

**Meeting Minutes of the
Executive Committee of
the Board of Directors of
the Arizona Historical
Society**

December 18, 2023

Mission: Connecting people through the power of Arizona's history.

Minutes

1. **Call to Order** – By President Linda Elliott-Nelson 12:01 pm.
2. **Roll Call** – Secretary Deborah Bateman
 - a. **Present** – Robert Ballard, Deborah Bateman, Linda Elliott-Nelson, Thomas Foster, Linda Whitaker, Bruce Gwynn, James Snitzer
 - b. **Absent** – Desirae Barquin
 - c. **Staff** – David Breeckner, Vince Bradley, Rebekah Percival, Liz Kapp
 - d. **Guest** – Kelly Corsette, AHS Board Member
3. **Minutes** - Discussion and action, if any, to approve the draft Minutes of the November 13, 2023, Executive Committee meeting.
 - a. Motion to approve minutes of November 13, 2023, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes as submitted unanimously approved. (Linda Whitaker, Bruce Gwynn)
4. **Call to the Public** – Linda Elliott-Nelson
 - a. No members of the public present.
5. **Sanguinetti House Museum and Gardens (SHM) – David Breeckner, Bruce Gwynn**
 - a. **Discussion** – David Breeckner stated that AHS has drafted out a rental agreement with Yuma County Historical Society (YCHS) and shared this draft with the Executive Committee and Yuma County Historical Society. Bruce Gwynn said he had not received this draft. Other Executive Committee members noted that they had received a copy of the draft rental agreement.

Bruce Gwynn stated that the Yuma County Historical Society has been very successful at fundraising. This fundraising includes:
 - \$10,000 for AC replacement of two units
 - \$28,000 for wrought iron fence

- \$5,000 for the first Garden restorations
- \$10,000 for Jack Mellon restoration
- \$5,000 for side door from Jack Mellon back room
- \$130,000 for landscaping of Molina Block
- \$20,000 Christmas bonuses for staff over 15 years
- \$3,000 for securing windows of Molina Block Building (Theft problem)
- \$8,000 engineering study for the restoration of the Molina Block
- \$5,000 Restoring lawns and sprinkler renovation from this summer neglect
- \$6,000 Palm tree removal (fire danger to museum)
- \$10,000 in support for supplies, projects, summer camps, etc. over 10 years
- \$160,000 restroom construction

Grand total of \$400,000

Committed:

- \$1,000,000 restricted funds for Yuma County Historical Agriculture Display

Redondo Day Dinner and Auction has earned over \$750,000 over the past 12 years due to community support.

Bruce added that he will have letters of support from the following areas in the Yuma region:

- Mayor Doug Nichols and City Manager of Yuma –
 - o Work around of \$40,000 water meter for restrooms. A willingness to share in the yard maintenance of the properties equaling about \$10,000 per year.
 - o City of Yuma and Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area took on the responsibility of managing the failing Yuma Territorial Prison and the Quartermaster Depot (Colorado River State Historic Park) and has been very successful with both.
- Yuma County Supervisor Jonathan Lines and County Manager Ian McGaughey – Have offered their grant writing personnel to look for applicable grants for our ongoing restoration projects, in particular, the adobe Molina Block building which has been untouched by the state for over thirty years.
- Board President Shelley Mellon, Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, has offered to share expertise, resources and personnel in support of programming, special events, and outreach activities.
- Yuma Downtown Merchants Association President, Chris Wheeler, has offered their support in this endeavor. Old Town Yuma has experienced a resurgence in recent years that has not been seen since the 1950's and 1960's. He sees the Sanguinetti Museum as an integral piece of the attraction to the downtown area. He feels that our programming and fundraising activities have become an important part of the downtown cultural and civic scene.

Bruce Gwynn added that all this support is occurring in the Yuma County community, which is very tight collaboratively due to agriculture and its residents committing to a unique place to live. The Yuma community is looking forward to more local input on programs and exhibits in their area. YCHS is interested in doing more research on the history of Asian grocery stores in the area, the history of braceros and their descendants in Yuma, the history of Latinos and African Americans in the Yuma area, additional

Sanguinetti Museum exhibits telling the history of Yuma through the eyes of EF Sanguinetti and other pioneers, and the development of more diverse history advocates in the region.

David Breeckner stressed that this meeting is not seeking approval of a rental agreement but looks for a focus on the direction of AHS and an immediate change in who is operating the Sanguinetti House and Gardens (SHM). The lease shifts the gift shop at the SHM to the Yuma County Historical Society (YCHS); store items to be given back to YCHS at no cost; YCHS to have control over SHM exhibits, events, and the grounds; and that it provides for continuing access/admission for AHS members to the SHM. YCHS is to honor those bookings scheduled for Spring 2024 by AHS. AHS has agreed to \$7500 for utilities and maintenance; this amount is the same as for similar facilities under AHS rental agreements.

Linda Whitaker stated that she is a fierce advocate for Yuma and is convinced Yuma has the local support to sustain operations at SHM. She said she wanted to ensure that Executive Committee members knew what they were voting on.

Bruce Gwynn stated that this action would save around \$280K for AHS. YCHS current funds are restricted to the new agriculture museum and funds cannot be mingled. Bruce said he is requested \$50K for 3 years for support in taking over SHM operations.

Kelly Corsette stated that Yuma is a model. Kelly added that he is not an Executive Committee member and does not vote in this group; however, he stressed there needs to be an overall AHS message developed since this is a significant change for AHS.

Deborah Bateman added that Kelly Corsette's message was well stated. Yuma is a shining star. She would like to know how divestiture fits into the overall AHS strategy and vision and said that we need an ultimate vision on AHS.

David Breeckner responded that AHS is looking at a built-in budget deficit. Removing AHS from certain sites was added as a long-term resolution to financial issues to the 2023 revised Strategic Plan. The governor's office has been contacted for a budget increase; however, the latest word is that there will be no budget increase for FY 25. Yuma had been brought up as a potential site change due to the strength of local support. Current discussions are looking at a short-term lease plan, with a long-term plan that could include divestiture. David added that he had provided an SHM budget list of \$274K/year to Bruce Gwynn; \$45K was built into the current rental agreement. This lease agreement would take AHS halfway to the current budget deficit. Tucson and Tempe AHS facilities have the concentration of staff, revenue, and activities. David met with the Northern Arizona Pioneer Historical Society (NAPHS) on December 15, 2023, and NAPHS is aware of AHS conversations with YCHS regarding this direction.

Linda Whitaker reminded the group that this meeting is not the place to negotiate amounts on funding; however, she stressed that AHS still needs an overall message and a definitive plan.

David Breeckner brought up that there was an article in the Arizona Daily Star that discussed the budget issues and the discussions with Yuma. David added that he does have general messages ready for the public and can also disseminate these through AHS membership.

Linda Whitaker brought up that if board members receive contact from reporters or the public, they should refer these individuals to AHS.

Deborah Bateman stated that we need to succinctly state what AHS represents so that board members know what they are supporting through AHS.

David Breeckner responded that members support the AHS mission and the Journal of Arizona History and that AHS supports historical societies across the state.

Linda Elliott-Nelson stated that this rental agreement represents a win-win scenario. AHS is able to reallocate budget funds in needed areas with the transition of operations to YCHS, and YCHS is able to have more local control and support of SHM with the lease agreement.

Tom Foster brought up that he had met Bruce Gwynn at the Hilton Gardens Inn some years ago, which led to the partnership with AHS and the SHM. He added that Yuma has done some amazing things and that he supports Bruce with this direction.

A motion was made to formally suspend all AHS planned operations and future activities at the SHM and Jack Mellon Mercantile through FY25, and to approve transferring operations to the Yuma County Historical Society (YCHS) for the remainder of FY24 and FY25 through a facility lease agreement. (Tom Foster, Deborah Bateman)

Bruce Gwynn brought up that he would like to see this discussion to include AHS including \$50K/year to YCHS for 3 years included in the rental agreement.

Tom Foster amended his above motion to include adding \$50K to the rental agreement for YCHS. Robert Ballard seconded the motion.

David Breeckner stated that if the group was moving forward on this amendment, that these \$50K should come from operational reserves.

Vince Bradley noted that AHS has another building under lease and that this amount would set a precedent for AHS on lease agreements.

Tom Foster agreed that Vince made a key point in this setting precedent and said that he wanted to wait for Linda Whitaker to re-connect to the meeting before going forward.

Bruce Gwynn suggested that the \$50K be amended to one year for YCHS taking over the services at SHM. This amount, he stated, was needed as insurance to help YCHS with the transition to operations and be successful.

Linda Whitaker rejoined the meeting through the phone.

Tom Foster rescinded his amendment to the original motion.

Robert Ballard stated that he respects the comment that Vince Bradley made about precedent but added that the situation with Yuma is different. The funds requested by Bruce Gwynn are to help Yuma get on its feet and Robert added that the Brown House was already operating.

Tom Foster stated that there are two separate planning discussions regarding Yuma: one, short term; and another, long term. Vince Bradley agreed that this meeting is talking about the rental agreement and that divestiture is a separate conversation.

Tom Foster repeated his original motion to formally suspend all AHS planned operations and future activities at the SHM and Jack Mellon Mercantile through FY25, and to approve transferring operations to the Yuma County Historical Society (YCHS) for the remainder of FY24 and FY25 through a facility lease agreement. Deborah Bateman seconded. The motion was approved unanimously, with the exception of Bruce Gwynn who abstained.

Tom Foster brought up that this group should continue the discussion on funds and that he would not want this topic to get lost.

Linda Whitaker asked if the group should go forward without the \$50K request from YCHS and if this request should be kept separate from the record.

David Breeckner reiterated that this motion was for a site steward agreement. A stipend or operational stimulus could be brought forward to pay a third party to operate a site.

Linda Whitaker asked if the \$50K funds could be forthcoming under a separate contract.

David Breeckner said that the \$50K could come out of the investments account. The request from the Executive Committee could be to expend funds for \$25K for 6 months and \$50K for 12 months.

The following motion was made: to authorize AHS to develop and execute a contract of services with YCHS for \$50,000 to be disbursed in two increments across the remainder of FY24 and the first half of FY25, with those funds to be withdrawn from the AHS Investment Funds. (Linda Whitaker, Robert Ballard). The motion was approved. Bruce Gwynn abstained from voting.

6. Board Update – David Breeckner

David Breeckner advised that AHS has hired a new Chief Financial Officer who will start next Tuesday. The new Chief Financial Officer has military finance experience, has earned an MBA and is pursuing a CPA. This position will be based out of Tucson. Rebekah Percival stated that there are strong candidates for some of the vacant positions in her area. David added that other positions that are vacant have been posted. Two more staff have resigned. David added that the bonuses had been approved and the first amount (half of the bonus) had been paid last week. The second half of the bonus will be paid in 3 months. David stated that AHS is reallocating funds from the closure to positions.

David Breeckner added that an article regarding AHS, the holiday closure, the conversation with Yuma, and the budget challenges appeared in the Arizona Daily Star. It was a fair and balanced article. The reporter has covered AHS in previous articles, which were also fair and balanced.

David Breeckner observed that the overall shutdown has allowed the workforce to get facilities work done, such as repairing drains and fire compliance.

Vince Bradley noted that finances are moving forward. Marketing is working on a development plan and seeking out opportunities. Grants are moving forward, and AHS is receiving applications for grant renewals. Events are being booked for January and February 2024.

David Breeckner noted that AHS is developing an MOU with a new partner, Listen Up, that uses Artificial Intelligence to replicate speech patterns and turn current language into free local information in 25 different languages. This is integrating modern technology into the visitor's experience. He added that AHS is working with the state Attorney General to update language in documents. David added that there was a "Tech the Halls" mixer with the Arizona Tech Council at AHS to encourage collaboration and support on exhibits, such as the exhibit in Tempe with U-Haul.

David Breeckner observed that discussions with the state continue for new construction in Tempe for a new archives annex (13,000 square feet). The current archives are housed in offices and classrooms; \$15M has been requested from the state.

Linda Whitaker attended a tour in Tucson of 3 sites. One site has been deleted from the list. Bill Ponder is working in the Tucson area to affirm the city's support for land. Linda Whitaker added that Bill Ponder will begin conversations with the University of Arizona as well. AHS has contracted for an appraisal of the Arizona History Museum in Tucson to determine its current market value.

With the mention by David Breeckner for the annual performance review of the AHS Executive Director, Linda Elliott-Nelson announced that she had asked Deborah Bateman to chair the Performance Review Committee this year. Deborah added that

Robert Ballard and Linda Whitaker have agreed to be on this committee and that the performance review will include a self-evaluation from the Executive Director as well as input from AHS board members. They are focusing on a deadline of January 31, 2024, for this performance review.

7. Confirmation of the Executive Committee meeting schedule for 2024.

Linda Elliott-Nelson shared the proposed slate of meeting dates for the Executive Committee in the 2024 calendar year. The recommended dates were accepted without discussion or issue with the exception of December 30, 2024, which is still up to discussion given its placement between holidays.

8. Announcements – Linda Whitaker announced that the legislative hearing on the AHS Sunset Review will be held on January 10th or 11th, 2024. The AHS Executive Director and a liaison are allowed to attend. At this meeting, the findings of the AHS Sunset Review should be shared.

9. Adjournment by Linda Elliott-Nelson at 1:21 pm.

Dated this 19th day of December 2023.

Arizona Historical Society

Linda Elliott-Nelson, Board President

The Arizona Historical Society does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the administration of its program and services as prescribed by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Persons with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation such as a sign language interpreter or alternative formats, by contacting AHS Administration at 520-617-1169. Requests should be made as early as possible to allow time to arrange for the accommodation.

Upcoming Executive Committee Meetings
Noon and Virtual unless announced otherwise

- Please use the following link as a hyperlink to solicit online registrations. It has been set up to work (individually) for all Executive Committee meetings in 2024.
- <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUlc-2hqDIsG9QarPDKi819C7uUohXboP9Q>

All meetings are hosted and live-streamed via Zoom.

January 22, 2024; February 26, 2024; March 26, 2024; April 29, 2024;
May 20, 2024; June 24, 2024; July 22, 2024; August 26, 2024; September
23, 2024; October 28, 2024; November 25, 2024; December 30, 2024 (to
be discussed)

Upcoming State Board Meetings
Noon and Virtual unless announced otherwise

- Please use the following link as a hyperlink to solicit online registrations. It has been set up to work (individually) for all State Board meetings in 2024.
- <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAod-2opj4qHNEcUWuowtZ2nJI5HaZEciYX>

All meetings are hosted are live-streamed via Zoom.

January 26, 2024; March 29, 2024; May 31, 2024; July 26, 2024; September 27, 2024;
December 6, 2024