



Elgin County Museum Advisory Committee Meeting

February 15, 2023

Elgin Heritage Centre

Present: Chair- Amanda VandenWyngaert, Vice Chair- Kim Teuscher, Jennifer Beauchamp, Donna Lord, Charlie Jenkins

Council Representatives: Mayor Dominique Giguère and Mayor Mike Hentz

Regrets: Joan Mansell (Secretary)

Staff in Attendance: Brian Masschaele, Mike Baker, Ally Shelly (recording secretary),

Before the meeting is called to order, advisory members introduce themselves to the committee's new council representatives Mayor Dominique Giguère and Mayor Mike Hentz.

1. Appointment of Officers and Confirmation of Member Terms

Members confirmed willingness to continue their appointed positions.

Amanda VandenWyngaert to remain in the position of chair.

Kim Teuscher to remain in the position of vice chair.

Joan Mansell to remain Secretary.

Elgin County Museum Advisory Committee 2023 Members

- Amanda VandenWyngaert, Chair (2nd year of second 4-year term, 3rd year as Chair) - Museum liaison member
- Kim Teuscher Vice-Chair (2nd year of second 4-year term, 2nd year as Vice-Chair) – Member-at-large
- Joan Mansell, Secretary (2nd year of fifth 4-year term, 8th year as Secretary) – WI member (east)
- Jennifer Beauchamp (2nd year of first 4-year term) – Museum liaison member
- Donna Lord (3rd year of first 4-year term) – WI member (west)
- Charlie Jenkins (4th year of second 4-Year term) – Agricultural representative
- Councillor Dominique Giguère, County Council representative
- Councillor Mike Hentz, County Council representative

2. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m. by Amanda VandenWyngaert, chair.

3. Additions to the Agenda

Correction to the agenda - 1. Election of Officers and Confirmation of Member Terms Item should read Appointment of Officers not Election of Officers.

*Moved by Donna Lord to approve the agenda,
seconded by Jennifer Beauchamp. Carried.*

4. Approval Minutes from November 2nd, 2022.

Moved by Charlie Jenkins, and seconded by Kim Teuscher that the minutes from the September 7th, 2022 meeting be approved as presented. Carried.

5. Correspondence

a) Councillor Appointments and Amended Terms of Reference

Brain Masschaele circulated the memo appointing councillors Dominique Giguère and Mike Hentz and the amended terms of reference to the by-law, which now includes two members from council.

7. Curator's Report

Mike Baker updated members on museum projects.

Working on installing new exhibit Cycling: An Unspoken History since the last travelling exhibit closed on January 7th.

Inspiration for this exhibit came about through an acquaintance with the collector Rick Wolfe. We were able to call on him to attend the unveiling of the bike murals in Port Bruce last May and to provide a high-wheel bicycle demonstration and we also invited him to come to a bike event we held in partnership with the city of St. Thomas last September.

We did a small bike show with him in 2012 here – but I actually go back almost 25 years to a show I did at Museum London.

There are a lot of good reasons to organize a show like this - the County's role in early cycling and in the promotion of improved roads that came in its wake.

The exhibit ties in well with the County's cycling tourism initiatives.

Also, we intend to hold another cycling event this year with St. Thomas.

The show itself focuses on the period from the 1860s to 1890s – when the bicycle evolved into what we have today. The bicycle sparked the motor industry – the good roads association – involved women on a somewhat equal basis. Several Canadian products including the Dodge Bothers bicycle made in Windsor.

Also, many accessories, trophies, ribbons and a number of tools and equipment used in bike repair.

The rack card is our main promotion tool - which we produce every year with our exhibit line up. It is sent to the provincial tourist info centres and the members of our regional museum network and Library branches. We did have a distribution system through Daytripper, which is no longer available. We were not entirely sure how effective this was as we usually ask visitors how they heard about us. The last visitor to the Cipher/Decipher exhibit – brought their rack card with them.

The back of the card normally listed other sites and museums in Elgin County, this year we are promoting cycling options. I consulted Lindsay in tourism about what we should put on the back.

The card includes main cycling routes, which has locations online for detailed bike trails, and a printable version of the trails, virtual tours for Sparta and the High Wheel Way through Malahide (two others are being developed) and the barn quilts and the new cycling murals the Bushell Estate funded.

The new exhibit already has three booked tours. Both the Elgin Historical Society and the Antique Club will be coming. The Golden K Kiwanis called me for my annual appearance – I talked them into leaving the basement of Knox Church to see the exhibit.

We picked Family Day, Monday February 20, 2023 to open, which gives enough time to install it, but it's also a good day for us, we had about 70 visitors at our Family Day events before the pandemic.

Ally always finds crafts for the kids to make related to whatever the exhibit is.

Rick will be attendance to do informal tours.

I have already received some good coverage in the Time- Journal, Eric Bunnell has always supported the museum; and I did an interview with Ian McCallum on MyFM yesterday.

In addition to talks and the opening, we are working with the library and tourism office in St. Thomas to set up a cycling day event on the 27th of May. A self-guided tour is being created, starting at the tourist kiosk in St. Thomas and following the Steam Whistle Trail, a printed guide with historical notes on the way will guide people along the tour. We did a similar event in September last year, which turned into a walking tour. Given the exhibit we decided to move up the date and provide an actual cycling component. At the event we will have some activities with Rick touring the show and possibly demonstrating the high-wheel bicycle. The Archive's green screen would be ideal for this, if we can find some space.

The other show we're installing this year on the opposite wall will be an overview of Elgin County's history. Mainly graphics while we assess what space is needed for traffic.

Three periods will be featured, the original Talbot Road, the railway which celebrates its 150th anniversary this year and the creation of a road system sparked by the arrival of the bicycle then the car.

As we just passed our 5th anniversary here in the new building I thought we should see where we were in our recovery from the pandemic. And how we plan to approach it. We are getting traditional groups back, but mostly heritage groups. We will cast a wider net – retirement homes who provide outings; churches to attract new visitors.

Certainly, while this show is on and we have it until the end of July we'll be in touch with area cycling clubs, with an invite.

Rick is his own publicity machine, he has a wide network and even has a plan to shoot a video of the show for YouTube.

Happy to say we've just had our first booking for the grade four medieval studies program.

Ally has a package and will give an overview-

Ally circulated the teachers resource guide for the medieval education program and reported that we have one school booked in April, they are a repeat booking, a private school which usually brings about 16 students.

The resource guide is sent to the Thames Valley District School Board and the London Catholic School Board, we will try to reach out to some home school associations. The program runs for about 5 hours, there are five activity stations; Chainmail/Coins, Illuminations, Catapults, and Brass Rubbing.

Ally also reported that we started returning to the long-term care homes late last year with our Edu-Kits, and circulates the program information. Terrace Lodge has booked for March. These education kits were created as an outreach program for seniors, giving them something to do in the homes and to help keep them stimulated, we frequently attend stroke recovery groups.

The program information is sent to the homes early each year, and we plan on reaching out to the new retirement homes that have opened in the last few years - Seasons, Talbot Manor and Royal Oak.

We have also finally been invited back to the Elgin Manor to fill the display cases. We have two new displays- Travelling Salesman Miniatures and a Dairy Bottle Collection.

Mike continues to share targets for 2023. Circulating Heritage Centre statistics and attendance and bookings to date for 2023.

We have set some pretty modest targets, but it gives us something to aim for. The meeting numbers look high, but we're counting the rug hookers who are coming every week.

Metric	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Attendance	3748	3259	945	828	1537
Booked Tours	22	8	1	1	5
School Groups	11	9	0	0	1
Bookings/Meetings	23	22	8	1	36
Events/Programs	14	18	2	0	6
Offsite	7	6	5	1	1
Edukit Presentations	7	9	2	0	1
Donation Box	\$2230.95	\$1335.25	\$340.05	\$312.39	\$481.41
Gift Shop (Net)	\$2157.96	\$2014.29	\$675.50	\$755.00	\$2069.86

Heritage Centre closed due to Covid- 19 provincial shutdowns

2020 - Closed March 14, 2020. Reopened to public August 11, 2020 (21 weeks).

2021 - Closed January 5 to March 9, 2021 (9 weeks) and April 6 to July 20, 2021. (16 weeks).

2022 - Closed January 5, 2022 to February 1, 2022 (4 weeks).

Targets for 2023	
Total Attendance	2000
Booked Tours	10
School Groups	5
Meetings	50
Edukit Presentations	7
Donation Box	800
Gift Shop (Net)	200

Museum Bookings and Programs 2023

Attendance to date February 15, 2023 – 145

January

Rug Hooking -

January 16 – 5

January 24 – 8

January 30 – 5

January 25 – Elgin Historical Society meeting – 10

January 31 – Dutton-Dunwich History Book Researchers – 5

Offsite

January 19 - Heritage Port meeting, Port Stanley Hotels – 13

February

Rug Hooking

February 5 – 9

February 14 – 2

February 8 – Library Supervisors meeting – 9

February 9 – Women’s Institute Executive meeting – 5

Upcoming

February 15 – Museum Advisory Committee meeting

February 20 - Family Day

Feb 21- Golden K Kiwanis Tour

Feb 22- Rick Wolf Tour in partnership with the Elgin Historical Society

Feb 23 – Museum and Archives Staff Meeting

Terrace Lodge Edukit booking – March 1

Elgin Historical Society, My Grandma’s War Time Kitchen – March 22

Vimy Lecture– April 5

London Christian Academy, Medieval program school booking – April 13

Antiques Club - May 2

Bike Event – June 26

8. Bushell Projects

This bequest was received in 2020 and \$425,000 was provided for several projects.

- Funding for a position in archives to digitize select collections. Mainly photos and newspapers which go right into the on-line database for public access.
- Series of cycling murals. These have been installed. We are working on interpretive panels for the murals now to provide some background to the themes explored in the works. They will go up on the wall adjacent to the murals. (See attached images of completed Bushell Estate murals).
- Collection acquisition – used a portion to acquire a Jumbo collection.
- Conservation work – Two Whale paintings and a WWI honour roll restored.
- We are also working on the Link trainer to bring it to point where a child can ride in it.
- Augmented Reality experiences.

Augmented Reality Attractions

This has been a rare opportunity for us, something we would never do on our own. This project came with a 12-month researcher's position. Images of the attractions were circulated to members.

With Exar Studios, Engage Art app users visit locations and use their smart phones to experience history and activities through a new visual reality.

These adventures have been completed – seven in St. Thomas most relate to murals, also a memory wall at the veteran's memorial park and engine 5700 at the tourism kiosk.

Five adventures in Port Stanley. The ship adventure is anchored on the Kiwanis monument in Glover Park. Ships pass the bridge and then by touching the screen, the viewer can help unload whatever cargo is on board.

One adventure has been planned for the Heritage Centre related to the Psychiatric Hospital.

Exar Studios - <https://www.exarstudios.com/work/elgin-county-museum-st-thomas>

Port Stanley adventures have not had the same kind of launch and promotion the St. Thomas adventures had, Mike suggested a small show on Port Stanley be mounted at the Heritage Centre to promote the adventures, and showcase some of the artifacts and archival material Heritage Port donated last year.

Former LACAC for Port Stanley after amalgamation became a heritage organization and collected material. Mike attended a talk on hotels and presented artifacts from their collection and others to illustrate the presentation. Ted Halwa, now the president, suggested it would be a good exhibit. It would be a good component and we could use it to acknowledge the group's contributions to the archives and museum.

9. Collection Review

For the past year we have been reviewing the permanent collection to identify unprocessed material and material that does not fit our mandate.

We are now on our third assistant for this project, actually a returning former student, Lauren Donker. She knows the collection well so we're glad she's able to rejoin us.

Almost all of the shelving on the fourth floor has been worked through. After identifying the unprocessed material, we decide if it's to be retained or begin looking to find new homes for the items. New homes have been found for some things and some items have been sent to auction, as per the policy. The fine art has been placed on long-term loan to the St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre and documents have been sent to Archives.

The next material to be reviewed will be the costume collection of about 2000 pieces and the items housed at the Elgin Manor.

At the next meeting Mike plans to report on CMOG (Community Museum Operating Grant) to give members an idea on the process and operational plans. Brian and Mike propose bringing the committee to Elgin Manor at a future advisory meeting, so members can see the museum's offsite storage, see what the museum has and understand the space constraints, the museum is working under.

Brian Masschaele updated the committee on Indigenous outreach plans with the Oneida Nation of the Thames. A partnership has been established to assist them with strategies to develop a material history collection and at their cultural centre. An indigenous artist has been recommended to potentially create a mural that will be displayed on the back wall of the Heritage Centre.

The mural will depict the Oneida arriving in Port Stanley, and walking to their current location. Ideally, the mural will be unveiled at a special event on a significant date, either the anniversary of the walk or on September 30th National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

10. Museum Partner Reports

Jennifer Beauchamp provided an Elgin County Museums Update, including events for Backus Page House Museum and Port Burwell Marine Museum.

Gay Lea Dairy Museum

Craig Steven, the Manager for the museum reports that while the museum is still closed for the season, they will be hosting an antique car group this month for a tour and ice cream making session.

The staff of three is busy planning for their season opening which will include hiring several summer students. Last December they created some displays with the plan to do a large opening event.

Activities last fall include a successful Halloween weekend event and several school groups visiting in October and November.

Elgin County Railway Museum

Rose Tysdale is in charge of Social Media and Marketing, and reports that the museum expects to open as usual Victoria Day weekend to Labour Day weekend. The past summer their hours were Friday, Saturday, Sunday from 11:00AM to 4:00PM, averaging 50 people a day.

They only hosted two events last year: Beerlesque and the Season Finale. Beerlesque had 409 attendees, and the Season Finale had roughly 1200 people over two days. They were the venue for Hexes & Jinxes Mystical Market (hosted by our local Purely Wicked boutique) and they brought roughly 2000 people to the museum.

This past fall the museum went through a big transitional phase with staff, and currently only have two full time on-site staff members.

This coming summer they are solidly booked with weddings, as well as various events, some hosted by the museum, some are simply renting the space. This coming season is going to be functioning very differently than previous years due to the number of weekends which have been booked, and hours are yet to be determined.

Port Burwell Marine Museum

Jennifer Beauchamp, curator, reports that the museum is still closed for the season and will open May 19th and close September 4th. We have advertised for two students to fill the summer positions.

The most notable news is the condition of the lighthouse. It has been determined that it is structurally unsound and will not open this year. It is in danger of collapsing due to damage to its supporting wooden beams.

The summer exhibit that was planned since last fall is, fittingly, on the erosion of Lake Erie shoreline.

Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives

Amanda VandenWyngaert provided an update on the Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives.

The museum is closed for the season, but are having pop up exhibits at both the new building and the old.

Current pop-up exhibit - On Track The Railways of Aylmer and Malahide, Celebrating 150 years of local locomotive history though a look at the area's competing railroad corporations, created in collaboration with the Elgin County Railway Museum will be at 75 Talbot street -

February 19 to 20, 11:00 to 4:00

February 22, 3:00 to 6:00

February 25-26 11:00 to 4:00

An event will be held on February 21 to commemorate the railway.

Upcoming Exhibits

If the Shoe Fits - history of Shoes and Shoe making.

March 6 to November 25, 2023

Witness - an exhibition comprising four decades of local history as seen through the lens of David Richie

April 22 – 7:00 to 10:00

April 23 – 1:00 to 6:00

April 29 - 12:00 to 6:00

April 30- 1:00 to 6:00

11. Committee Member Reports

Donna Lord shared the Women's Institute Report.

With declining membership the Women's Institute have held fewer meetings, they no longer meet in the winter for the convenience of members. The Secretary from the head office at the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario sends out monthly information to all members.

Agriculture representative, Charlie Jenkins reports that the Holstein Association members were pleased to see the John Wise Plow in its new location in the county's administrative building, when they held their meeting last month.

13. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held June 14th, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. at the Heritage Centre.
Proposed meeting dates: September 6th and November 1st, 2023

14. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:19 p.m.

Moved by Jennifer Beauchamp.

Bushell Estate Murals



Port Burwell



Dutton



Shedden



Rodney



Port Bruce



Belmont