

This meeting of the Heritage Toronto Board was held on December 12, 2023, from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at St. Lawrence Hall (157 King St. East, 3rd floor, Toronto).

PRESENT: Liza Chalaidopoulos (Chair) Dilys Chan
 Anne Deck Lori Davison
 Jeff Junke Suzanne Kavanagh
 James Lane John McAlister
 Aaron Sanderson Colin Smillie
 Sarah Watson

REGRETS: Christopher Castellano
 David Ecclestone
 Bradley Evoy
 Councillor Paula Fletcher
 Martin Green
 Sandy Kedey
 Gretchen Mangahas
 Peter Ignazi
 Councillor Gord Perks
 Joel Peters
 Sanah Rizvi

ALSO PRESENT: Allison Bain, Executive Director
 Chris Bateman, Manager, Plaques
 Laura Carlson, Manager, Public Programs
 Mira Celper, Development Coordinator
 Lucy Di Pietro, Manager, Marketing and
 Communications
 Selma Elkhazin, Programs Coordinator
 Andrew Himel, Programs Committee
 Heather Kingdon, Operations Coordinator
 Nadia Sule, Programs Coordinator
 Andrea Switzer, Manager, Development
 Jingshu Yao, Programs Coordinator

A. OPENING REMARKS, AGENDA, AND MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Liza Chalaidopoulos called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory

Ms. Chalaidopoulos made an Indigenous land acknowledgement to start the meeting.

3. Introduction and Opening Remarks by Chair

Ms. Chalaidopoulos welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for making the effort to attend in person. She noted that staff would be giving a year-end presentation at this meeting.

4. Approval of Agenda

HT 23-21: APPROVAL OF AGENDA for the December 12, 2023 Board Meeting of Heritage Toronto. **(carried)**

Moved by Suzanne Kavanaugh, seconded by Dilys Chan and approved unanimously.

5. Declarations of Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

6. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Board Meeting

HT 23-22 APPROVAL OF MINUTES of the meeting of the board of Heritage Toronto held September 27, 2023. **(carried)**

Moved by Colin Smillie, seconded by James Lane, and approved unanimously.

B. CONSENT AGENDA

Sarah Watson pulled one item, the Empire Club plaque approval, from the consent agenda to discuss later in the meeting.

HT 23-23: APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA **(carried)**

Moved by Colin Smillie, seconded by Suzanne Kavanaugh, and approved unanimously.

C. REPORTS

1. CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Ms. Chalaidopoulos updated the board on the Executive Compensation Policy review, noting that the city has offered to assist with writing the new policy. A draft will be made by the city and then sent to the agency to complete the work. Ms. Chalaidopoulos explained that she will reach out to Sanah Rizvi and Sarah Watson, both of whom offered to assist, to develop a plan.

Ms. Chalaidopoulos noted the City's public appointments process is underway. New Board members will be appointed shortly and some existing board-members' terms may be ending. Ms. Chalaidopoulos explained that if a seat is not filled, board members are expected to continue with their position on the board until a replacement member is chosen.

Ms. Chalaidopoulos pointed out that the Development Committee is seeking new members and encouraged board members to reach out to John McAlister if they would like to be part of the committee or know anyone who is interested.

2. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Allison Bain noted that her remarks would be part of the Year-End Report.

3. PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

Sarah Watson noted the Tours Report, Plaques Reports, and the Full Moon Festival Report. She explained that the Full Moon Festival saw many registrants as well as a great turnout at the event itself with 715 registrations and 275 attendees. The event was deemed a great success. Of the plaques discussed at the last meeting, one plaque application is open for discussion and feedback from the board: the Empire Club.

The Empire Club plaque was not recommended for approval by the Programs Committee due to concerns around its colonial subject matter. This led to a greater discussion around deficiencies in the Plaques program, which the plaques team works hard to address. Ms. Watson shared some quotes that were received from members of the Programs Committee regarding the plaque.

Ms. Bain noted that part of the board's mandate is to serve as a voice of the community, and staff welcome feedback on content. Ms. Chalaidopoulos did add the caveat that, although the board and committees provide support and input on Heritage Toronto's projects, it is staff's final decision on how and whether to proceed.

James Lane noted that this issue brings up interesting questions around how the agency seeks to maintain its commitment to producing plaques focusing on equity, diversity, and inclusion, and what plaques help the agency to achieve this goal. He noted it was very important to listen to the perspective of board members such as Bradley Evoy and Joel Peters who have expressed opposition to the plaque. In his opinion, the goal of our programming is to broaden perspectives, not narrow them down. There needs to be a balance between producing plaques with a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion, and plaques that highlight other themes or subjects.

Lori Davison added that plaques are educational tools and open room for discussion. If colonialism is used as a marker for whether to include or exclude, there would be no plaques left in the city. Stories need to be told with all information presented. The Empire Club needs to acknowledge both sides of its heritage and this should be the dialogue.

Aaron Sanderson pointed out that the agency should be considering how to judge whether something should even have a plaque. Many larger organizations have the means to pay for plaques, but does this mean the agency should produce them? Other groups have stories that need to be told but do not have the means to tell them. Does the agency need to do more outreach and encourage organizations to apply for a plaque? How can the agency ensure there is a balance going forward? It should also be considered how the organization (in this case the Empire Club) is willing to face their history. Do they celebrate it? Mr. Sanderson noted these are important questions to consider.

Mr. McAlister added that in the plaques process there needs to be clear criteria as to why a plaque application is or is not approved. It should also be considered, he added, how this may impact other revenue streams such as people's willingness or interest to donate.

Ms. Watson re-iterated that the Programs Committee fully trusts the judgement of staff and their intentions behind producing plaques but noted that discussions such as this were important. She concluded her report by noting that the annual call for tour proposals is now open and encouraged anyone with great ideas to apply.

4. DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Mr. McAlister encouraged the board to donate as part of the End of Year Campaign. He noted it is a key time for fundraising and asked the board to share information about the campaign within their networks. He noted that, if anyone needs assistance with messaging, they can reach out to him. He reiterated Ms. Chalaidopoulos' call for more members on the Development Committee.

Mr. McAlister noted that fundraising experience is appreciated as there are many opportunities to grow individual giving to the agency. While there is strength in the agency obtaining sponsorships and corporate donations, assistance is needed in building a bigger annual-giving donor base.

Ms. Chalaidopoulos pointed out to the board that many companies have programs where staff volunteer hours can be exchanged for a donation to a charity. Mr. McAlister also added that many companies have matching donation programs. They both encouraged the board to explore these within their own companies.

Suzanne Kavanaugh encouraged board members to assist with donor thank-you calls. She added that it is a fun phone call to make and it is great to speak with donors and express the agency's thanks for their support. It is important for the agency to maintain these relationships.

5. MARKETING AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Dilys Chan noted that the tours program resulted in many registrations and, as a result, over 8500 clicks on the Heritage Toronto website, which made over 1.7 million impressions in 2023. She added that there was also an increase in e-newsletter subscribers, which now totals over 10k.

She noted recent media coverage of the plaques team. Chris Bateman and Meg Sutton have been featured on Metro Morning (CBC), Global News, and in The Toronto Star, speaking about the Queen's Wharf Lighthouse, Brass Rail Tavern, and Richview Memorial Cemetery.

Earned media, Ms. Chan explained, is a priority for 2024, and there will be a focus on building relationships with journalists and by leveraging the State of Heritage Report. She noted the recent "Storytelling: Are we Getting It Right?" State of Heritage event was successful, with many attendees and significant participation by emerging historians.

6. FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

James Lane reviewed the financial statements as of November 30, 2023, noting that on the revenue side, individual donations for the year are below budget. He also noted that Awards ticket sales fell below budget as the event did not sell out. However, the decrease in ticket sales was balanced out by an increase in sponsorships. A major success is TD's sponsorship renewal for an additional two years for the Equity Initiative. There was also success given a crowd funding campaigns for plaques and tours performed to budget.

He noted the agency is planning to show a deficit of \$23k which is a direct result of the City appointing a new audit firm which increased audit fees by 280%. Given that the agency must accrue this cost to 2023, and it would be inappropriate to use donor funds, it will be asking the city to cover this deficit.

Mr. McAlister commented that it is encouraging to see tours revenue up and it might be worth continuing to explore the relationship between individual donations and ticket fees. There is room for discussion around the messaging being provided. For example, why is our charity in particular deserving of donors' money?

7. YEAR-END REPORT

Staff presented their 2023 Year-End Report.

Ms. Davison added that it was very interesting to see tours revenue rebound recognizing the new ticket-fee model. However, attendance appears to be almost half of what it was previously. She noted that technically, based on this information, every attendee is now more profitable. She asked what Laura Carlson's hypothesis is as to the lower attendance. Should the agency be investing more in marketing tours because there is a ROI, or is the ticket fee suppressing attendance numbers?

Ms. Bain pointed out that it is difficult to trend behaviors currently, given the blip of COVID impact, but agreed that analyzing attendance and marketing needs was key.

Ms. Carlson noted that there is an increase in attendance compared to 2022, where only some of the tours had a fee associated, so it doesn't seem that all tours having a fee in 2023 is impacting people's decision to attend. However, she explained, it is also worth noting that the tours program now is much different than it was in 2019 where there was no limit on attendance, no registration required, no headsets, and tours were drop-in only. Currently, there is a necessary cap on attendance due to the number of headsets available. The bus tours, which are more expensive, also helped to bolster 2023 tour revenue.

Mr. McAlister pointed out that if the agency is promoting tours, then the conversion rates and drop-off rates can be explored to determine whether to invest more in marketing. Mr. McAlister suggested that there could be deliverables tied to social media and marketing as part of emerging historian tour-development contracts.

Ms. Chalaidopoulos explained that there are many factors to look at: are people joining a tour just because they are interested? Is there a tie to events and timeliness?

Mr. Sanderson asked how the agency will prioritize building relationships with Indigenous communities in the upcoming year and what the challenges are that the agency faces with this. Ms. Bain explained that connecting with Indigenous communities continues to be a challenge and Lucy Di Pietro added that the agency needs to reconsider the model and move beyond one-time asks for projects to a more fulsome relationship. Mr. Sanderson asked if there was an Indigenous office within the City of Toronto. Ms. Bain explained that there is, but it is a very small department and, when last they spoke, the offices noted their priority was economic and housing policies and could offer no assistance.

Jeff Junke noted that a different approach is needed when connecting with the Indigenous community and these relationships will take longer to build. Ms. Kavanaugh echoed Ms. Bain's statements and explained that in her own work she has also faced challenges in forging connections with Indigenous communities.

D. OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Chalaidopoulos drew everyone's attention to the proposed 2024 board meeting dates, noting that two are on Tuesdays and two are on Wednesdays to avoid both major religious holidays and Toronto City Council's meeting dates.

HT 23-24: MOTION TO ADJOURN MEETING

(carried)

Moved by Colin Smillie, seconded by Aaron Sanderson, and approved unanimously.

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.



Liza Chalaidopoulos