

Friends of the Aiken Co. Historical Museum (FOM)
Annual Member Meeting
September 22, 2024 @ 3:00 pm
The Aiken County Historical Museum

Board Members Present: President Chris Jakubec, Liz Nica, Kathy Cunningham, Rachel d'Entremont, Ashley Scott, and Executive Director Lauren Virgo

President Chris Jakubec called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm and welcomed the 30 or so members in attendance. She introduced those current Board members in attendance. She announced that it was time to elect officers to fill openings for FY2025; a quorum was present. She presented the proposed **slate of new officers : President, David Tavernier; Vice-President, Jeanmarie Bronson; Treasurer, Deuce Weinspach; and Communications, Jessica Welton and current member— running for re-election as Special Projects Chair—Kathy Cunningham.**

Continuing Board members include Past President, Chris Jakubec; Secretary, Rachel d'Entremont; and At-large, Ashley Scott. There were no nominations from the floor and Chis called for a motion. **A motion was made from the floor to accept the proposed slate of officers for 2025; there was a second, and the motion carried.**

Secretary Rachel d'Entremont was asked to review the proposed changes to the Bylaws. She said in addition to some minor changes for clarification, four substantial changes were proposed:

- Allow amendments at anytime (currently allowed only at the Annual Meeting) with 30 days' notice
- Permit electronic voting when in-person is not feasible
- Allow for variation in term length of 1-3 years (currently 2 years) to ensure staggered terms
- Add examples of reasons for removal from the Board such as non-attendance and failure to perform duties

A motion was made from the floor to accept the proposed amendments to the Bylaws; there was a second, and the motion carried.

Financial Report

In the absence of the Treasurer, Chris reported that a recent Treasurers Report showed that the finances were in good shape with a net income of \$33,200 for the FY2024. She explained that that income was from membership dues, donations, investments, and fundraisers. The Friends have no liabilities. She thanked the members for their support.

President's Report

Chris reported that it had been a financially successful year with several significant fundraising events: a Low Country Boil, Opera & Broadway Night, Holiday Tea, and the Winter & Summer Lecture Series. She recognized and thanked Liz Nica for her organization of and significant financial donation to the very-well received Opera & Broadway event.

She reported on a grant which allowed for the repair of the BATTERY structure and said that the Friends had contributed over \$21,000 to the Museum for programs and exhibits. Other work of the Friends included Recollections (an oral history), and maintenance of the lawn.

Upcoming events include a Scavenger Hunt—a joint fundraiser with Women of Woodside—in October, the Holiday Tea in December, and the Winter Lecture Series—which Anna Dangerfield and Lil Brannon have agreed to organize—scheduled to start in February.

Chris encouraged those in attendance to support the CPST-5 (Capital Projects Sales Tax) renewal which, if passed, would fund electrical & plumbing upgrades, painting, and improved handicapped accessibility at the Museum.

Museum Executive Director

Lauren Virgo said that the Museum could not operate without the Friends. She said that each day she was excited to come to work in such a beautiful building. She explained that the County covered staffing and operating expenses but the Friends fund all exhibits and educational programs as well as the other touches that make it a museum.

Some financial highlights included: a donation by the Friends of \$21,577 for annual expenses, such as exhibit creation, educational programming, supplies, and artifact preservation; \$5,561 for the Aiken County Accommodations Tax grant for the outdoor equipment, such as exterior lighting, yard games, cocktail tables, a pop-up tent; support Recollections oral history program, which Ian Mini oversees; and the collection of funds to create the Leah Walker Memorial Storyteller's Garden. She reported that the Museum expended almost all of its CPST funds from previous years. This included projects such as the repainting and floor refinishing of major rooms, window tinting, slate roof replacement, and a new security system. The Museum is requesting 1.5 million dollars in the to-be-voted-on CPST 5. These funds will go towards plumbing repairs, repainting and repairing the exterior, finishing the replacement of the slate roof, new carpet, and most importantly, new HVAC units.

This past fiscal year, two exhibits were renovated. With a donation by Women of Woodside, the museum hired a local college student to research and write panels for two newly renovated communities exhibits – the North Augusta exhibit and the LBC-Burnettown exhibit.

She explained that the staff created a new program called Family Fun Days, which brings families to the Museum once a month on a Saturday to enjoy a history-themed activity. Two of the more popular themes were a Circus Day and a Farmers Market Event. They will continue and enhance this successful program in the next fiscal year. Other events that continue to be a success for the museum are the Egg Roll, the Spooky Tours, the Holiday Craft show, and a new program called Heritage Day in which we explore the crafts of early Aiken County settlers.

The new Collections Manager has been working tirelessly to decrease the backlog of artifact accessions, process new donations, and improve the archival collection in preparation for a move to the North Wing. The North Wing, courtesy of the Aiken County Government, will allow for artifact storage facility on the second floor of the former Aiken Elementary and currently the north wing of the Aiken County Public Library. CPST funds from previous years are being used to create usable space, but it will be up to the Friends to provide furniture, laboratory equipment, and archival storage supplies for the actual storage of artifacts. She invited the Friends to visit www.AikenCountyMuseum.org and click on the Collections page to view artifacts that have been processed and placed online.

The Museum hired a new Operations and Education Manager, Mary Rosbach; a new Collections Manager, Melanie Sigman; and promoted Ian Mini to a full-time position as our new Events and Volunteer Manager.

Lauren shared that the Museum's 5-year Strategic Plan is coming to an end this December. They are working on a new Strategic Plan for 2025-2029. This will be a guiding document for the museum and its supporting organizations for the next five years.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned to refreshments to be followed by a presentation from David Tavernier on the life of Tommy Hitchcock.

Rachel d'Entremont, Secretary

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