

Minutes of the October 22, 2022 Zoom Meeting of the
Board of Directors and Advisory Board
Illinois State Historical Society

Attending:

Officers: Dan Monroe, President; John Hallwas, Vice President; Will Shannon IV, Secretary. Ty Rohrer, Treasurer, absent.

Directors: Jenny Barker-Devine, David Joens, Tim Draper, Michael Wiant, Robert Sampson, Mark Flotow, Nathan Pierce, Aaron Lisec.

Advisors: Megan Van Gorder, Jeff Dunn, Tom Dueringer, Kristan Hoganson, Jean Crockett, Jenni Dahl, Caroline Kisiel, Kathleen O'Hara, Rosemary Feurer

Staff: William Furry, Executive Director; Mary Lou Johnsrud, Office Manager, Kim Jones, Clerical Operations

Guest: Jeff McCardle, University of Illinois Press

President Monroe called the meeting to order at 1p.m. He introduced Jeff McCardle, Journals development manager for the University of Illinois Press, who spent the next 15 minutes discussing the Press's involvement in marketing, developing, and promoting the ISHS's *Journal* and *Illinois Heritage*.

Mr. Jeff McCardle said he'd been in discussion with Bill Furry about new opportunities for *Illinois Heritage*. Mr. McCardle shared his screen for his short presentation. He said that 2022 has been a year of ups and downs. He noted that the Society's numbers for institutional memberships has dropped by 50 percent, owing to the ISHS joining the Scholarly Publishing Collective out of Duke University, which means the Society no longer works with JSTOR to provide online access for current content of the *Journal*. He said UI Press did not have a Journals package for libraries when the switch occurred, and libraries did not have a chance to enroll. That situation change this fall and the package will be available for university libraries around the country. Mr. Furry asked if the delayed publication situation for the ISHS Journal had an impact on renewals. Mr. McCardle said that the six-month delay did have an effect, but it was insignificant compared to the larger issue of online access.

He said that next year the Scholarly Publication Collective will provide more availability for to libraries that subscribe. "There are a lot of reasons to be optimistic," he said. The Press, he said, has hired a new marketing person, Michelle Woods, who will be in touch with Bill Furry and Bob Sampson to discuss new marketing initiatives. He said that Bob Sampson has brought the Journal publication calendar around, and he is now providing new issues every 60 days.

Regarding *Illinois Heritage* on line, Mr. McCardle said it will take about 90 days to create the new *Heritage* website at Duke University. He suggested that we just publish PDFs and note make content available in HTML now. Offering *Illinois Heritage* online will present

opportunities to unbundle the ISHS editorial package down the road and make subscriptions to each publication individually. He said it would be unwise to unbundle the publications now, and suggested that a poll among members be taken. Mr. Furry said that we have three years of *Heritage* PDFs available, which could be put up on a platform now. He noted there will be some expense for adding *Heritage* to the platform, approximately \$1,200.00.

Mr. McCardle said a subscription rate increase for 2024 is a good idea, just to keep up with expenses. Ms. Jonsrud said that the Society is losing money due to increased costs such as postage and shipping, and the rates will only go up. "It will cost us more to do more," she said, and membership dues increases are inevitable.

President Monroe asked, "What can we do?" Mr. McCardle said he'd be happy to provide a subscriber list of lapsed libraries who have not renewed for two or three years. He noted that the University of Illinois Library doesn't subscribe to the ISHS *Journal* because they are still part of the JSTOR package.

After Mr. McCardle's presentation, President Monroe invited brief introductions, then asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the July 30, 2022, meeting of the board and advisers.

Motion: Mr. Stanley moved that the board accept the minutes of the July 30, 2022 meeting of the ISHS Board of Directors. Mr. Hallwas seconded the motion, which was approved after minor corrections, which included a few name misspellings and incorrect attendee comments.

President's Report.

President Monroe said the Society should be very pleased with its participation in the 2022 Conference on Illinois History, which by all accounts was successful, well-attended, and well-represented by the Society. More than a dozen members attended and we had three panel discussions, including presentations on publications, archives, and historical sites. He said ISHS involvement presented an excellent template for participation in future conferences. Thanks to Christian McWhirter and Jake Freifeld for making the conference a success. President Monroe he had a conversation with the ALPLM director who was very complimentary of the Society's involvement.

Mr. Monroe said that the naming of the Illinois State Historian is likely to take place this spring. The position is a two-year appointment and candidates will be evaluated by a 3-member panel of members of the ALPLM and ISHS. He said the job description and qualifications for the position are posted online, and that the appointment will complement the candidate's specific discipline. He said they would like to name the person in April. He said he is interested in volunteers to help serve in the committee. He said the committee is looking for nominations.

Lastly, he said the ISHS Executive Committee met to discuss Mary Lou Jonsrud's and Bill Furry's retirement plans, and has asked them to prepare job descriptions so the Society can be proactive and help them affect a smooth transition for when they are ready transition to the "Elysian Fields."

Vice President's Report.

Mr. Hallwas said that he and the membership committee have been involved mostly with membership issues, specifically how other state historical societies address the issue of membership erosion and how they have implemented new policies to get new members and to hold onto existing ones. He said that he had recently met with several historical societies around west central Illinois at the Western Illinois University Library to discuss ways institutions can work together to promote membership, exhibits, publicity, and other items of mutual concern.

Treasurer's report.

Mr. Rohrer was unable to attend the meeting today but said he will be working with Mr. Furry to prepare the 2023 budget.

Secretary's report.

Mr. Shannon said that aside from approving the minutes for distribution, he hasn't done anything additional as ISHS secretary, but he has been working as chair of the Assets Management Committee, on which he would report later in the meeting.

Executive Director's report.

Mr. Furry said that he attended the Illinois Council for the Social Studies (ICSS) fall conference in Palatine and presented a program on "How Schools can work with the ISHS to Local History." He said there were 20 teachers in attendance and each received a complimentary membership in the Society, courtesy of three donors around the state who invested in the teachers as good prospects for the Society. Three teachers who attended the Conference on Illinois History also signed up, as well as three individuals, who signed up for basic memberships.

He said he is working on the 2023 budget and any committees that have special line items to include in the budget should do so before the end of October.

He said that the November-December magazine of *Illinois Heritage* is almost finished, with articles on the Hinsdale Historical Society, Woody Guthrie in Illinois, and contributions from John Hallwas ("Forgotten Voices of Illinois History") and Kristan McKinsey (Illinois Women Artists Series).

Committee reports

Annual Awards.

President Monroe, chair of the awards committee, said that award nominations are starting to come in for judging and that judges are always needed. Ms. Johnsrud said that nomination letters and guidelines for the Orndorff Student Scholarship award and Olive W. Foster Teacher award are on the ISHS webpage and have been mailed out to all the school districts in Illinois. Information will also be in the Nov-Dec issue of *Illinois Heritage*. The date for the annual "Best of Illinois History" awards ceremony will be April. Watch for details online and in your mailbox.

Mr. Furry said the committee is looking for nominations for the new Russell Lewis award for outstanding museum professional, for which we have trouble finding qualified nominees. If you have a nominee in mind, he said, please let the committee know.

Assets Management

Mr. Shannon reported his committee will be meeting over Zoom in two weeks on November 2. He said the ISHS has a new bank management team at U.S. Bank to manage the Society's portfolio and that after an initial meeting this summer, the committee agreed to stay with the bank. He said that in general, despite the optimistic forecasts last winter, "everyone got beat up this spring and summer" due to higher inflation, rising interest rates, and stock market instability. He said that indications are that inflation has peaked and the Society should hold its course. He said that the Society has taken a \$44,000 loan from the bank to meet expenses for the late summer and early fall.

Development Committee.

No report.

Educational Affairs Committee.

Mr. Rohrer was unable to attend the meeting and there was no report.

Historical Markers.

Mr. Stanley, chair of the markers committee, said that it was a "good planting season" for historical markers, noting several plaques are planned for unveiling in coming weeks. Markers "planted" since the last board meeting include the Sheldon Peck Homestead in Lombard, the Prudence Crandall marker in Troy Grove, the Freedom Seekers/Tan Farm marker in Chicago, the Sherritt Chase marker in DeKalb, the Carthage College Marker in Carthage, and the reinstallation of the Garfield Farm marker in La Fox. Markers planned for later this fall include the War Horses of East Alton, the Wilhelmina "Minnie" Vautrin marker in Secor, the Locust Grove marker in rural Williamson County, the East St. Louis Race Massacre, the George Washington Carver Center marker in Peoria, and the Peoria's Moffatt Cemetery marker, Nance Legins-Costley marker, and the Moffatt Cemetery Veterans marker—all in Peoria. Other markers in discussion are the Henry Stephens marker in Springfield, the Atchinson Cemetery in Mt. Vernon, and the Emmett Till marker in Chicago. Mr. Stanley said there had been some discussion about a possible marker to Nichelle Nichols in Robbins, Illinois, as she was an original cast-member for the *Star Trek* television show and later the movies. Her character, Lt. Uhura, was touted as a role model for young African-American women, as she was the navigator on the Star ship *Enterprise*. The ISHS Board unanimously supported this initiative 2023-2024.

Mr. Furry said the Pomeroy Foundation grant money (second installment) has nearly been exhausted, and he will be applying for additional funds in 2023. The program has been very successful, he said, with the premise of 25 new markers exploring alternative narratives in Illinois history reaching new audiences. We can be proud of this effort, he said which has garnered excellent press coverage around the state.

Membership Committee.

Mr. Hallwas talked about his committee's efforts to reach out to other state historical societies to see how they are handling membership erosion issues. He said that the issue isn't just at ISHS but with most membership organizations. Ms. Johnsrud said the Society has about 900 active individual and family members, in addition to historical societies, libraries, and other institutions. Building membership requires expenditures of time and money, she said. Mr. Furry noted that the Society has approximately 50 new members this year (teachers and students) thanks to efforts and donations from individuals.

Mr. Hallwas said he had spoken with the Indiana Historical Society (IHS) leadership and learned that, while the HIS is state funded and its membership is around 9,000, the IHS is also struggled with retention of its membership. He said a new membership initiative resulted in 1,000 new members, but that their renewal rate is about 85 percent, which means their attrition rate requires constant efforts to maintain membership numbers. He said the IHS is considering lowering the basic membership fee to reach new audiences and keep old members.

Mr. Hallwas called on committee member Jenny Barker-Devine for her report on the Iowa and Missouri historical societies. Ms. Barker-Devine said that the Missouri Historical Society (MHS) is a state-funded organization with a very large staff, and one paid person devoted to membership strategies. She said the MHS is streamlining its membership levels and creating discounts to other research facilities for its members. She said the historical society seeks more partnering opportunities and more virtual programming to maximize outreach efforts. She said she had been unable to have a conversation with the Iowa Historical Society but plans to do so in coming weeks.

Mr. Shannon, committee member from St. Clair County, said that he had not had a chance to speak with the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), his years as an employee there and his knowledge of their membership model, offers some suggestions for the ISHS. He said the Society should plan on identifying its ideal member and maximize efforts to reach them. He said we need to articulate what the benefits of memberships are and make them transactional, so new members become invested. He said to focus hard on retention, add value where possible, and network with like-minded organizations. He said the Society needs to have achievable goals in mind, i.e., who is our customer, what do they want, and how do we deliver it to them?

Mr. Hallwas thanked everyone for their input and said the committee would be focusing intensely in coming months to strategize on membership goals. He asked for suggestions and recommendations from the board. We need to make a strong effort to not lose members, he said.

Nominations Committee.

Committee chair Mark Flotow said his committee is reaching out for new nominees for the Board and Advisory Board, and counseling potential candidates on what they need to do to qualify for the board and advisory board. He said that the 2023 nomination form is now available on the website and in *Illinois Heritage*, should any member of the board choose to nominate a qualified candidate. He said the chief requirement is membership in the Society, but there are other responsibilities outlined in the bylaws, principally committee assignments. Mr. Flotow said the deadline for this year's nominations in January 31, 2023. Mr. Flotow also canvassed current

advisory board members to see who would like to continue on into their second year. He said twelve people responded almost immediately.

Ms. Hoganson asked if the ISHS Board Meetings will continue to be over the Zoom platform, and if we are willing to float the dates for meetings to support religious holy days. Mary Lou Johnsrud offered to poll the board to help determine the best means of meeting (In person, Zoom, hybrid) to serve the needs of the Society.

Publications Committee.

Mr. Sampson, reporting for the committee, said that *Journal* issues for the remainder of the year are at the printer and will be forthcoming in early 2023, and the Spring 2023 issue is now in the dropbox for copy editing. This means that the *Journal* schedule will be back to normal for the calendar year in 2023. He noted that there will probably be fewer book reviews in coming issues until new Book Review editor Aaron Lisee gets up to speed. He requested that board members interested in reviewing books for future issues should be in touch with Aaron at SIU's Morris Library.

Website report.

Ms. Johnsrud said that Ms. Evans website report was distributed prior to the meeting and reflects traffic on the website since the last board meeting. She said the website continues to be a popular resource for individuals seeking information about Illinois history resources.

Old Business. None.

New Business. Mr. Furry said the next UIS SAGE Society UIS "Lunch and Learn" will be held on Wednesday, October 26, at the Illini Country Club in Springfield. ISHS director Jenny Barker-Devine will speak about Illinois College and the Beecher family, and archaeologist Terrance Martin will present a program on African American archaeology at New Philadelphia and Springfield.

Ms. Johnsrud asked the Society would like to consider adding a program, speaker, or tour to the next Centennial Awards program, as some recipients in distant locations preferred to have some value to driving down to Springfield, other than to receive a certificate. Discussion was deferred until the next board meeting on Saturday, December 17 at 10 a.m.

President Monroe asked for a meeting to adjourn. Motion was made, seconded, and affirmed. The meeting ended at 2:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

William Furry
Executive Director

