

CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE

Board of Directors

June 17, 2023

In Person Meeting at Samuel Center for Canal History, Port Byron NY;

Meeting also Conducted Remotely via Zoom

Committee Reports submitted via Dropbox for the June 17, 2023 Board of Directors meeting are part of the record for this meeting, although they are not attached. The reports remain accessible online, and were reviewed as part of the deliberations of this Board meeting.

MINUTES

Those attending were: Board Members Anita Cottrell, John DiMura, Lisa Dingley, Janice Fontanella, Ronald Grube, David Kinyon, Bill Miles, Tammee Poinan-Grimes, Chris Romanchock, Darrin Rooker, Ruth Rosenberg Naparsteck, Bill Schollenberger, Andrea Seamans, Dan Ward, Dan Wiles, and Craig Williams. Hannah Lewis of the Erie Canal Museum was an invited guest, and Paul Bartczak, Jules Hoepting from Letchworth Gateway Villages and Sharon Leighton were also attendees.

Mr. Williams called the meeting to order at 10 AM and introduced Jules Hoepting from Letchworth Gateway Villages.

Mr. Kinyon presented the April 8, 2023 Board of Directors Meeting **Minutes**. Ms. Cottrell requested that the amount raised from the Annual Appeal on page 3 of the Minutes be revised from \$800 to \$8,000. On a motion by Mr. Miles seconded by Ms. Seamans the revised Minutes were approved.

In presenting her **Financial Report**, Ms. Cottrell noted that much of the \$78,515 in income reported is restricted for existing Canal Society commitments. She noted that donations received at the Port Byron Erie Canal Heritage Park have increased and that Site Solutions has been paid in full for its work on the 2022 NYS Canal Conference. Ms. Cottrell will close out the Canal Conference bank account due to the small balance remaining in order to avoid ongoing bank fees. The Financial Report was approved on a motion by Mr. Grube seconded by Mr. Ward.

Mr. Williams presented a proposed **2022-23 operating year budget** of \$306,378, noting that the Thruway Authority has committed to paying the Society a fee for operating the Port Byron Visitor Center of \$141,000 for 2023. The request for the Society to be designated as a sole source provider has been initiated by Kara Ostrander from the Thruway Authority. A \$50,000 'bridge agreement' with the Thruway Authority is now in place through the end of August. Other financial matters contained in the contract with the Thruway Authority include a change from an annual management fee (previously 30%) to a provision for a 10% overhead fee. An increase from \$20,066 to \$60,900 in Facility Maintenance is largely attributable to the cost of operating and maintaining the Samuel Center. The Samuel Center restroom renovation will be aided by an \$18,750 Canalway Grant and the \$10,000 donation from a former parishioner, leaving a need to raise another \$8,000. Grant and donation-funded projects include the Port Byron Aqueduct Arch Engineering Analysis and the Albany Symphony Orchestra performance in October as part of the Fall Study Tour. The Society will also benefit from the \$25,000 operating assistance grant

provided by the NYS Council on the Arts. There is only \$36,900 remaining from the collections management grant from Save America's Treasures. Mr. Rooker questioned whether funding from the new Thruway Authority contract will be retroactive, depending on when the final agreement is signed; Mr. Williams was not sure about this matter. On a motion by Mr. Rooker, seconded by Ms. Fontanella, the budget was approved.

As a continuation of the Board's deliberations regarding **Diversity**, Mr. Williams explained that there were repeated comments in the review of the Society's grant application by NYSCA that the Society needs to further diversify its sources of funding.

Mr. Williams expressed his appreciation for the efforts by Ms. Dingley to post the Minutes from the Society's Board of Directors meetings on its **website**. He also noted that important committee chairmanships remain open, particularly for the **Membership Committee**.

Mr. Kinyon related for Board members the June 12 fatality at Lockport Cave & Underground Boat Ride as part of a familiarization tour arranged by Destination Niagara. Ms. Poinan-Grimes noted that **tour boats** operating on the NYS Canal System must pass Coast Guard inspections, and that more safety protocols are expected to be put into place by the NY Power Authority following the Lockport Cave Tour incident.

The 2023 **World Canals Conference** is featuring a broadcast of webinars in lieu of an in-person Conference, to be followed by an in-person Conference in Poland in 2024. There will be a meeting soon with representatives of Parks Canada regarding the 2025 World Canals Conference in Buffalo due to the proximity with the Canadian border, according to Mr. Miles.

Mr. Williams reported that the **Spring Field Trip** went well. Upcoming events in Port Byron include the July 20 Potter's Farm to Fork Fundraiser and a Doug's to Go Benefit on August 28. Mr. Williams plans to have a reconnaissance tour June 28 in preparation for the **October 6-8 Fall Study Tour**, which will feature the Sunday waterfront performance by the Albany Symphony Orchestra, presenting a musical score composed 200 years ago. Ms. Seamans stated that she is preparing a request to Channel 5 for the Port Byron Erie Canal Heritage Park to be the beneficiary of their \$2,000 grant for non-profit organizations. Mr. DiMura suggested that a bike ride be offered in conjunction with the Fall Study Tour. Mr. Romanchock recommended that the Society offer a student or faculty scholarship.

Mr. Williams provided a background overview about the Society's deliberations about acquiring the **Lois McClure** in order to assure that new Board members were fully informed about discussions on this matter. He stated that there are different options under consideration regarding placement of the vessel at the Port Byron Erie Canal Heritage Park. Rebecca Hughes, Deputy Executive Director of the NYS Canal Corporation, has discussed with Mr. Williams the possibility of moving the boat on the Champlain Canal from Whitehall to Waterford, and allowing the vessel to winter in the Waterford flight. In addition, the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum may paint the boat prior to its departure. The Museum is in the process of creating a Memorandum of Understanding between the Museum and the Canal Society regarding the **Lois McClure**. Mr. Romanchock suggested that placement of the boat at Port Byron utilize cribbing similar to that used for the *Nathan Roberts* at the Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse. Mr. Kinyon

requested that the Board be provided with a written proposal, which would detail the commitment intended by the Canal Society as what assistance other agencies would provide. Mr. Schollenberger inquired whether the Society has the ability to maintain the boat. Mr. Williams explained that the Canal Society is compiling a checklist regarding all aspects of boat operations (e.g., electrical hook-ups). He also suggested that the Society could apply for a State CFA grant to cover some expenses. Mr. Rooker thanked Mr. Williams for his efforts to date, and he noted that having a boat on the Port Byron site would appeal to students.

Analyzing and cataloging the Weseloh Collection will require even more time, Mr. Williams explained. Additional shelving for the **Society's collections** could become available due to a plan by the September 11 Museum to replace its current shelving, he announced.

Mr. Williams noted the importance of the Society making some of its **resources available online**. Mr. Romanchock suggested that six Question & Answer presentations be created, and he requested assistance from Board members in developing content and identifying presenters. Hannah Lewis reported that the Canal Museum is creating a series of short videos featuring the Society's collection. Ms. Dingley suggested that such content be made available on YouTube.

In addition to his written **Park Manager's Report**, Mr. Wiles noted that both attendance and income from admissions to the Port Byron Erie Canal Heritage Park are up, nearing 2019 levels. Volunteer recruitment and retention have been challenging this season, he explained. At the same time, collaborative programming is improving between the Park and the Samuel Center. Mr. Williams distributed a draft floor plan for restroom renovations at the Samuel Center. Mr. Rooker related that Port Byron Fire Chief Corey Rooker had donated a fire/security key box for the Samuel Center.

The conclusion of the engineering analysis of the **Port Byron Aqueduct** is that the arch is very safe. There is speculation that there may be two more arches from the Aqueduct under the Samuel Center parking lot. Mr. Romanchock again offered to assist with replacing clapboard on the Lock Shanty on the grounds of the Park.

Mr. Romanchock informed the Board that an associate of his who is rehabilitating a canal boat warehouse is interested in exploring sunken boats.

Mr. Williams announced that **future Board meetings** will be held on Saturday, September 9 and on Saturday, November 11.

On a motion by Ms. Cottrell, seconded by Mr. Miles the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 12 Noon.

Respectfully submitted,
David R. Kinyon, Secretary