

**STEELE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Monday, October 20, 2025, 6:00 PM  
Steele County History Center

**Board Members Present:** Tom Bonacci, Dave Effertz, Chris Fiske, Jerry Ganfield, Keith Holman, Patty Jessop, Janis Lueth, Alexandra McGuire, Jane Middlestadt  
Nancy Vaillancourt

**Board Members Absent:** Elizabeth Anselmo

**Additional Attendees:** Members-CJ Brase, Bev Falteysek, Barb Kasper, Deb Lustig, Berneice Schoht, Diane Wilson, Guest-Brandon Thiesse

**Steele County Liaison:** John Glynn

**Staff Present:** MaryAnne Higgins, Amy Lowery, Anne Peterson, Jennifer Thiele

1. **Welcome and Call to Order:** Meeting called to order by Patty Jessop at 6:00 PM
  - a. Determination of Quorum: Dave announced a quorum present.
  - b. Election of a Secretary: Jan Lueth offered to fill in to complete Samona's term for the remainder of this fiscal year ending in December. (M-Lueth/S Dave/P)
2. **Approve Agenda and Consent Items:**
  - a. Action item: Approve Meeting Agenda and August Meeting Minutes and Virtual Vote (M-Holman/S Middlestadt/P)
3. **Finance Committee Report:**
  - a. Brandon Thiesse from Bremer Bank provided an update on the portfolio performance and the transition of Bremer Bank to Old National Bank.
    - i. The portfolio's asset allocation was discussed, showing a balance of 60% equities and 40% fixed income with 1% cash reserve. Cash reserve is in the money market at 4% and still working to grow the portfolio.
    - ii. Brandon presented the portfolio's historical performance, showing positive returns despite market fluctuations. Portfolio is growing.
    - iii. Dave Effertz inquired about management fee, and Brandon explained the fee structure based on assets under management.
    - iv. The portfolio's fixed income and equity allocations were detailed, highlighting the performance of different asset classes.
    - v. Brandon discussed the cash management strategy and the impact of interest rate cuts on the portfolio's cash returns and will provide recommendations to the finance committee.
    - vi. Chris Fiske and Jennifer Thiele discussed the management of the Service Bay account which is primarily in cash and possibility of moving the cash to a more aggressive growth fund with a focus on liquidity needs. Brandon will provide a recommendation for the cash account based on the organization's goals and future plans as well as potential impact of interest rate changes and importance of maintaining liquidity.
  - b. Chris Fiske provided an update on the Finance Committee's activities including September financials and the review of the profit and loss statement and budget review.
    - i. Finances are steady to good.
    - ii. Finance committee has been working on making financial documents more user-friendly and informative.

- iii. Discussion included the performance of the Degner Trust (operations) and the potential increase in monthly distributions. Degner Trust now drawing about 2.8%- will potentially be increasing to 3.5 % return.
- iv. Chris clarified the budget versus actual report showing a strong financial position for the year. September Financials approved. (M Finance Committee/S-Jane/P)
- v. Jane expressed gratitude for the great job that Jennifer and the Finance Committee are doing.

**4. Staff Reports:**

**a. Amy:**

- i. Reports on finalization of stories for Fright Night 10/25 and revisions made to the murder mystery script.
- ii. The Boy Scouts currently have an exhibit in Lange Theatre room.
- iii. Deserae Michelson is a new volunteer from Waseca with print museum experience. She is working Tuesdays and Thursdays to organize the Village Print Shop with the hopes of offering workshops/classes in the future and making it a functioning print shop.

**b. MaryAnne:**

- i. Provided an update on the Onward and Upward Ladies of the Stage event, brunch and panel discussion.
- ii. Shared information about the Land, Air and Water project with the local FFA that will be displayed in the Wenger room. Jerry built some diorama boxes for this exhibit.
- iii. Things have been busy with Mystery dinners, school tours and rentals and preparation for Fright Night. Working on upcoming events including Christmas in the Village, Cookie Sale and Victorian Tea.

**c. Anne**

- i. Fall Celebration 9/13 highlights were shared.
- ii. Lori Rugg/Master Gardener will be providing suggestions for cemetery planting.
- iii. Corrections are being made for 10 of the cross markers in the cemetery.
- iv. There has been a steady stream of visitors to the museum. Museum quest book represents visitors from 21 states and 2 foreign countries in a recent 1 month time period.
- v. The letter from Dr Jim Goddard and his research while visiting the museum and Cottage 11 as well as his personal background and work back in England were discussed. He has an interest in writing a book about the State School. Nancy would like to create a booklet that could be sold in the gift shop with photos and overall history.
- vi. Discussion about the city administrator's efforts to staff the front desk 8 hours daily and to move the museum out of the hallway at City Hall. The importance of the hallway exhibit space for the museum's historical artifacts was emphasized. The need for a long term plan and the potential impact on museum visitors was highlighted. The board expressed support for keeping the museum in the hallway and the importance of working with the city on information for any future plans they may have.
- vii. Anne shared how for many, a visit to the museum is a pilgrimage of sorts. The group discussed the importance of this museum and its value on many levels.

**d. Jennifer:**

- i. Thanked the board for completing the past virtual vote and provided update on search for alternative IT support and decision to stay with Baker Tech. Coordinated Business Solutions out of Burnsville completed a server analysis and backed out with respect for Historical Society's budget.

- ii. The need for upgrading computers to Windows 11 discussed with Baker Tech providing a workaround that is covered with banked hours provided in the annual contract.
- iii. Jane suggested the need to obtain a third quote for the AV system because of the cost discrepancy between the Baker and Sim quotes. Suggestions were offered including Fette in Faribault. John suggested checking with Steele County IT for possible resources. The AV system needs to be included in the annual appeal/marketing. Jennifer will check with the Owatonna Foundation to see if we could re-apply for funds this year.
- iv. Jennifer also reported on the status of various grant applications including the Arts Council grant for Folk Art Workshops (Awardees will be notified in 1/26) and SHIP grant for bike racks and water bottle filling station. Board expresses support for continuing to seek funding and support for the museum's programs and exhibits.
- v. 2026 calendar is being finalized, with plans for adding possible print workshops in addition to genealogy sessions.

**5. Committee Reports:**

- a. Marketing (Thiele)**
  - i. Jennifer covered this in her report.
- b. Governance: (Jessop)**
  - i. Patty reported that work is progressing on updates to Bylaws.
- c. Executive: (Thiele)**
  - i. Update on quotes and claims that will be covered in Building and Maintenance.
- d. Education and Programs: (Thiele)**
  - i. Looking at overview of Murder Mystery Dinners. Looking at adding another dinner in 2026 and also possibly another Victorian Tea.
  - ii. Fright Night 10/25 will also be having give away/donation pumpkins and squash.
  - iii. Looking at offerings for Christmas in the Village.
- e. Acquisitions and Collections: (Ganfield)**
  - i. Jerry reported they are working through donations and evaluating WW 1, 2 and Korean War uniforms and stories. Delivered a WW1 uniform to Historical Museum where the original owner resided.
  - ii. Nancy will be attending the City Council Study Session about the Princess Owatonna statute. Jennifer mentioned that the preliminary plans include placing the Princess Owatonna statue in the atrium here at the History Center. The base will be on wheels for easy movement. Jerry clarified that the statue being discussed was previously on exhibit in City Hall.
- f. Events: (MaryAnne)**
  - i. MaryAnne reminded the group that the membership dinner is 11/6. Tickets are 25\$. Let her know if you want tickets.
  - ii. MaryAnne is looking for bakers for the cookie sale. 4-6 dozen cookies would need to be delivered 12/1 for the cookie sale on 12/3. Discussion followed about pricing which will remain as last year for this fundraiser.
- g. Building and Maintenance: (Ganfield)**
  - i. Jerry reports that the insurance company deemed the damage to the history center and village as wear and tear and not storm related.
  - ii. Jerry also stated that Travis Brockmiller plans to replace the shingled roof over the threshing machine with metal.
  - iii. Dave Effertz suggested challenging the insurance company's decision and getting a second opinion. (M Dave/S Keith/P) Dave will coordinate contacting appropriate source for evaluation.

- iv. Jerry provided updated on the boardwalk project, describing that 200 new boards were installed. A photo was shared of the work completed. Gratitude expressed to Jerry and his crew for the beautiful work completed.
- v. Jerry estimates the cost of the next phase of the boardwalk project at \$3,500, including materials and labor.
- vi. Jennifer suggests pulling \$10,000 from the Tuerk Fund CD when renewing to cover these costs. Board approved pulling \$12,000 from Tuerk CD when renewing to cover cost of the threshing machine roof, boardwalk project and miscellaneous costs. (M-Dave/S Jerry/P)

**6. Old Business:**

- a. None.

**7. New Business:**

- a. Jennifer proposes signing a contract with Jeff Jarvis for the Native American exhibit, with a \$1,000 deposit to start the design work on this project. The board approves signing the contract with Jeff and paying \$1,000 deposit. (M-Keith/S Nancy/P).
- b. Jennifer discussed the need to fill three board positions, including those Samona, Andy and possibly Elizabeth. Bylaws require 12 members. Discussion followed regarding recruiting board members from outside Steele County. Other historical societies don't have county specific restrictions. Currently, the Bylaws state board members need to be Steele County residents. The board noted challenges in recruiting and emphasized importance of seeking representation from outlying townships.
- c. Efforts will continue to recruit new board members who are Steele County residents. Diane Wilson suggested recruiting board members from current committees. Need potential board member names by 11/6.

**8. Open discussion:**

- a. Board discussed the importance of keeping all townships happy and engaged with the society. Member, Barb Kasper questioned ongoing concerns with certain Ellendale residents. Jennifer shared that 2 Ellendale gentlemen who aren't supposed to be on the Historical Society property were recently here with the Publisher of the Steele County Times. Jennifer invited them to this board meeting to share grievances. Jennifer expressed the need for open communication. MaryAnne shared that there are still active volunteers from Ellendale.

**9. Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned by Patty Jessop at approximately 8:00 PM.

**Next Meeting:** Monday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 6:00 PM at the History Center

Respectfully Submitted  
Jan Lueth, Interim Secretary