

Whitman County Historical Society Board Meeting
1-21-2026; 7:00pm; WCHS Archives, Pullman

Board members present: Jeff Pietila, Mark Clinton, Jon Anderson, Janet Barstow, Pat Flansburg, Denise Mahnkey, Linda Hackbarth, Krista Boyd, Wendy Blake, Val Gregory

Guests present: Alex Otero, Debbie Sherman, John-Mark Mahnkey

Janet Barstow moved, Mark Clinton seconded, and the board approved the consent agenda as submitted.

As part of our review of our Volunteer Manual, members are asked to thoroughly review the document and send suggestions for improvement to Val or have them ready to discuss at the next meeting. One suggestion from tonight's meeting is to be sure it includes our policy regarding firearms and alcohol. Once the document is finalized with all the needed updates, all the board members will sign a copy.

Val Gregory reviewed the current location/project lead volunteer assignments. The Perkins House is still in need of a lead volunteer. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact Val. Wendy Blake and Janet Barstow agreed to organize this year's Annual Meeting. Krista Boyd will continue as lead for the Jones School. The Oral History project is currently on hold according to Denise Mahnkey. Pat Flansburg will continue as lead for the Trinity Chapel in Palouse. Linda Hackbarth will continue as lead for the Depot. Alex Otero will continue as lead for the Archives. Kathy Meyer will continue as editor for the Newsletter. Katy Whelan will continue as editor for *The Bunchgrass*.

It is time to review operational needs and identify funding sources. Members were notified that our fundraising needs to be significantly improved, or the Society will be out of funds within a few years. Everyone is encouraged to submit fundraising ideas.

Regarding operational needs, Pat Flansburg noted that in order to make more frequent use of the Trinity Chapel, there will need to be improvements to the heating and the basement will need renovation.

It was also noted that we should strengthen our relations with other historical organizations, museums, etc. in the area. It was suggested that this year's Annual Meeting could feature presentations from such entities.

Alex Otero outlined the plans for equipment purchases made possible by Robert King's generous donation of \$15,000 to the Archives. The list includes new computers, monitors, a scanner, and software upgrades. He will work with Val to finalize an exact list over the next week or so. The Board plans to review and authorize the purchases via email before the end of the month.

Alex forwarded a proposal from WSU Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections to digitize our Pullman Herald collection for preservation purposes. The Board is supportive of the concept, but would need more details regarding the exact materials handling procedures before providing approval.

Alex also forwarded a question from Ed Garretson regarding the number of copies printed and cost of recent issues of *The Bunchgrass Historian*. The Archives keeps a log of this for each issue, but it needs updated. Jon said he would be able to look up the invoices from J&H Printing to provide the missing figures. The mailing list is being reviewed, with letters going out to the members who are behind on their dues.

John-Mark Mahnkey and Debbie Sherman provided an update on the Depot Train car project. The contract with Dan Thayer is completely concluded and the cars have been buttoned up for the Winter and are awaiting the next steps in the restoration. The Rolling Stock committee is now looking for a new project manager and contractor, but have not yet met with success. The search continues, following leads from regional rail organizations. Many restoration companies are set up to have the cars delivered to their facilities, which is not

a great option for us. Val noted that Carol has a house available if we can locate a contractor that can bring their equipment here. It is hoped that work can resume in the Spring. Fundraising continues, with a goal of at least \$30,000 more based on the estimates that had been provided by Dan Thayer. However, Debbie noted that the exact figure could be higher due to unexpected materials needs, abatement responsibilities, and increasing costs as time goes on. The USDA grant that had been applied for was not awarded to us, but that agency's funding had been reduced, and we may be on their waiting list if more funds become available after all. Debbie stressed the importance of the rail cars to the success of the Depot, reporting that most visitors show as much or more interest in the cars than to the building. Raising the remaining funds should continue to be an important priority. If the cars cannot be restored, they will eventually have to be sold.

Linda Hackbarth has been in contact with the City of Pullman regarding plans for the USA's 250th Celebration. She is wondering if the Historical Society has anything planned. We do not currently have anything planned, and none of the board members are aware of any plans in other towns in the county. None of the board members had any objections to the Depot committee working with the city of Pullman to support any events or activities sponsored by the city. If anyone learns of plans related to the 250th Celebration, we can consider participating at future meetings.

John Brown, a former WSU professor, met with Val before the meeting with a proposal to print photos of a Pullman rail car that WCHS locations could make available to visitors in exchange for donations. The Board was not interested in accepting this proposal. None of our locations are really set up to offer such merchandise, and previous efforts with similar offerings have not proven popular with our visitors.

Mark Clinton passed on a question from Mike Rowe, a community member who was wondering if WCHS would be involved with a time capsule interred at the County Courthouse and due to be opened this year. As far as we can determine, we are not. It seems that the County Commissioners are in charge of that project.

Mark Clinton moved, Krista Boyd seconded, and the Board approved that the meeting be adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Wendy Blake, Secretary

Upcoming Meetings @ 7pm:

Wednesday, February 18 – Depot – Exec meeting at 6pm

Wednesday, March 18 – Perkins House

Wednesday, April 15 – Palouse Museum