



**Lowell Observatory Advisory Board
Meeting of the Executive Committee (EC)**
Sunday, January 28, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

I. Welcome, Approval of Minutes, Millennium Fund update:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Palmer Nackard. Present were Executive Committee Members Drew Barringer, Michael Beckage, David Chase, David Connell, Kay Corbin, Brook Miner, Pam Ross, Donna Weistrop, Erica Broman, Leo Crowley, Martin DeWet, Joe Marcus, Pat Quinn, Marj McClanahan, Executive Director Jeff Hall, and Sole Trustee Lowell Putnam. Also, present were staff members Lisa Actor, Amanda Bosh, Cody Half-Moon, Cristoph Keller, Kyler Kuehn, Anne LaBruzzo, and Stephen Levine. Mattie Harrington managed the slide presentations. Guests for the meeting included Richard Baker, Kris Walsh, Joe Robie, Kent Colbath, Andrew Victor, George Jacoby and Allan Affeldt.

Palmer welcomed everyone and noted that he is planning for good conversation of topics vs. formal presentations. He presented the Observatory Crucial Milestones for 2024 as follows:

- Successful ADC launch
- Defining and Expanding Science and Technology
- The Search and Hire of new Executive Director
- Unifying the Observatory

The Milestones for Beyond 2024 included:

- Succession Planning
- Diversifying and Maximizing Revenue
- A Defined and well-funded Science and Technology vision.

Minutes for the Executive Committee meeting of 31 October 2023 were approved as modified.

Palmer reported that the balance in the Millennium Fund is \$ 2,184,914 as of the end of December 2023. There is \$84,544 available in 2024 for disbursement. The Millennium Fund provided help for four major projects in 2023. Those were replacement of the boiler at the Trustee's residence, strategic planning facilitation, philanthropy team travel and donor cultivation, and replacement of sewer pumps on campus.

II. Trustee's Remarks:

Sole Trustee Lowell Putnam welcomed all and noted that more time is needed for our AB meetings leading to an extended June meeting. He emphasized that education is part of research and growing the institution. He looks forward to hearing thoughts and input during this January meeting.

III. Executive Director Succession Update:

Erica Broman spoke with the search firm last week. We are pleased with our search firm and will be looking at input by the end of February. She thanked the social media team for getting the posting out to end users across multiple media. We have had 80 individuals respond so far and have qualified a dozen or so. The pool will be narrowed down in the next few months. We are expecting between two and four finalists to meet with staff and the leadership team.

IV. Supporting the Sci-Tech Vision:

The Trustee prefaced this discussion by mentioning that two priorities are on parallel paths and that those should form the basis for our discussion. The priorities are:

- Immediate execution of smaller, specific projects that have money and are ready to go.
- The long-term concerns to be addressed by creating a framework document that outlines the goals of the Sci-Tech vision at Lowell Observatory. Take into account what would attract someone to Lowell.

Michael Beckage, the new chairman of the Sci-Tech Committee, outlined the committee's new work. Beckage said scientific technology is linked to evolution in the field. The Trustee has proposed a reinvention of the Technology Committee to reimagine science and technology at the Observatory. Ten volunteers on the committee will meet quarterly. There will be focus on the following things that make Lowell Observatory special:

- The faculty, Staff and Environment
 - Diverse brain trust with important historical perspective
 - Scientists have ability to pursue their research interests with academic freedom and opportunities to educate and participate in outreach.
 - Decades-long record of significant science and discovery
- The ability to set and implement priorities quickly.
- The ability to fundraise for activities like education, outreach and projects, with little federal and state oversight and regulation. We can be efficient and move quickly.
- The ability to partner with donors and recognize their priorities to fundraise for Education, Outreach, personal development of scientists, and finding answers to the mysteries of cosmology.
- Ability to commit to long term research. Lowell is not overweighted toward one type of research.

The Committee priorities will be established by the Lowell staff assigned as managerial liaison by the Executive Director or Trustee. The committee will be fundraising advocates. They will offer expertise in areas essential to success in sci-tech endeavors, and act as a sounding board for top level vision. They will be foot workers in support of and directed by staff/faculty.

Supporting the Sci-Tech Vision:

Palmer invited a group discussion on what the sci-tech visioning will take. Christoph Keller and Kyler Kuehn started with helping us understand the need. We need to continuously innovate. It is getting more difficult to compete so we have to be smarter in an era where bigger is better. We need to know what we can do with limited resources. Our vision must be inspiring, and has to be exciting for our own scientists. It must be realistic, fundable, competitive and doable at the Observatory. We have to know if we can still be competitive once a project is built. We must have a new sci-tech committee with an agreed-on list of projects with project leads identified. There is still cost and schedule uncertainty. We will need to work on selling points and cost to get to conceptual design. We must pay attention to options for the technical approach like outsourcing vs. in-house, and integration with ongoing technical efforts.

Christoph and Kyler placed special emphasis on the Percival Lowell post doc fellowship as the highest priority in the sci-tech vision. It will bring in the brightest and most innovative. We currently have four positions guaranteed and need to start raising funds for a fifth. They stressed the importance of continuing to hire one per year. The 2024 cost for that is approximately \$131k/year including benefits, plus \$20k per year in research funding. Since this is open for instrumentation as well, \$20K per year for project funding may not be enough.

Lisa Actor stated that we need to start drafting a case for supporting Lowell science and technology. Maybe several smaller campaigns vs one big campaign. Meanwhile there are some nice small projects we can start right away to get momentum going. In the short term, there is the need for funding the post docs. Timing may be perfect for supporting an endowment campaign. Lisa Introduced Leslie Curry, the new CPO. She gave ideas for planning funding, and gave a potential endowment target of \$30M. She also discussed how we can get recognition to donors.

V. Marketing the ADC:

Cody Half-Moon showed marketing plans for the ADC and its tie to the Observatory to elevate Lowell's brand. It will invite guests to be co-discoverers in astronomy, expand our national and international presence, and strengthen city and state support and partnerships. Sales objectives must be to drive interest and ticket sales, promote the ADC grand opening event, and create post opening follow-up during peak season.

We need a PR firm to cover broadcast/media, magazines and exclusives. We are building partnerships and promotions, and driving coming-soon campaigns and early-planner campaigns. We will use science media for national reach. We need to leverage current resources to our maximum benefit. We have partnered with Lobeline marketing.

Visitation projections: 17% year over year. 200k guests per year. We need to work on building the momentum.

VI. Planning for the AB of the Future:

Palmer asked the Advisory Board to think about and be ready to discuss the skills needed from the AB members and Observatory staff in the future.

VII. Other Business:

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be held on March 14, 2024 at 1:30 p.m. on-site at the Observatory.

The Annual Meeting of the Advisory Board will take place on Mars Hill, Thursday/Saturday, June 6-8, 2024.