



**Lowell Observatory Advisory Board  
Meeting of the Executive Committee (EC)**

**Friday 23 September 2022 at 11:00 a.m.**

**I. Introduction and Minutes, Election of Officers:**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Michael Beckage. Present were Executive Committee Members: Tom Ensign, Joe Marcus, David Connell, Donna Weistrop, Michael Beckage, Palmer Nackard, John Giovale, Kay Corbin, Brook Miner, Drew Barringer, Leo Crowley, and Pamela Ross. Others present were: Sole Trustee Lowell Putnam, Erica Broman (Trustee Designate), Lisa Actor (Chief Philanthropy Officer), Amanda Bosh (Chief Operations Officer), Stephen Riggs (Sr. Philanthropy Manager), Christoph Keller (Director of Science), Danielle Adams (Chief Marketing and Revenue Officer), Samantha Gorney (Director of Education), Jeffrey Hall (Executive Director), Kyler Kuehn (Director of Technology), and Stephen Brown (Lowell Observatory Foundation Board Member). Guests included George Jacoby and Clark Slipher. Mattie Harrington and Pamela Ross recorded meeting minutes.

An election of officers was held as required by the Advisory Board bylaws at the first Executive Committee meeting after the annual meeting. A call for nominations went out via email prior to the meeting. Michael Beckage and Pam Ross were nominated for and re-elected to the positions of Chairman and Secretary, respectively.

Minutes from the Executive Committee meeting on 23 June 2022 meeting were approved with a minor correction.

**II. Millennium Fund:**

Beckage gave an update on the Millennium Fund. Funds available in 2022 total \$81,626. To date, \$64,815 were requested and approved to support two projects. First was an upgrade to the Giovale Open Deck Observatory (GODO) rail system. Second was to renovate the HCPS Conference Room. Amanda Bosh reported that the rail system upgrade will be performed when needed components are received.

**III. Trustee's Welcome:**

Lowell Putnam welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their participation. He reported progress regarding Section 17, stating that a "go to" person with the Department of Agriculture has been identified. This lawyer indicated that Lowell Observatory has broad rights to use the land for observatory purposes, and other purposes may be permissible as well.

Putman also stated that BNSF has expressed interest in a possible third track or overpass over the area of Section 17 owned by Lowell Observatory. This request is being considered. It has been made clear that the area in question is owned by Lowell Observatory and the Observatory's permission is needed to use the land.

**IV. Executive Director Update:**

Executive Director Hall stated that a first draft of the 2023 budget is being put together. The budget for 2023 will be discussed in detail during the January financial meeting. The concern over the reduced number of visitors to the Observatory is requiring a fresh look at the sustainability plan. The Executive Director will be redoing the sustainability worksheets and will provide a more detailed report in January.

Some LDT partnerships are up for renewal. Yale is tapering off their use. The observatory will offer 40-60% of its nights on the LDT to its partners.

The report from the Visiting Committee is ready and should be received soon. Suggestions from the report will be taken into consideration and action will be taken where appropriate.

**V. Marketing and Revenue:**

Revenue from premium access is down slightly from forecast. General admission is well below target projections, however, strong visitation over Labor Day weekend is a positive sign. Conversions from visitor/guest to membership is lower than expected, however there have been more paying guests and the gift shop revenue is up along with improved reviewer scores.

Nate Nise was recently hired to work on video content. A focus will be to increase public awareness of Lowell as more than an Observatory and to show that all visitor activities are not weather dependent.

**VI. Philanthropy:**

Lisa Actor stated that the annual fund is at 67% of goal. Membership has reached 84% of the goal for the year. The three months left this year will be key to reaching the goals set for both.

The Astronomy Discovery Center (ADC) construction budget has escalated 52%. It was previously at 36% escalation, but the costs have continued to rise. The current budget for the ADC's completion is \$53.9 million. The budget was reduced by seven million through scaling-back on some items on the wish list. \$15 million is needed to complete construction and \$7 million is needed for the endowment fund. Opening of the ADC is currently estimated in June 2024.

The observatory continues to seek additional funding from the State to help with this project and the philanthropy team is discussing other strategies to raise needed funding.

The Tombaugh telescope has arrived, and Ralph Nye has proposed a plan to restore the telescope. The Philanthropy team is currently organizing LDT tours for the Slipher Society members.

**VII. Executive Director Succession:**

Lowell Putnam sent an email in August to the Executive Committee regarding the effort to find a new Executive Director when Dr. Hall retires. Feedback has been received and now decisions must be made on how to proceed. Some questions concern the qualifications of the new Executive Director. For example, should candidates be required to have a PhD, or be an astronomer? What should be included in the job description, and should an agency be used to do the search? How do we make sure candidates understand that Lowell Observatory is more than just an observatory? The mission of Lowell Observatory must be foremost in the contemplation of the replacement and those being considered must have a good understanding of the mission statement and vision for the future.

**VIII. Lowell Observatory Foundation (LOF)**

Donna Weistrop reported that the Trust is currently at \$8.6 million, which is down from the \$10 million balance in January 2022. There is an Investment Committee chaired by Teri Kelly, with George Putnam and David Chase as members. They will be giving an update at the October meeting of the LOF. They are considering moving assets into investments with more stable returns.

The Foundation is currently considering term limits for the Chair. Should there be a Vice Chair put in place as a rising chair to move into the Chair's position once the term has expired?

The LOF website update is still in process.

The next LOF meeting is scheduled for 26 October 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

**IX. Other Business, Future Meetings:**

Beckage noted that the Membership Committee proposed changing the wording in the diversity statement in the bylaws from 'disabilities' to 'abilities.' Beckage suggested this would be a good opportunity to review the bylaws, which were last updated in June 2020. This will be on the agenda at the next EC meeting. Beckage also noted that EC members should start brainstorming for the next EC meeting in Phoenix and consider stepping-up to do more as ambassadors for Lowell Observatory.

The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Sunday 29 January 2023 at 2:00 p.m. at the Wigwam Resort.

**X. Adjourn**