Louisiana Old State Capitol Advisory Board meeting

March 9, 2016

Members present: Bridger Eglin, Florent Hardy, Liz Harris, Kay Long, Betsie Magee, Frank Ransburg, Peggy Vidrine

Staff present: Suzette Crocker, Mary Durusau, Shelby Daugherty, Ali McLarty

Meeting was convened at 2 p.m.

Secretary of State Tom Schedler addressed the group giving an overview of the current museum funding in HB1. Secretary Schedler explained that the office began the year with $1.9 million, which is not sufficient to fund the two largest museums – the Old State Capitol and La. State Exhibit Museum. In FY2015-16, the museum budget was $3.4 million. As the funding bill now stands, the museum budget is approximately $3 million.

Secretary Schedler said when he took office the museum system included 17 facilities and that number has now been reduced to 14. He hopes that at least three or four others can be returned to local control.

He encouraged board members to reach out to legislators and encourage them to maintain the amount of funding currently in HB 1. Schedler also said there may be discussions about moving museums into the state museum system, but he wants the OSC to remain in the Secretary of State’s office.

Mary Durusau announced that officers need to be elected at the next meeting. Pam Love, who has served as chairman, has resigned. Liz Harris suggested the board be surveyed for best meeting date.

Executive Director Suzette Crocker gave an update on upcoming exhibits and noted Lauren Davis has exhibits booked through 2017. She said that our events calendar is completely booked through 2016 and into July 2017.

Future construction on North Boulevard and St. Phillip Street will limit access to the building. We have asked the city to delay St. Phillip construction until the end of the year when we are closed for cyclical maintenance.

Suzette also gave a recap of major improvements including new House stage, new exterior lighting and the installation of the major electrical switch to serve the building.

The exterior of the building needs to be waterproofed, and we have submitted a Capital Outlay request. However, this project was not included in HB2. Suzette said that when it rains we frequently have water coming through the House Chamber windows. A suggestion was made to pursue emergency funding, and Mary will follow up with SOS leadership.

Mary Durusau gave an overview of the Strategic Plan which the Advisory Board and Foundation Board worked on in 2014. In spite of major staff changes and threatened budget cuts, many of the objectives identified in the plan are being addressed.

The addition of our education coordinator, Caroline Kennedy, has resulted in greatly-improved tours for schools and other tour groups. Suzette said we are getting rave reviews from teachers.

The Old State Capitol is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, and our accreditation is up for renewal in 2018. We will need several board committees including collections, finance and facilities. Board members were asked to consider on which committee they would like to serve.

Frank Ransburg moved for adjournment, seconded by Peggy Vidrine.