

Saint John's Arboretum Advisory Council Meeting
Monday, October 1, 2012
Natural History Museum, Saint John's University

Council Present: Terri Barreiro, Tom Haeg, Greg Miller, Bob Russell, Steve Saupe, Lew Grobe, John Benschoter, Scott Daninger, Kari Dombrowski, Stephanie Pinkalla

Staff Present: Jenny Kutter, John O'Reilly, Sarah Gainey

Guests: Br. Benedict Leuthner (Abbey/University discussion)

Opening Prayer

Br. Lew Grobe

Introductions

Introductions of council members and staff

Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda (Terri), seconded (Scott), all in favor. Agenda approved.

August Minutes

Motion to approve (Terri), seconded (Tom H.)

- Compliments given on the thorough note taking; easy to get a sense of the discussion for those who were not present, and a good refresher for those who were.
- All in favor. Minutes approved.

Business

Council Meeting Format & Role of Council

Discussion of meeting participation, attendance, etc.

- Want to be sure council members time is used wisely; some come a long distance to attend.
- Are council members being used to the best of their time? Can meetings be better focused?
 - o Add more action items/decision-making
- Given our role as advisory in nature, do we need to meet 4 times/yr?
 - o Summary of current meeting schedule:
 - October: mid-long term planning (looking 2-3 years out)
 - December: short meeting/unfinished business, Open House party
 - February: committee meetings, work on FY work plans
 - June: evaluation of FY, priorities for next FY
 - o Quarterly meetings are good – a nice frequency to see each other and work on issues that come up throughout the year
 - Nice to combine meetings with educational opportunities and tours, day/morning field trips, etc.
 - Move the summer meeting? May (before Plant Sale)? Late July/early Aug (after summer vacations)?
 - Do a council member poll to find best times to meet?
 - Been done in the past with no obvious consensus
 - Can definitely ask again
 - We don't currently have a meeting set aside for long term planning (10 years+).
 - Last strategic plan was completed before both John and Jenny were on staff, hasn't been revisited recently
 - Better to schedule 4 meetings, annually
 - Staff can always cancel a meeting if nothing critical needs to be done (easier to cancel a meeting than to add a meeting)
 - Every few years, 4th meeting could be staff/council retreat
 - o Less focused on production
 - o Community/relationship building

- Once/year, could we schedule an opportunity to address the Abbott in person (in our advisory role)?
 - Who do we advise (particularly with the split corporations?)
 - University President/Regents (education), Abbott (lands)
 - We don't have a strong lands advising role, except for those council members who already serve on the Abbey Forest committee
- Will continue to schedule 4 meetings/annually, with flexibility for staff to change if needed
 - Chair requests input for agenda items from council be sent either to him or to Jenny Kutter

Abbey/University Discussion (*Br. Benedict Leuthner*)

- Abbey and University are legally separate corporations as of July 1, 2012. Arboretum staff recently received the final documents outlining use of the Abbey lands and invited Br. Benedict to come to the meeting to clarify the changes and answer questions.
 - Short answer: We operate and maintain relationships between Abbey/University roughly the same as it has historically been
 - Long answer: See following discussion...
- 3 major goals for the split:
 - Aligning governance for University, making it fully in charge of the educational mission
 - Responsibility for inner campus (physical plant, buildings, powerhouse, etc) – who is responsible for what?
 - Responsibility for land – clarity about inner campus as well as outer campus (Abbey lands)
- Maps:
 - Inner campus: defined area to clarify how far development can go, generally
 - Different parts of campus have different leases/licenses for the University to use (i.e. Flynntown residential area treated differently from the Quad, treated differently from the Athletics fields)
 - Abbey still owns all the land, the University owns buildings on the land (generally – some shared space)
 - Outer campus: defined by two separate agreements
 - Saint John's Abbey Arboretum: “teaching triangle,” the area around the Boardwalk Loop
 - Longer lease for educational use, greater freedom for use
 - Saint John's Abbey Forest: encompasses the remaining undeveloped Abbey lands
 - Shorter lease, still open for educational use, limited, more permissions
 - Developed permissions form to help manage different uses
- Overall Goal:
 - Abbey remains clearly in charge and recognized as landowners, not University (as is often mistakenly referred to in media and elsewhere)
- Questions/Discussion:
 - If someone asks, “where is the Arboretum?” what is our answer?
 - Saint John's Abbey Arboretum is the public name of all Abbey lands
 - We do not need to delineate between the two names on the legal agreements
 - Agreement mentions Abbey Land Manager and Education Director
 - Currently (and historically) has been the same person (Tom Kroll) in both roles, although there is potential for that to change
 - Council has discussed that kind of staff structure in the past
 - Education activities more or less the same?
 - YES, our programs will continue to operate as normal
 - How committed is the Abbey to conservation in the “Abbey Forest”
 - If not in a strict easement, forest reserves can be “nickled and dimed” to death
 - Plans to prevent future encroachment or other bits and pieces of development in and around Abbey lands?

- The monastic community is a “living easement,” committed to conservation
 - That said, forest/lands are part of the overall economic picture of the Abbey
 - If forced, conversations may be had about long-term status
 - Fees/gifts/donations? Where do those go?
 - Program (education) related – go to University, all event income goes to Arboretum budget (University side)
 - Lands related – go to Abbey
 - If questions, defer to understanding of donor intent
 - Name of the council was changed, why?
 - Formerly the “Saint John’s Arboretum Advisory Council”
 - Renamed to “Saint John’s Environmental Education Advisory Council”
 - Role of council has not changed, name change to provide clarity
 - Advisory role of council has always been geared toward the programming side
 - Members of our council also serve on the Abbey Forest Committee, providing a connection and limited advisory role on lands issues
 - University appoints council members, except 2 Abbey appointments
 - Council reports to staff (Tom Kroll), who reports to the Regents/President
 - Summary: Not a lot of changes to operations, forcing good conversation about Abbey/University relationship overall
- What is the name of the educational program?
 - Saint John’s Arboretum was always a place and a program
 - This has been a confusion and a tension from the very beginning
 - Do we continue to have the place and the program with the same name?
 - Or do we clarify the relationship by giving the program a name different from that of the place?
 - Saint John’s Abbey Arboretum is now the name of the place, what about the program?
 - Name change is a BIG deal
 - Staff time, costs of new printed materials and merchandise, public understanding of change, etc.
 - Do we have to change our name? Continue to call the program Saint John’s Arboretum?
 - Wouldn’t it be confusing to have two such similar names for land and program?
 - When we’re referring to place vs. when we’re referring to program would get lost
 - Abbey’s intent to have more recognition over lands might get lost
 - Keep Saint John’s Arboretum name and logo, but change the mission and vision to reflect Abbey Arboretum/lands changes?
 - Saint John’s Environmental Education Center or Environmental Learning Center (ELC) of some kind?
 - Might hesitate to call ourselves an ELC, in MN that name seems to generally refer to places that have overnight programs/dorms, etc.
 - Nature Center?
 - We don’t really have a “center” or a building for people to identify as such
 - Abbey Arboretum of Saint John’s? or drop Saint John’s for just Abbey Arboretum?
 - The Saint John’s name is important (a big identifier in the community)
 - i.e. University of MN Landscape Arboretum has the recognition and reputation of Univ. of MN
 - How would members react?
 - Members might not be that confused about name change since they will hear about it from us
 - General public might not be that confused – there are still a lot of local people who have never heard of Saint John’s Arboretum
 - Timeframe:

- Need to take the time to do this right, with more discussion
- We are asked to begin referring to the land as Saint John's Abbey Arboretum now, but have time to figure out our program name
- Note that the "real charm" of the place is how connected we all are – let's not break that down
- Discussion topic/ Action item for February meeting:
 - Let's start the meeting with a list of name options ready
 - Send ideas for name options to Steve or Jenny
 - Arb Staff: find out if keeping program name of Saint John's Arboretum is still on the table

Key Directional Priorities 2012-2014

- *Expanding Curriculum*

- Ever-standing goal of improving and updating curriculum to align with state standards
- We've increased middle-school participation
 - 1st time that all 7th graders from North Jr. High came to Arb this fall
 - St. Cloud district funding for K-8 (not preschool)
 - Although all 14 preschool sections are coming in winter, teachers are finding funds
- Curriculum updates:
 - Changing biomes class from 4th to 6th grade to meet change in MN History standard
 - New water class was developed and introduced this fall
 - Solar class is no longer a choice for 6th grade at 742 due to standards changes
- What difference does it make if all students in a grade come vs. some students?
 - Repetition (students having experiences each year) is more important than reaching all kids
 - Hope that coming often instills better connection, intrinsic values
 - Last year was the best year for across the board participation from St. Cloud schools
- 2-3 years out?
 - Better to be more specific than broad – change curriculum to meet some standards well rather than trying to hit all standards a little
 - Would like to try to refocus all current classes
 - Expand timeframe teachers bring students
 - Starting earlier in Sept, have more classes in winter
 - This year started 1 full week earlier than normal on its own!
 - Aggregate results from standardized tests?
 - Currently not available by standard, so hard to tease out effectiveness of our programs
 - Ed. Committee is currently writing our own pre/post tests for students so we can get a better handle on program results

- *Big Grant Fundraising*

- Continues to be a big priority
- Part-time provisional grant-writer position will be posted soon
 - Position available from now until June 30, 2013
 - Any council members who know of grant-writers who might be interested should have them contact John and watch for the posting
- Annual need of \$40,000 just to sustain current capacity with fellowship and bussing
- Human Resources office is helping advertise the position
 - Think of adding to the SEEK job section

- *Protect Land & Arboretum status long-term*
 - Mostly monitoring progress and working on issues as they come up
 - Change goal to “Protect Arboretum status long-term”
 - Land protection/status is job of Abbey Forest Committee
 - Continue to collaborate where land/education needs meet
 - Continue conversations between council, Arb staff, Abbey, and University regarding partnership/relationship and program name change
 - Review/update program mission/vision/goals/objectives in light of changes (as well as length of time passed since they were updated)

- *Membership*
 - Benefits of being members – how to highlight better
 - Present at Open House
 - Have flyers at door and/or on tables reminding people of the benefits of being members, extras to share with friends/neighbors
 - Poll members at Open House (or online)?
 - A survey has not been done in more than 5 years
 - What programs would they like to see?
 - What current programs do we offer that they like?
 - What benefits do they use/not use?
 - What benefits would they like?
 - Membership committee will meet to work on updating benefits and developing a member survey
 - Sustaining memberships campaign
 - In August, we discussed the proposal to pursue a “sustaining membership” campaign using the \$5000 donation from CenterPoint Energy as a match for those that sign up.
 - Jenny is still working out logistical details for managing a sustaining membership program (automatic credit card gifts)
 - Hoping to roll-out campaign before Open House, if possible

- *Strategic Partnerships on campus*
 - John feels we have not moved fully in the direction needed to develop lasting partnerships
 - May have lost ground when some programs (like Green Bike partnership with CSB Campus Rec) fell through
 - Trying to find more ways to connect our programming with other campus groups
 - Connect with Alum Office (young alum committees in particular, looking for programs for recent alums)
 - Is this goal in the FY work plan for CSB/SJU education?
 - Not currently
 - Will work with committee to better define goals and strategies

- *Assessment & Accountability*
 - No changes/progress, still a big need
 - Help with big fundraising if our assessment program is improved
 - Help identify if we are achieving goals we’ve set out to achieve
 - A longitudinal study – following students over several years – has been on the wish list a long time
 - Working on redefining how we assess participation in future years
 - Stop counting individuals all the same
 - Develop “Levels of Engagement”

- Level 1 engagement could be 500 individuals reached in short/light-intensity programs (such as tabling at student events, maple syrup sundaes, etc)
 - Level 5 engagement might be XX number of individuals reached in longer-term, intense learning (semester-long project, Master Naturalist class, etc)
 - Other levels in between
- **NEW Priority:** *Revenue-building activities and programs*
- More programs/activities that can help sustain staff, planning for lean years
 - Focus on adult community programs (potential memberships)
 - Partner with groups in Twin Cities (population generally willing to pay a little more for good programs/services)
 - Bus tours from cities, larger revenue, partner with Abbey, HMML, Guesthouse, others on campus
 - Connect with communities like the Basilica and other parishes
 - Alumni relationships (another partnership with alum office?), getting alums back on campus for events
 - Orchard/vineyard/honey production as revenue stream?
 - Need to connect with Abbey on priorities and zoning for land-use
 - Will work with committee to better define goals and strategies

Other business

- Do we have money available for updating ISD742 trunks?
 - Might be able to find matching time/money available from district
 - Don't have funds in Arboretum
 - Hard to spend our money replacing items that we know were lost within the district, knowing many items might continue to disappear
 - Kari D. willing to look for funding opportunities
 - Small grants?

Next meeting and Open House celebration: Friday, December 7