



HIGHLANDS
BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

2024 Winter Board of Trustees Meeting

December 11, 2024

In attendance: Karen Patterson, Lindy Harrison, Frances Oakley, Jonnie Swann, Jennie Stowers, David Martin, John Mitchener, Gayle Watkins, Leslie Manning, Lori Heys, Lisa Armstrong, Tom Holmes, Linda Barlow, Charley Tarver, Lisa Daily, Jamie Creola, Vernon Skiles, Bill Bush, Bob Strickland, Julie Thomson, Keller Torrey, Rada Petric, and Jim Costa

Meeting called to order at 3:05 p.m. by President John Mitchener.

A motion was made by John to approve previous meeting's minutes. Seconded by David Martin and Karen Patterson. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report, Tom Holmes

Holmes noted that HBF is in good shape and doing well financially and that we had two very successful fundraisers - Soiree \$178K raised - NET \$121K and Half Shell ~\$35K raised with minimal expenditures due to Helene and the event's cancellation. Individual contributions are at 89% with EOY giving in full swing and hopeful we will reach our \$220K projections

Holmes reviewed the investments as of December. Landon asked if the Board could be presented with a YTD report on how well the investments had done in 2024. Creola will reach out to Justin Souma, Investment Manager, to get that information.

Holmes reviewed the 2025 Budget planning process - ED providing data/spreadsheet, thorough review between ED/Treasurer, deep dive with Finance Committee that approved it going forward to Executive Committee, and Executive Committee review and sending it along to the Board for final approval. The budget is in line with the 2023 budget (normal budget year) with a slight increase for staff increase and related costs for taxes/benefits.

A motion was made to approve the 2025 budget. Seconded by Gayle and David. Motion carried.

Development Report, Keller Torrey

Torrey noted that the Development Committee had not met since the last Board mtg. in late October however, work had been done on End of Year Giving and next year's events (see below). EOY Giving Letter and eblast sent in November. Will send an additional eblast at the end of the week.

2025 Events update:

- Soiree
 - Location - Lori and Ed Hey's property
 - Date - Monday, July 28th
- Patron Party
 - Location - Kathy & Bestor Ward's house
 - Date - Wednesday, June 18th
- N Campus Sculpture Reception
 - Sometime in spring - will work with Julia to finalize the date
- Highlands on the Half-Shell
 - Location - HBS
 - Date - Sunday, October 5th

Strategic Planning Report, Gayle Watkins

Watkins stated the committee met twice to discuss process and participation and begin the compilation of information needed to move the process forward. This included stakeholders, visitor/program/participant data, current mission/vision statements, engagement/data collection methods, etc.

She discussed the overall time with the goal to present a draft Strategic Plan at our annual Membership and Summer Board meeting in June. She iterated that while the committee's role will be to implement and steward the process, participation by the entire Board, community partners, and constituents will be critical to its success. Watkins also let the Board know that the committee was looking for one more member to join the committee and asked for suggestion - noting that the individual didn't have to be a trustee. They could be a member, supporter but ideally someone who would be in Highlands over the winter as the committee will be focusing on interviewing/engaging with local stakeholders.

Education/Outreach Report, Jamie Creola and Julie Thomson

Creola began by letting the Board know that work had begun on the 2025 Zahner Lectures, as well the bi-annual Carpenter lecture. The Education & Outreach committee had met and reviewed prospective speakers/topics. Next step (after the first of the year) will be to reach out and engage interest and availability.

Thomson shared that she had been busy doing outreach programs and hosting small group tours/engagements at the Nature Center (through a PPT). Also, that while the Nature Center closed for the season right before Thanksgiving, we are planning to pilot having the NC open once-a-month for programming and self-discovery during January - March. More to come.

Education/Director's Report, Jamie Creola

Creola informed the Board that she was in the final interview stages for the Marketing & Communications Specialist. We had an amazing pool of talented candidates. A reminder to turn in the COI and Whistleblower paperwork was given. Creola also noted that the 2025 meeting and event dates were listed on the agenda and that she would be sending out calendar invites in the new year.

HBS Update, Jim Costa, Director

A thorough summary of HBS projects/programs was circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting. Costa touched on a couple of aspects relating to operations - installation of Wayfinding signage, Nature Center renovation, irrigation, and damage/repair to the cottages thanks to Helene.

UNC-CH IE Program Presentation, Dr. Rada Petric, Field Site Director

Petric gave an overview and update of the UNC-CH IE program that HBF funded over a three-year period at \$300K. She informed the group that the program is the most sought after in the university system and already had 13 students apply for this next year (15 max). She highlighted the impact the program has on its students and the career paths they are following.

Petric thanked HBF for support of these students and the IE program.

Meeting adjourned: 4:45 PM