

CANAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK STATE
Board of Directors
June 1, 2024
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 1, 2024 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: Tom Beardsley, Steve Boerner, Anita Cottrell, Janice Fontanella, , John Hatch, David Kinyon, Bill Miles, Andrea Rebeck, Chris Romanchock, Darrin Rooker, Bruce Schwendy, Andrea Seamans, Will Van Dorp, Dan Ward, Dan Wiles, and Craig Williams; also present was Derrick Pratt, representing the Erie Canal Museum.

Mr. Williams called the meeting to order at 10 AM, and invited new Board members Andrea Rebeck and Tom Beardsley to provide background information on themselves, followed by self-introductions by other returning Board members.

On a motion by Ms. Fontanella, seconded by Ms. Seamans, the **Minutes** from the March 23 Board meeting were approved with a correction on page 3 of the address for the Samuel Center for Canal Learning, from 34 Rochester Street to 38 Rochester Street. Mr. Kinyon requested that Board members having difficulty accessing reports in the Dropbox account to advise him so that he can rectify the situation.

Ms. Cottrell presented the **Treasurer's Report**, noting the \$50,000 *Lois McClure* donations from the Vermont Community Foundation and the Lois McClure Trust. It appears that there will be a small profit resulting from the Spring Study Tour, and the \$16,500 payment to the Erie Canal Museum paid for the services of Amie Flanigan. Donations from the 'Friends of the Port Byron Erie Canal Park' totaled \$1,304.83, compared to expenses for 'Friends'-related expenses of \$1,093.76. The Thruway Authority still owes the Canal Society approximately \$26,000 for non-reimbursed expenses through mid-May. The Treasurer's Report was accepted on a motion by Mr. Schwendy, seconded by Mr. Miles.

The Finance Committee had recently met with new investment adviser Calvin Klemmer from Merrill Lynch about the Society's \$103,526 in **investments**, which are currently invested per a conservative strategy. Mr. Rooker noted that non-profit organizations are encouraged to maintain reserves in the amount of approximately one year of operating expenses. Mr. Williams stated that the Society should encourage bequests in order to strengthen the Society's reserves. In response to a questions from Mr. Wiles about possible uses of the reserves, Mr. Williams pointed out that withdrawal of funds from the reserve may be made only with authorization by the Board of Directors, but that the funds are not donor-restricted. Ms. Cottrell provided a recap of the history of the Society having been left bequests that have formed the basis for the reserve.

Ms. Fontanella announced that the **Human Resources** Committee will meet soon to develop an evaluation process for the Port Byron Park Manager.

In addition to his written report, Mr. Williams expressed his appreciation for the recent donation of a photographic display by Frank Forte; he suggested that the Society may place the display in the second floor of the Erie House. Mr. Williams had completed the moving of the balance of the **Weseloh Collection**, although there remain a number of items to be relocated from the Erie Canal Museum to the Center. He pointed to the addition of newly donated shelving at the Samuel Center. In response to a question from Mr. Boerner about online accessibility of the Society's collection, Mr. Williams noted that nyheritage.org contains much of the Society's collection; in addition, he suggested that previous issues of *Bottoming Out* may be made accessible through this website. Mr. Williams noted the contributions of Ami Flanigan in cataloging the Society's collection, and that the intent is to have the Samuel Center for Canal Research open to the public in the future.

Mr. Williams urged that future issues of *Bottoming Out* promote the availability of the Society's collection. Tammee Poinan-Grimes has been promoting the Society on its Facebook page, but that there is a need to assure that consistent messaging takes place across all of the Society's promotional platforms, and invited Board members to assist in achieving this objective. Ms. Cottrell will request the assistance of Lisa O'Hara in updating the Society's **membership** online database. Mr. Beardsley noted the benefits from the use of promoting the Society on Facebook.

Mr. Williams congratulated Mr. Kinyon and Mr. Romanchock in providing an excellent **Spring Study Tour** May 3-5 in Buffalo/Niagara Falls/Lockport/Medina. Mr. Kinyon acknowledged that the inclusion of Love Canal and Niagara Falls resulted in the tour being somewhat 'non-conventional' and Mr. Romanchock related the importance of sharing the history of Love Canal with attendees.

Mr. Schwendy will join Mr. Williams June 3 in performing a site reconnaissance in connection with the October 18-20 Boonville/Black River Canal **Fall Study Tour**. Adirondack Architectural Heritage and the Hudson River-Black River Regulating District will be invited to provide background information for the tour, which will also include the Forestville Feeder.

Mr. Williams suggested that the Society consider a **2025 Spring Study Tour** to the Amsterdam/Schoharie area of the Central Mohawk region. He also raised the question about the future of the State Canal Conference after the 2025 World Canals Conference. Mr. Miles provided an overview of the June 24-26 **World Canals Conference** in Poland, which will be attended by 10 delegates from New York State. Due to Andy Kitzmann having left the Erie Canalway Commission for the Hudson River Valley Commission, Patrick Stenshorn has assumed the co-chairmanship of the 2025 World Canals Conference along with Sharon Leighton. The 'Call for Papers' for the World Canals Conference is expected to be issued soon, Mr. Miles stated. The 2026 World Canals Conference will take place in China.

Mr. Schwendy announced that the **2025 Winter Symposium** will take place March 1 at Monroe Community College. Much of the programming will present topics dealing with the Erie Canal

Bicentennial. Mr. Schwendy noted that he needs assistance handling registration for the Symposium.

Mr. Williams reported that C&S Engineering continues to work on the plan to move the ***Lois McClure*** from Seneca Falls and transport it by trailer to the Port Byron Erie Canal Park. The Society has applied for a permit to take core samples from the Port Byron site and at the “sugar beet” site. The boat would be moved from its current mooring in Seneca Falls to the “sugar beet” site by Tour Boat US. The plan being developed for the Port Byron site would include a cradle to hold the vessel. Currently, Mike Riley is paid to inspect the *Lois McClure* every two days and to make sure that the vessel is not taking on water. Insurance on the boat has been extended another six months at a cost of \$7,500, a marine survey has been completed at a cost of \$4,500, and approximately \$1,000 has been expended on marine supplies. A \$24,000 Canalway Infrastructure Grant was approved April 15. When completed, the C&S Engineering plan will be transmitted to the US Army Corps of Engineers; according to Mr. Williams, the Corps of Engineers understands the intent of the Canal Society in placing the *Lois McClure* in the un-watered canal prism at Port Byron and is willing to consider workable solutions to the wetland delineation. Mr. Williams concluded his report by announcing that former members of the *Lois McClure* crew at the Lake Champlain Maritime Center are expected to serve as docents with the boat during the June 7-9 Seneca Falls Canal Fest.

The Canal Society was awarded a \$25,000 Erie Canalway Infrastructure Grant for the continued **archeological survey** work by Art Cohn in Seneca Lake. Mr. Williams intends to apply for a State Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) grant by July 31. Applications are due by mid-July to the NYS Council on the Arts for operating assistance; Mr. Williams hopes that the Canal Society will be invited to apply for 3-year grants from NYSCA soon.

In addition to his written report, Mr. Wiles pointed to the April 5 report by Robert Brown as a follow-up to his and Barry Oaksford’s Thruway Authority visit to the **Port Byron Erie Canal Park**. The NYS Tourism Industry Association (NYSTIA) tourism display now located at the Port Byron Visitor Center is a valued improvement, Mr. Wiles stated. The re-opening of the Port Byron Thruway Rest Stop west of the exit from the Thruway to the Port Byron site has already resulted in a significant drop in visitation to the Canal Park, he explained, resulting in a decrease in sales as well. Ms. Seamans reported on the Route 38 billboards that had been created with the assistance of Port Byron BOCES graphic art students. Additionally, Port Byron High School seniors and juniors participated in making vegetable gardens at the Park, and Mr. Wiles credited senior class students from Port Byron for assisting with this year’s Canal Clean Sweep.

Mr. Williams requested that the Board authorize the Executive Committee to proceed with the purchase and installation of **heat pumps at the Erie House**. A \$20,000 estimate has been obtained from one contractor. This request was approved by the Board on a motion by Mr. Schwendy, seconded by Ms. Fontanella. Ms. Seamans noted that in addition to the purchase of the heat pumps, the heating and cooling distribution systems will have to be revised.

Similarly, Mr. Williams requested that the Board authorize the Executive Committee to approve bids for **restroom renovation at the Samuel Center for Canal Research**. Plans for the restroom renovations have been completed by Crawford & Stearns and a total of approximately

\$68,500 in grants have been secured to undertake the work. However, bids to date have ranged from between \$60,000 to \$130,000. This request was approved on a motion by Mr. Hatch seconded by Ms. Rebeck.

Mr. Kinyon informed the Board that Canal New York will actively encourage canal stakeholders throughout the state to attend and participate in the upcoming round of public information meetings being conducted by 'The Agency' on behalf of NYPA and the Canal Recreationway Commission regarding **Canals 2050**.

The Board agreed to change the next **Board of Directors meeting** from August 17 to August 24. Other upcoming meetings are November 2 and January 11, 2025.

On a motion by Mr. Miles seconded by Mr. Schwendy voted to adjourn the meeting at 12:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
David R. Kinyon, Secretary