



Elgin County Museum Advisory Committee Meeting

June 14, 2023

Elgin Heritage Centre

Present: Chair- Amanda VandenWyngaert, Joan Mansell (Secretary), Jennifer Beauchamp, Donna Lord, Charlie Jenkins

Council Representatives: Mayor Dominique Giguère and Mayor Mike Hentz

Regrets: Vice Chair- Kim Teuscher

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

Before the meeting is called to order Mike Baker introduced advisory members to the museum's Young Canada Works summer student, Anna Lise and Joan Mansell, who was unable to attend the February meeting.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:03 a.m. by Amanda VandenWyngaert, chair.

2. Additions to the Agenda

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

3. Approval Minutes from February 15th, 2023.

*Moved by Donna Lord and seconded by Dominique Giguère that the minutes from the
February 15th, 2023 meeting be approved as presented. Carried.*

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

None

5. Correspondence

a) Crane Plaque

Brain Masschaele circulated a letter of endorsement from MPP Rob Flack recommending the Elgin County Heritage Centre as a new location for the plaque honouring Dr. James W. Crane which was previously located at the Crane Conservation Area located on Iona Road in the Township of Southwold.

Brian distributed the letter sent in 2021 at the direction of the previous council, expressing interest in the acquisition of the plaque, to the owners' legal representation. A verbal conversation followed with the owner's legal representation. To date, there has been no formal response from the property owner or their legal representative expressing a willingness to donate the plaque to the County.

It was suggested that County staff check the location of the cairn to see if it is on municipal property, and if it is included in the road allowance and to determine if the plaque currently at this location is a replica.

6. Curator's Report

Mike Baker updated members on museum projects.

Before updating members on museum projects Mike Baker circulated a copy of the Globe and Mail article featuring the museum's exhibit Cycling: An Unspoken history and guest curator Rick Wolfe

Mike Baker circulated the attendance record. This is the full year's attendance to date divided into categories determined at the beginning of the year.

A category was added and, a target set for the museum's programs.

Family Day, (February 20, 2023) was our opening day for Cycling: An Unspoken History exhibit

Attendance was 105, well above the average of 70 visitors we usually receive for Family Day. Rick Wolfe our guest curator has been very effective in promoting the show – even before it opened. He was likely responsible for about 30 people in attendance on opening day.

The Ride the Whistlestop bike event held May 27th is next on the list with 127 in attendance.

Mike circulated the poster and the cycling guide produced for that day.

This event was billed as a ride which participants could make from either end of the Whistlestop Trail – the branding the two tourist authorities gave to Sunset Drive some years ago when the shoulders were paved. Also links the two surviving stations of the L & PS, a good historical theme.

The weather was good, not too hot for outdoor activities.

Counted 75 visitors, most arrived on a bike – This number only includes those who entered into the Heritage Centre. Added members of two cycling clubs – 28 (one from London), 20 participants listed on

the poster (2 no shows St. Thomas cycles and Tru4u), 4 volunteers – 127 for the day. Probably missed people who did not come into the building.

Great support from county partners. The Elgin County Archives did 33 photos with the green screen, Elgin County Tourism, Community Paramedicine, the Elgin County Library did buttons, and the OPP brought a tent. Two St. Thomas police officers made an appearance.

Considerable assistance from our organizing partners St. Thomas Public Library, they made the promotional poster. Railway City Tourism – placed photos of the tour stops from the archives on their web site. Two volunteers from the Railway City Cycling Club. Rob and Carol Simmons helped organize the event, their persistence made this happen. They booked the non-county participants and arranged the funding (\$500.00) from Doug Tarry Homes.

Cycling: An Unspoken History

The response for the exhibit has been better than expected thanks to the media attention.

Responsible for a record 6 booked tours and a lecture in London,

We have been receiving visitors from quite far afield – anywhere between Toronto and Windsor. Last week we had two friends meet here to see the show one from Midland and one from Windsor.

Many of the local people who come have never heard of the Heritage Centre before they saw the bike show media.

Some people know Rick Wolfe, many don't – they've heard about it from the variety of media he's done. Two CBC programs, Globe and Mail and Rogers cable – the Rogers entry is included because they booked the place to tape the show Next Week Today which included Rick Wolfe and Mike Baker and Carolyn Krahn from Economic Development and Tourism, who was able to participate due to someone cancelling. Rogers wanted the bike show as a back drop.

The big media outlets the Globe and CBC Toronto both came through us to contact Rick and the show has been at least referred to in the interviews.

Good coverage from the Eric Bunnell in the St. Thomas Times Journal, in last Friday's paper had a photo of our costume winner from the bike event.

A lot of our walk-ins are coming to see the bikes specifically.

We're at around 500 visitors for this exhibit, adding that to the bike tours and programming and we're at over 800 for the show.

Given the amount of coverage we're getting it seemed a good idea to extend the show. Cycling: An Unspoken History is extended to September 2, 2023.

The rest of the activity recorded here are meetings, schools and off-site activity.

Meetings are mostly rug hookers in our program list, usually the same 5 people, but reflects use of the building. Other meetings are from our department, and the bike event committee (we don't count ourselves).

Off-site activity includes programs we are invited to contribute to – Sparta and Heritage Port

Last week in London, Mike lead off a speaker's series, Terrific Tales at the Byron Branch of the London Public Library, Rick Wolfe attended with his high wheel bicycle - 21 attended.

Mike asked Ally Shelly to share an update on school programming.

The museum has 11 schools booked between April and June, we have had 359 Students so far, and expect another 67 approximately, for the medieval education program.

Total for the school year will be near 426 students. At \$9.00 a student we will make \$3861.00

Technically, we have booked 14 Schools with a total of 16 days programming, some schools required two days due to our limited space in the building, we have set our maximum at around 50 students.

3 schools cancelled - John Wise Public School (cancelled 2nd day), Lambeth Public School (2-day booking cancelled) and John Robarts Public School. London Schools seem to have the most difficulty with busing. There is currently a driver shortage and busing is increasingly expensive.

We have had great success this year with booking Elgin County or St. Thomas schools. Our location was close by, so it was easier to secure a bus.

Mike Hentz, asked about subsidization for busing.

We have received donations from the Stirling Chapter IODE in the past for education purposes, this has helped keep our costs low. If the museum was to consider subsidizing busing for schools a policy would be required to determine distribution. Staff will look at options for offering assistance.

School programming largely depends on volunteers. About 10 volunteers are circulated through to help with the activities. We would not be able to run this program effectively without their dedication.

Mike circulated the Elgin County Joint Multi Year Accessibility Plan Heritage Centre, and explained the Community Museum Operating Grant offered by the Ontario Government. The grant is applied for every year, about \$15,000 in received each year, this hasn't changed in 15 years

The application requests a series of statistics that are measured against the ministry's requirements. Total number of open hours for example – minimum number 1060 hours and 180 days. Other statistic include attendance, volunteer numbers, programs, school visits, and a detailed analysis of revenue and expenses. This requires us to recast our year-end statement into categories they recognize such as - salary, exhibit, education, acquisition, curatorial, and conservation.

To retain funding the museum is obliged to meet a series of standards set by the province to ensure the museum is managing the collection, maintaining its buildings and serving the community in a way that reflects acceptable museum practice.

There are 10 standards. Usually the ministry selects a particular standard each year and requests a report from the applicant on current activities that indicate how it is meeting the requirements of the selected standard.

This year we have been asked for our accessibility plan – which should draw on the physical plant standard and the community standard.

Fortunately, the County has an Accessibility Plan and an Accessibility Coordinator Sarah Savoie.

However, there is only one reference to the Heritage Centre in the whole plan and we are required to submit a plan with goals and timelines specific to the museum.

The requirement was taken to Sarah. The plan was reviewed and we itemized the elements that would constitute a separate plan for the museum and attached a time line to them.

Elgin County Joint Multi Year Accessibility Plan Heritage Centre is the result.

Most of the requirements are for training to ensure that staff, the committee and our volunteers are aware of our requirements under the accessibility legislation. There are areas such as content creation for online use that must adhere to guidelines. This will require training as well, which would cover content created for the database and for social media.

There is also an opportunity to state that we will be mindful of visitors with disabilities when designing exhibits. Height of displays and cases, size of printed text etc. and offering alternative ways of communicating the content of a show.

Volunteer recruitment must also be compliant, documents and the process for that will be reviewed.

There are very few physical barriers at the Heritage Centre thanks to the design of the new building. However, Sarah did note we need a procedure for the emergency call button. This needs to be put in place elsewhere in the County.

Also, the front counter is no longer compliant, a new arrangement will be needed there. That is scheduled to be done between 2024-26.

Fortunately, Sarah was already on the agenda for the June 13th council meeting so there was an opportunity for this section to be adopted into the County Plan.

With the permission of the Chair, Mike provided a draft motion endorsing the museum section of the accessibility plan.

Resolved that the Elgin County Museum Advisory Committee endorse the Elgin County Joint Multi Year Accessibility Plan Heritage Centre information as adopted by Elgin County Council on June 13, 2023.

Moved by Donna Lord, seconded by Mike Hentz. Carried.

It is unknown what the ministry will request next, but one document they have requested in the past is the current strategic plan. The museum's previous plan has just gone out of date this year. This plan took the form of assessing to what extent the objectives of the previous plan – which covered 2014-2019 had been met and then setting out steps were required and a time line for achieving them. Building the Heritage Centre covered a few.

Perhaps a start on a revised plan could take the form of a similar summary, outlining which objectives have been met, what remains to be done and any additional objectives that should be added.

This could be submitted in time for the committee to review for the November meeting.

Gift Shop

Net Sales – \$1631.46. Not consolidated by Finance yet. Expenses will be adjusted. We take 20% commission for the few vendors we have.

8. Bushell Projects

This bequest was received in 2020 and \$425,000 was provided for several projects. The major components of the Bushell bequest have been completed.

Signage still needs to go up for the EXAR Augmented Reality experiences in Port Stanley.

Conservation work is pending on an honour roll from WWI.

Cousins of Donna Bushell from Michigan visited last week. Dugald Campbell and family were given an overview of the projects. They are coming to attend the opening of the Three Sisters Stage.

There is one final component of the mural project to complete.

Mike asks Brian Masschaele to update the committee on the Oneida Project

a) Oneida Project

Brian Masschaele circulated Report to County Council recommending the installation of an interpretative mural depicting the settlement story of Oneida Nation of the Thames on the exterior of the Elgin County Heritage Centre and updated the committee on progress on the mural project.

A lead artist, secondary artists and volunteers have been engaged, the work will be completed at the Oneida Cultural Centre. Mike Baker has been in touch with the sign shop to acquire panels and paint samples. On June 22, 2023 Mike will attend a meeting at the Oneida Cultural centre to discuss the mural project.

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.

9. Collection Review

The 4th floor has been fully assessed. What has been retained will be re-shelved along with recent acquisitions which we now have room for and the new locations entered into the database.

The material removed from the collection is around 200 items, pending additions. This may seem high, but there a lot of small items such as glass bottles or vials with no information or

distinguishing features. This material will now be photographed and offered to other institutions.

This provides enough space to start assessing the textile collection, which will be our focus for the summer. A start on reviewing the Elgin Manor storage can take place soon as well, so that everything we wish to transfer will go out at the same time.

10. Museum Partner Reports

Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives

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

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

The pop-up exhibit - On Track the Railways of Aylmer and Malahide, celebrating 150 years of local locomotive history through a look at the area's competing railroad corporations, created in collaboration with the Elgin County Railway Museum at 75 Talbot street, had 150 visitors over the several days they were open. Seeing a large increase in attendance at the new location.

The exhibit - Witness - an exhibition comprising four decades of local history as seen through the lens of David Ritchie saw 350 visitors and raised the museum \$4000.00 from sales of his prints. David Ritchie donated his remaining prints for sale in their giftshop.

Current Exhibit - If the Shoe Fits - History of Shoes and Shoe making in Aylmer runs March 6 to November 25, 2023. This exhibit features the history of over 90 local shoemakers, shoe stores, and stores with shoe departments. They were only able to include a limited number of shoe makers in the main exhibit, the 101 shoe makers or shops that had operated in Aylmer can be found on the additional online exhibit.

The museum will participate in events at Springfield Family Fun Day and the Aylmer Fair.

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

Backus Page House

Backus Page house had their first year open with winter hours and have seen an increase in attendance at all events totalling 423 visitors so far for 2023.

Heritage Farm Show will be held Sept 2 and 4, 2023

Elgin County Railway Museum

Rose Tysdale is in charge of Social Media and Marketing, and opened 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.

This summer they are hosting a few events; Beerlesque, Whiskey, Wine and Chocolate, a comedy night and the Season Finale.

Port Burwell Marine Museum

Jennifer Beauchamp, curator, reports that the museum opened for the season May 19th, 2023. Two summer students have been hired to fill the summer positions.

This summer the exhibit is on Erosion, featuring the little Grand Canyon east of Port Burwell. Using it as an opportunity explain the condition of the lighthouse.

In June, Port Burwell Public School will be visiting the museum to see the exhibit there will be a rope maker on site to do demonstrations.

In July and August the museum will be offering children's programming in partnership with the library in Port Burwell and on Canada Day as an activity the museum will be making Harvard airplane windsocks in connection with the Harvard fly over.

11. Committee Member Reports

Donna Lord and Joan Mansell shared the Women's Institute Report.

Middlesex District had a fundraiser luncheon on April 15th.

Elgin District had their annual meeting at Fingal on May 10th with volunteer hours totalling 1422 hours. The program was on Elder Abuse and Lin McCann showed a video,

Oxford District hosted the SA picnic on June 3rd at the Ingersoll Cheese Museum. Program was on cheese and potluck dishes were made of cheese.

Mary Clutterbuck announced that they have 2 East Elgin students apply for the 4-H scholarship and the winner will be presented in August. They write an essay about the effects of the environment

ACWW had their world conference in Malaysia and 4 Elgin WI members attended. The goal is funding "Rural Women in Action".

Kent District is hosting the Tweedsmuir workshop in August in Highgate. Mary Clutterbuck is Tweedsmuir Convenor and will attend.

The 45th Elgin Historical Show is on August 19, 20 at the Dan Patterson Conservation Area. Local museums are encouraged to present an exhibit and contact Joan Mansell, if interested. Joan circulated the poster for the event.

Yarmouth Glen branch disbanded in May 2023 after 63 years of service.

Member Joanne Erickson made a final contribution to the museum on their behalf.

13. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held September 13th, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. at the Heritage Centre.
Proposed meeting date: November 1st, 2023

14. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 p.m.

Moved by Charlie Jenkins.