

**Irish Heritage Society Board**  
Minutes, March 9, 2016

Meeting opened at 7:00: Directors present: Margaret Bratcher, Pat Rochelle, Mary Stack, Greg Connor, Neil Finlen, Steven Purcell, Larry Mertes, Mike Whelan, Steve Young, Dan Leifel, Paula Sweeney, Maria Millen.

Minutes of February 10, approved as submitted.

Steve Young gave the Treasurer's report. 30 parade entrants paid to date.

Observing that Tee shirts did not mention WJBC, our media sponsor, motion made and adopted to front the cost of correct TEE shirts at \$600. To be repaid from sales.

Mary Stack presented the membership report.

Report made on June 26 picnic at Funks Grove with Mike Matejka to speak on burial of Irish RR workers. Leifel to get Chicken, ice and bottled water.

Book Club meets on March 24 at 6:30 at Margaret's home. Book: Brooklyn by Colm Toibin.

Neil updated the Board on the parade for March 12.

Meeting adjourned at 8:11.

Next Meeting, 7:00 April 13 at the Farnsworth Building.

Respectfully Submitted

Dan Leifel, Secretary

Attached: Retirement letter from Greg Koos



March 11, 2016

Mrs. Margaret Bratcher  
Irish Heritage Association  
6 Hidden Lake Ct  
Bloomington, IL 61704-7285

Dear friends,

Maggie

It was in April of 1977 when I learned of an opportunity to help build exhibits for our historical society. I had been a member as a kid and thought, "Well - why not?" In those early years the Museum, under the leadership of Barb Dunbar, became accredited; we restored the oldest building in Downtown Bloomington; we published a marvelous and hugely profitable illustrated history; and in 1989 we took on the project to convert this magnificent McLean County Courthouse into a museum.

In the following 27 years there has been a constant and collective passion to make this Museum into one of the finest regional history museums in the United States. We've succeed at that. And we've succeeded because of the hard and thoughtful work of the people who are most deeply engaged: our board, staff and volunteers. We are currently near our goal of raising \$3,000,000 through our *Extending Excellence* campaign. This board-led effort is achieving the collective vision of the Museum staff. That vision is to serve our 21<sup>st</sup> century audiences using 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies informed by age-old western humanism.

As members and donors you have supported our Museum by attendance at events, gifts of your time, donation of your items that are part of your personal and family history, and financial support. I want to thank you for this commitment and I ask you to continue your engagement with the Museum.

What we've done here is rare. We have a widely admired historical organization which exists due to your generosity. We, the Museum members, fund 70% of the costs of the operation. Most museums of our type receive 50% of their support from government sources. We've proven that philanthropy works!

It has also been exciting to watch our new *Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 Visitors Center* attract visitors from over 35 nations and 45 states to our Museum. Our venture into heritage tourism proves that our work can contribute to the overall economic health of our community.

Learning takes place here. I believe that people become better citizens when they know that they live in a specific place with a specific story. What we do here matters. That's why I'm only stepping down as executive director on March 31. I am freeing myself to tell the story of our community though a different means. It's been a long time since a general history of McLean County has been written and I have decided to take that task on as a core "retirement" activity. I will also serve as a part-time consultant for our new Executive Director, Beth Whisman, through September.

Beth Whisman "gets it" in a very big way. I had the pleasure of meeting and working with Beth as she told the story of our county at WJBC. I came to respect her insights, her passion and her view that our community is a great place to be. Beth is the principle staff person who manages our successful capital campaign. I've seen her work with community members, board and staff to bring this project to fruition. I encourage you to get to know her, to offer a helping hand and to welcome her as our new Executive Director.

Sincerely Yours,

Greg Koos  
Executive Director

Thanks for  
being part  
of this!

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