling and education as well as enable upgraded security.

“Visioning and strategic planning are essential for any organization that wishes to survive, thrive and grow into the best it can be,” said HHM&A Board Chair Marlan Kaufman.

He noted a similar exercise six years



HHM&A Vice-Chair Chantel Hofer records goals suggested during the strategic planning exercise held last month.

ago helped set goals that have been met and helped the museum move in a positive direction.

“Having staff and board members working together at various tables resulted in a feeling that we are in this boat together,” he said.

The HHM&A Board of Directors will be pursuing these goals using recently established committees to help research and develop strategies for implementation.

In addition, the entire day-long conversation will become a working document to aid both short-term and long-term planning.

Last month’s strategic planning session is part of a broader refocus on governance by the HHM&A Board that includes restructuring and estab-

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Museum boardmembers and staff gathered at the Prairie Arboretum Interpretive Center April 22 for a day-long strategic planning session.

Heritage Hall Museum & Archives

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The Director's Perspective

Step by step, we continue our efforts to fulfill our mission and propel this organization forward. I want to give a special shout-out to HHM&A board members and their endeavors to explore their roles in this effort. I appreciate the leadership of board chair Marlan Kaufman and I'm using this space to share some of his reflections on our strategic planning session held last month.

"Visioning and strategic planning are essential for any organization that wishes to survive, thrive and grow into the best it can be. Having staff and board members working together at various tables resulted in a feeling that we are in this boat together. Dreams and visions were shared with a sense of mutual acceptance and a desire to accomplish what is best for HHM&A."

"The gift of this process is that it creates a mutually developed focus and direction to the mission, goals and activities of the museum staff and board members for the near and long term. I was somewhat surprised at how unified the participants were as they wrestled with diverse issues throughout the day. The process showed this during the 'voting' exercise."

"As a former educator who has experienced similar sessions, I knew the potential a planning day could have for an organization if done well. We were led by an expert who helped guide us forward, sensed when it was time to shift or move on, and created an attitude of how important this process was in leading our organization forward. That possibility kept me and everyone else energized throughout the day."

"Having served on this board in the past, it is incredibly satisfying to have watched HHM&A grow into the museum/archives it is today. My personal concern is for the stability and overall health of the financial structures supporting the staff, maintenance, exhibit development and operating expenses of HHM&A. Setting a goal to establish and finance an endowment fund will be a focus of two board committees and key staff stakeholders. A well-funded endowment will provide basic support for annual budget development and long-range maintenance needs. Implementing this goal will be foundational to moving part-time staff positions towards full-time and/or adding staff in areas of greatest need."

"It's my intention as chair of the board to keep the goals front and center and to ask staff and committees to implement specific plans and procedures to meet them, so five years from now, or sooner, we can say 'well done' and even better than we envisioned."



Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer
Executive Director/ Archivist

Odds & Ends

In addition to welcoming the steady two-day stream of visitors during Schmeckfest, the museum has seen a growing number of guests in recent months. That included about 50 members of the Granite Threshing Association from Iowa, who spent Monday afternoon, April 10 touring the museum and historical buildings. On May 1, Nick Schrag brought his third and fourth-grade class from Freeman Academy to tour the Deckert House. Several other schools have also scheduled visits. There have been dozens of other visitors this year, including groups of friends, families, and others who simply stopped in after seeing our billboards on Highway 81.

Summer plans

The museum is preparing for a busy summer with open hours on holidays and extended hours during community events, including:

- May 29: Memorial Day
- June 23: FJC/FA Alumni Milestone Anniversary Dinner
- July 4: Independence Day
- July 22: MCC Sale
- July 29: S.D. Chislic Festival
- Aug. 12: Freeman Firehouse Ribs Cookoff
- Sept. 4: Labor Day

Also, the museum will be open until 7 p.m. the second Wednesdays of June, July, August and September as part of a citywide promotion: "Market in the Park & Main Street & More."

The museum is also among several sponsors for a Freeman Network for Justice and Peace program on June 10 at Pioneer Hall at 7:30 p.m. Ted & Company TheaterWorks will be presenting "We Own This Now," a play by Alison Casella Brookins that looks at love of land, loss of land, and what it means to "own" something.

Summer intern

The museum is pleased to welcome Aundria Lankford as our summer intern. A student at the University of South Dakota, she is pursuing a BA in German with minors in Russian and International Studies.

Our Mission

is to preserve, educate and foster appreciation for the diverse natural and cultural history of the greater Freeman area, settled largely by Germans from Russia in the 1870s.



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HHM&A Board of Directors

Marlan Kaufman, chair
Chantel Hofer, vice-chair
Jeanne Carter, secretary
Kevin Albrecht, treasurer
Nathan Bates, Brett Eisenbeis, Donovan Friesen, Viki Graber, Charles Schrag, Kevin Waltner, Terry Waterman

Staff

Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer, executive director/archivist
Terry Quam, curator
Brian Skinner, facilities manager
Tim L. Waltner, communication/ education coordinator

Planning for the future continued from front page

lishing committees; see accompanying box.

At the same time – and independently – HHM&A has begun a major project through the American Alliance of Museums, designed to elevate standards of practice for the museum.

HHM&A Committees

(Includes board, staff and community members)

- Buildings & Grounds
- Collections Management
- Development
- Finance
- Nominating & Governance
- Program

A team including several members of the board and the museum staff has begun meeting as part of the project.

The Museum Assessment Program (MAP) has helped more than 5,000 small and mid-sized museums to strengthen oper-

ations, plan for the future, and meet industry standards.

“MAP adds to our credibility as a museum,” says HHM&A Board Member Charles Schrag, who has played a key role in pursuing the project. “Being selected for MAP by AAM shows that the largest accrediting body for museums in the U.S. believes that a little museum in South Dakota is worth supporting and has the potential to do even greater things.”

“AAM’s willingness to send an unbiased museum professional to assess the museum will help us evaluate how we are doing as a museum,” he said. “The museum has had a tone of positive growth over the past five years. The MAP process will give us the opportunity to step back, reflect on that growth

and chart a sustainable path forward.”

Schrag also noted that completing MAP positions HHM&A well for new grant opportunities and potentially pursuing AAM accreditation.

The one-year process includes self-assessment, institutional activities, and a consultative peer review – including an on-site visit and recommendations. It is designed to address “big picture” issues, including policies, budget, governance and other circumstances unique to the museum.

Themes include:

- Public Trust & Accountability
- Mission and Planning
- Collections Stewardship
- Education and Interpretation
- Financial Stability
- Facilities and Risk Management

Museum welcomes Schmeckfest guests

Schmeckfest 2023 proved to be a success at Heritage Hall Museum & Archives with more than 900 guests visiting the museum March 24 and 25.

After a three-year interruption due to concerns about Covid-19 (2020-21-22), Freeman Academy was able to resume the ethnic-themed festival this spring. The museum participated by scheduling two full days of programming that focused on history and traditional crafts. That included presentations by historians, authors, artisans and people with knowledge and interest in a wide

variety of artifacts and collections in the museum.

“It was gratifying to hear so many positive comments from people about the changes in the museum, both inside and out,” said Marnette D. (Ortman) Hofer, executive director/archivist. People also enjoyed the variety of programming, she said.

“Having a variety of things for people to pick and choose from was a very positive thing. Some enjoyed seeing the return of the artisan demonstrations. Others appreciated the programs at the Bethel Church.

And our Heritage Pickers always get good reviews.”

“It was great to have so many people show up, including families. It was a reminder of how much our museum has to offer,” she said. “It was very affirming”.

HHM&A featured the opening of the new Natural World Gallery in the Kauffman Wing during Schmeckfest. While it won’t be complete until later in the year, the new diorama featuring

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Donna Zeeb shared an entertaining and informative look at clothes hangers.



Terry Waterman, a member of the HHM&A Board and active in the development of the Natural World Gallery in the Kauffman Wing, visits with Schmeckfest guests.



Enlisting the voluntary participation of Brad Schardin, Duane Tieszen offered a literal hands-on demonstration of a Magneto Electric Shock Machine, used for medical treatments in the early 1900s.

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 mounted animals, the mosasaur exhibit and a new “forces of nature” exhibit drew considerable attention. Guests also enjoyed seeing the

recently relocated/refurbished Deckert House, closed since 2018. Extended hours during Schmeckfest utilized special admission wristbands that enabled guests to come and go as

they pleased and included both Friday and Saturday. The new \$20 family pass for two adults and all children (k-12) will remain part of the admission structure.

Thank You

To Our Latest 2023 Heritage Hall Museum & Archives Members

January-April 2023

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