

BOURBONNAIS GROVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP MEETING—July 10, 2025 (action items are in red)

Since this meeting ended without a motion to adjourn, the meeting is not formally closed, and any unfinished business may be carried over to the next meeting and become the first item of business at the next meeting.

CALL TO ORDER: President Jim Paul called the Zoom meeting to order at 7:20 pm after a delay in his internet connection. He hosted, presided over the meeting, and took minutes.

ATTENDANCE: In addition to Jim, Charles Balesi, Daron Kinzinger, Frank Koehler, Betty Leininger, Mary Ann Lambert, Ken Lewellen, Betty Leininger, Steve Liehr, Cindy McBarnes, Christine and Max Michels, Steve Monts, Doris O'Connor, Jean Legris-Pekoc and Roy Pekoc, Josué Savoie, Gary Seiner, Penny and Phil Stickney, and Ellen Stringer attended.

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Jim asked for a moment of silence in memory of Judy Ponton.

MINUTES: The May 8, 2025, meeting minutes were approved. Mary Ann made the motion and Christine seconded it. Motion carried.

TREASURERS REPORT: Steve stated that the June 30 account statuses were: \$26,030.60--general account; \$4286.44--log schoolhouse account; and \$8501.28--KRVCF. A motion was made to accept the treasurer's report and pay the bills by Frank and seconded by Ken L. Motion carried.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS: Jim asked that the Joanne Schnell Memorial Native Plant Garden on the south side of the Letourneau Home/Museum not be impacted by the 7/7/25 board decision that all bushes and arborvitae within 3 feet of the Letourneau Home/Museum foundation should be cut back or cut down and kept lower than the windows. Motion was made by Ellen and seconded by Frank. In the discussion about future painting of the house, it was understood that the native mint and other plants close to the house should not be cut back but covered with a tarp. Motion carried.

Jim asked the membership how to use the recent \$5000 donation from Ralph and Sue Lambert? One possibility would be to replace one of the worst windows with work done by Restoration Works and a carpenter. That cost was estimated at over \$6000. Charles emphasized that the cedar shake roof needed financing more than the windows at this time. Yesterday he asked Russ Kamp, an expert, to inspect the Letourneau Home/Museum roof. Mr. Kamp stated that the roof has a maximum of two-year life. He estimated the cost to be \$60,000. Doris suggested that a sign with all donors for the roof could be created. Ken L. made a motion that the Lambert donation be set aside for the roof project. Daron seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Charles made a motion that a capital campaign be started to raise money for the roof. Frank seconded the motion. Motion carried. Charles will draft an email to send to all members and the public which will publicize this capital campaign.

NEW BUSINESS

Jim read parts of his resignation letter. Here is the entire letter.

On May 13, 2025, I wrote the following email to the BGHS board members, “Since this issue [bushes and arborvitae around the Letourneau Home] has important consequences, I would like the debate about the Letourneau Home/Museum landscape to be scheduled in November after the Sesquicentennial and *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner events. As many of you know, I became a Master Gardner in September 2009, for the purpose of maintaining and show casing our gardens and arboretum with the assistance of BGHS volunteers and Master Gardner associates. We brought the BGHS to the point of presenting our arboretum and gardens to the public in June 2011 as part of the garden tour during the Kankakee Kultivators Garden Walk. If we volunteer and at times, hire professionals, we can keep our arboretum pruned and clean. In so doing, the aesthetic beauty provides wonder for all to see. I would like to continue this tradition as we do our part for the environment.”

On May 14, I responded to Daron Kinzinger’s email regarding an upcoming board meeting, “Due to my emotional investment in this landscaping issue, I view including this agenda topic as a no confidence in my leadership. I respectfully request that you please not include this issue on any board meeting agenda until after the *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner in November. If the membership and board then decide to remove bushes and trees, I will then reevaluate my official duties and roles in the BGHS. Thank you.”

The board did not respect my request to delay and insisted that the issue be dealt with before the members could express their views. On Monday July 7, the board met via zoom. In this meeting a board member made the motion that all bushes and arborvitae within 3 feet of the Letourneau Home/Museum foundation should be cut back or down and kept lower than the windows. The motion was seconded. In the discussion of the motion that followed, those of us in opposition did not have sufficient time to present our opposing views. Our opposing views and my leadership role made no difference. My University of Illinois Master Gardener evidence such as that in this link were not allowed to be expressed

<https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/ilriverhort/2015-03-09-update-your-home-new-foundation-plants> [the author, Rhonda Ferree, a retired horticulture educator states: “Don’t locate plants within 1 ½ feet of the foundation where soil is often too dry for good plant growth. Plants should be far enough away from the house to avoid growing against the house and to maintain good air circulation.”]. Neither my role as principal executive officer of the BGHS with general supervision, direction, and control of the business and affairs of the organization, nor the members views on this issue made a difference to the board members who supported the motion. Therefore, conspicuously absent in their decision was their confidence in my leadership as executive director and president and our members’ input. The motion passed 5-3. Those in favor were Daron Kinzinger, Ken Lewellen, Ken Ponton, Josué Savoie, and Gary Seiner. Those opposed were Charles Balesi, Mary Ann Lambert, and myself. Malette Trudeau-Stevenson was absent due to illness. This was a board majority decision without general membership input, which I believe was a betrayal of the members’--and my--opportunity to debate and discuss this issue as well as proper policy procedure.

I hereby submit my letter of resignation, as BGHS president and board member, to be effective after this meeting unless the BGHS membership has a voice in the motion about the bushes and arborvitae around the Letourneau Home/Museum. One possible resolution would be

the technique we will use to conduct motions in the future once our reorganization is completed. That technique states that each member (excluding board members) shall be entitled to one vote on the matter presented to them by the president. This vote shall be called a Straw Vote. After the Straw Vote, the president will then ask the board members for a roll call vote on the same matter/motion that has been approved by the membership. This policy and procedure will ensure the integrity of our historical society so that the majority rules. If the board vote is against the membership majority vote, then we will have a problem. The society might as well be just ruled by the board and the membership meetings can be eliminated.

[At this point during the 7/10 meeting, Frank made a motion to put a stay of 60 days on the 7/7 board approved motion (that all bushes and arborvitae within 3 feet of the Letourneau Home/Museum foundation should be cut back or down and kept lower than the windows) so that the members could walk around the house and study this situation. Doris seconded the motion. This “straw” vote by the non-board members was unanimously approved. Jim then asked the attending board members for their votes on this motion. Gary--neutral; Josué--absent from the Zoom meeting at this time; Daron--no; Ken--no; Jim--yes; Charles--yes; Mary Ann (by phone)--yes. The meeting’s decorum collapsed, so I closed the Zoom meeting.] Mary Ann was still on the phone. She said, “Jim, the motion passed”.

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Since I fear the board is failing its moral and statutory obligations to the BGHS, I hereby resign from all my offices and certain roles in the BGHS. The following are the roles that I will no longer continue:

- 1) organize and preside over monthly membership meetings--including creation of Zoom links;
- 2) serve as BGHS secretary;
- 3) write monthly email newsletters;
- 4) manager of Sign Up Genius for volunteers;
- 5) serve as emergency contact for Aaron’s Alarm Company;
- 6) supervise quarterly pest control at Letourneau Home/Museum and log schoolhouse;
- 7) supervise HVAC tune up twice a year at both buildings;
- 8) donate annual Go Daddy and Zoom membership fees;
- 9) organize garden work session;
- 10) preside over Log Schoolhouse Advisory Committee meetings; and
- 11) serve as secretary of the Log Schoolhouse Advisory Committee.

I will continue to be a member, volunteer, consultant, and docent for the BGHS. I will continue to attend meetings when available both monthly BGHS meetings and meetings of the Log Schoolhouse Advisory Committee. I will continue to pick up mail at the Letourneau Home/Museum for Treasurer Steve Monts. I will continue my production of the

sesquicentennial history pageant “Hooray Bourbonnais II/*Deux*” for Saturday September 27. I will, as planned, serve as docent of both buildings for the October 25 bus tour. I will help organize the 2025 *Fleur-de-Lis* Celebration Dinner on Thursday November 13--if so invited by the BGHS after the August 7 membership meeting. I will supervise the Camp MOSH youth on July 24. I will continue serving on the Perry Farm Living History Advisory Committee. My position as Illinois Ambassador to the French Heritage Corridor is independent of the BGHS and will continue.

For the most part, I have greatly enjoyed my volunteer work as your president for the past 9.5 years. Since my role as your president and executive director has become meaningless, I resign. Accordingly, I suggest that your Thursday August 7 regularly scheduled membership meeting be used 1) finish the 7/10 meeting; 2) resolve the board-members relationship in the BGHS; 3) assign individuals to the roles that I will no longer serve; and 4) participate actively in electing board members and officers that respect the democratic policies, procedures, and goals of the BGHS; and 5) always remember that volunteers need to be valued, appreciated, and respected.

Sincerely yours,

James F. Paul, President of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society

July 10, 2025