

Museum Assessment Program (MAP) Sample Governance Assessment Report for the Springfield Fire Fighters Historical Society, Inc.

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This sample report from the Museum Assessment Program is based on a real museum. The report is a good example of the challenges typical of many museums participating in the MAP program. All of the names of the staff, board members, museum, town, buildings, as well as the Surveyor, have been changed.

INTRODUCTION

The American Association of Museums (AAM) Museum Assessment Program (MAP) is a program that helps museums improve their operations by helping identify their strengths and weaknesses, while providing guidance to address priorities and goals. This survey for the Springfield Fire Fighters Historical Society, Inc. (hereafter referred to as SFFHS) is a Governance Assessment. This assessment helps museums strengthen their governing structure and better understand the role of the governing board and staff, and the interactions between the two. The museum's performance is reviewed in the context of its mission, its governing structure, and by comparing their operations to generally accepted museum standards and best practices. This report provides recommendations and identifies available resources the museum can use to further its goals.

The information used to complete this assessment is: the AAM Application Information Sheet, Institutional Self-Assessment, the museum's operating documents, and an on-site visit by the surveyor Jane Doe. The on-site visit was conducted on April 11-12, 2008.

On the morning of April 11, I met with Board President, Bob Jones, and MAP Committee Chair, Mike Brown. We discussed their goals for the MAP site visit and report, and what my visit would entail. Later that morning, I met with the members of the SFFHS MAP Committee. I clarified the purpose of the visit with them and asked

them their goals for the assessment, as well as what they see as the main strengths and weaknesses of the board and museum.

The afternoon of April 11th was spent with Museum Curator, John Berry. A phone interview was conducted with Office Manager, Sharon Jenkins. Both staff members were interviewed about their analysis of the museum and board operations. On April 12, an exit interview was held with John Berry and President Bob Jones to clarify any questions and follow up on remaining issues. That evening, I had the opportunity to observe the full board meeting of the SFFHS. The board members of the SFFHS are dedicated and passionate about the Springfield Fire Fighters Museum, and stated a desire to become more professional in their operations in order to better achieve their goals.

The Board objectives for completing the assessment (as stated in the application) are:

- Recruiting and orienting new board members and assessing board performance.
- Ensuring effective organizational planning and determining, monitoring, and strengthening the institutions programs and services.
- Ensuring adequate resources.
- Managing resources effectively, ensuring legal and ethical integrity, and maintaining accountability.

Sections of this report will cover recommendations related to achieving these goals as well as offer suggestions related to other operational areas with respect to governance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A summary of major recommendations are as follows:

- Review existing mission statement. If serving as a liaison between the community and the Fire Department is still a critical part of the mission, then a concerted effort needs to be made to have more community-wide members of the SFFHS and Museum.
- Update the 1996 Strategic Plan of the SFFHS and undergo an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) to the organization.
- Finalize the Trustees Manual that was started a few years ago and organize a formal board member orientation.
- Improve financial reporting process and ensure all board members understand their fiduciary responsibility.
- Complete a succession plan for the museum to prepare for the eventual retirement of the longtime curator, and become financially and institutionally ready to hire a director to oversee the operations of the museum. The board should focus more on policy making, fund raising and governing instead of running day-to-day operations.

- Finalize and approve the Collections Management Policy compiled and recommended by the curator. The museum must have solid, approved policies for accessioning, deaccessioning, exhibition, research, access, filming, conservation, preservation, etc.

These recommendations will be discussed in more detail in the Overview Section.

BRIEF INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

Inspired by visits to several fire museums while on vacation, Springfield Fire Inspector Robert White convinced Chief Peter Williams that Springfield should have its own fire museum. Subsequently, Inspector White, Chief Williams and other involved fire fighters incorporated The Springfield Fire Fighters Historical Society in May 1983 as a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization.

The Springfield Fire Fighters Museum, which opened in June of that year with Robin F. Palmer as its director, originally consisted of 1200 sq. ft. of space on the first floor of Fire Headquarters. The museum featured exhibits that documented the history of the Springfield Division of Fire from its inception in 1886.

Springfield's Fire museum has influenced Fire departments in other communities to create collections that relate to their own histories. The SFFHS works in cooperation with, but does not come under the control of, the Springfield Division of Fire. Financial support comes from membership dues, donations, and grants from various government

agencies and private organizations. The SFFHS receives no tax funds from the City of Springfield, State of Illinois, or the Federal Government.

In its twenty five years of operation, The Springfield Fire Fighters Museum has grown from an initial 1,200 sq. ft. to nearly 4,000 sq. ft. of exhibits, offices, and storage. The SFFHS publishes a quarterly newsletter, operates a museum store, The Fire Fighters Shop, and supports a Website.

The Museum is open to the public Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and admission is free. Guided tours are offered by reservation. They currently have three part time staff: curator, office manager and gift shop manager.

MISSION AND INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING

Mission and Vision

The stated mission of the SFFHS is “The Springfield Fire Fighters Historical Society and Museum exists to collect and preserve the history of fire fighters and to use its collection and programs to educate the public and foster mutual understanding and respect between fire fighters and the public.” The board is committed and understands its role in collecting and preserving fire history and educating the public. The area that needs more development is how they can better fulfill the part of the mission that involves fostering mutual understanding and respect between the department and the public.

A majority of the board's efforts are focused solely on communicating with the Fire Department and its recruits. Since the vast majority of the museum's members, an impressive number at over 900, are current or former fire fighters, this is understandable to some extent. However, if the board is sincere in its desire to serve the public at large, then a community-wide membership drive needs to be undertaken. Some possibilities for this are targeting the Fire Auxiliary groups, individuals attending outreach programs/events, and City of Springfield or Sangamon County employees. The Membership DVD that was recently produced is a fantastic promotional piece, but directly targets fire fighters. This could be easily edited to target the general public.

Institutional Planning

The board of the SFFHS has a clear vision of where they want to be in the next few years, but they have no plan, written or verbal, on how to get there. Their vision, a plan of necessity, is to be in a new facility outside of their current home. They need space to expand their exhibits, store and display their collections appropriately, provide better access and more convenient, free parking for their guests, and better house the administrative functions of the museum staff. They articulate their passion for this vision very clearly. The last Strategic Plan was approved in 1996. They completed a MAP Institutional Assessment in 1994. Both of these written documents need to be revisited, reviewed, and revised to reflect the current status of the SFFHS and Museum. This new document, with official board approval, will serve as a guide for the board and staff,

and as a tool in explaining the goals of the organization to funders, potential and new board members, and organizational members.

Institutional Performance Measures

The SFFHS currently has no performance measures in place for evaluating its board members or the performance of the museum's programs, exhibits, and services. In order to understand if it is truly providing its members and the public what they want, they must be surveyed and asked their opinions. Visitors can provide insight into new program ideas, improved services, and how to better meet their needs. To ensure that board members are operating in an informed, ethical, and financially responsible manner, evaluation is critical. Tools and resources dealing with visitor and board evaluation are listed in the appendices at the end of this report.

Engaging the Community

The SFFHS is currently contracting with Marketing Resources, a full service marketing, public relations and fundraising firm in Illinois, to improve their public awareness and plan a fundraising gala in the fall. Some of the events they are participating in is a fire fighters Expo in May, an annual golf tournament in July, and the Gala in October. They are hoping that by working with Marketing Resources, they will gain enough public exposure to kick off their capital campaign, get an influx of funds, and start looking for buildings to move in to and build to suit their needs.

Some members of the board, along with the part-time staff, make public appearances and presentations to civic groups, retirement/nursing homes, schools, and fire fraternal organizations. The part time staff works 21 hours or less a week, so they are strapped for opportunity to facilitate more outreach programs. They are also limited in the number of on-site visitors they serve because they are not open on weekends. The board is hampered by their volunteer time in attending all events that could garner them more exposure. The SFFHS and Museum would greatly benefit from hiring a full time director who would serve as a consistent ambassador for the museum, their programs and goals.

As mentioned previously, the SFFHS spends the majority of its time and efforts marketing itself to the fire fighters, past and present, of the Springfield Fire Department. This is of financial necessity, as over 500 fire fighters participate in payroll deduction to support the monthly expenses of the museum. If the human resources existed to maintain the current level of membership, but also to expand community membership, then a more diversified income stream could be generated. The general public is an untapped and invaluable market. To be viable in the long term, the entire community must be served.

GOVERNANCE

Recruitment and Orientation

The SFFHS board is diversified in terms of skills and resources. They benefit immensely from the dedicated retired and current fire fighters who sit on the board.

They speak with true passion for the needs and purpose of the SFFHS and museum. They are also fortunate to have legal representation which helped them deal with an issue a couple of years ago (this will be discussed in Financial Stability), an author who is noted for his books that are sold in the Fire Fighters Shop and who frequently speaks on behalf of the museum, a media producer who created their membership promotional DVD, and a library communications coordinator who speaks often about the history preserved by the museum. All of these individuals comprise a dedicated team that has made this small Fire museum stable for 25 years.

Where the board lacks representation is in their ethnic make-up. Springfield and Sangamon County are roughly 70% white and 25% black/African American. The board does not reflect these percentages. This is an area to focus on as they work on understanding the needs of the community and new audiences. Staff shared that attempts have been made to improve the diversity of exhibits and collections, but the efforts were not very successful. If board members were reflective of the communities that need to be reached and represented in the museum, this task might be made easier.

The SFFHS board selects and recruits new members strictly by personal recommendations of existing board members. If an individual is considered to have a skill or interest that would benefit the board, they are approached and asked to join.

The area of recruitment and orientation is a stated concern in the SFFHS application

and self study. Although the board has started what promises to be a well organized and useful Trustees Manual, it has never been finalized and approved by the board. Some board members have left soon after joining because they were not sure what their role was or what they could contribute. It is essential that this manual be pulled out, updated with current information, and officially approved by the board. At that point, orientations will need to be scheduled with new members to go over the materials and give them a good overview of the SFFHS and its responsibilities. It would also be beneficial for the curator to give an overview of museum principles and the responsibilities surrounding these duties. This could be done by setting official start dates for new members throughout the year so as not to overtax the board. Orientations could be scheduled twice a year or quarterly, depending on the number of new members expected.

Relationship with Staff

The SFFHS currently does not employ a director. This choice, compounded with the fact that the museum staff all work between only 18 and 21 hours a week, leads to an inconsistent museum presence at the museum and in the community. The board president plays an active role in this absence of a director, and maintains communication with the staff as often as possible. One of my primary recommendations is that the board, as part of the strategic planning process, should develop a timeline for securing a full time director. This would provide the museum with a consistent presence in the museum, and most importantly, a constant ambassador in the community. This ensures that as board members and presidents come and go, the museum still has the institutional knowledge and relationships in place. Since the

director is not present to complete staff evaluations, the board needs to ensure that they take the time to sit down with the staff to do their performance evaluations and to set expectations. This has been done inconsistently.

Founding Documents

The Code of Regulations (By-Laws) of the SFFHS was last amended and revised January 20, 2000. It lays out clear guidelines for the structure and function of the organization. However, the Code only directs the Trustee-Director relationship, and in the absence of a Director, there are no clear written guidelines on how other staff and board relationships should function. If the SFFHS has no intention of hiring a director in the near future, they should add an amendment to the Code dealing with how the museum should function in the absence of this position. A simple statement added to the end of Article IV Section Two, Trustee-Director Relationship, which says, "Due to any absence or vacancy in the Executive Director position, the reporting structure will be..." This addition could lend itself to extended absences once a director is hired or vacancies in the position. Reporting structure and responsibility of part-time staff would be clarified. Since it has been eight years since the Code has been revised, a thorough review as part of the Strategic Planning process would be in order.

A draft of a Trustees Manual has been in the draft stage since 2003. Finishing and approving this document is essential to effective board operations as well as appropriate board member orientation. The completed components of this manual clearly lay out the roles of board members. Sections that need to be completed include

the Board Structure, Board Policies, and Documents. The manual, once completed, will be a thorough, one source document for answering all questions related to the SFFHS.

Structure

The completed Committees of the SFFHS, as outlined in the draft Trustee Manual, cover the following areas: education and programs, finance, fundraising, and marketing/public relations. Uncompleted sections include: collections, facilities and property, governance, membership, personnel, technology, and task force/ad hoc committees. Once the committee responsibilities are fully fleshed out for the manual, they will represent major aspects of the governance functions. The size of the board is appropriate for serving the needs of the museum. The structure of the board and its committees, though, are not necessarily the most efficient. There are too many committees for too few board members. This leads to members serving on multiple committees and being overtaxed. Focusing the priorities on fewer committees that truly deal with governance issues (i.e., facilities and property, finance, fundraising, governance, membership, marketing, and personnel) would make the most use of the board members skills and resources. Other committee duties such as Collections and Education and Programs are better handled by staff since they handle these issues on a daily basis. Staff would need to be empowered to make recommendations to the board on policy issues, and let the board know when they need assistance with these areas.

The membership of the board has an appropriate mix of tenured individuals and “newer blood.” They have an air of enthusiasm and energy for their goals and challenges, and a good mix of skill sets and backgrounds. The Code of Regulations calls for elections of officers every two years, with no officer serving more than two terms. There are no term limits for non-officer trustee positions. There was a conscious effort expressed to bring in newer leadership to the board and to the officer positions. If stagnation ever becomes a problem, the board might want to consider establishing term limits for non-officer positions. This does not appear to be causing any issues for the SFFHS at this time.

Responsibilities

There is not a clear understanding on the part of all members regarding their roles and responsibilities. This is mentioned in the self study activities and questions revolving around the lack of effective board member orientation. Since there has not been a director in a few years, there also seems to be confusion about what the true role of a board is, and what the staff should be responsible for. The board currently takes on many of the roles and responsibilities that would normally be delegated to a full-time director. If the board makes an effort to get the Trustees Manual finished and approved, and set up a system of board member orientation, it is only natural that this area would improve.

The board members are expected to serve as ambassadors in the community, and seem to take great pride in this duty. This responsibility is communicated verbally at board and committee meetings, and written in the newsletter. The Draft Trustee Manual also includes a Trustee Statement of Understanding that must be signed by each board member. A statement in this agreement says, "I will interpret the organization's work and values to the community, represent the organization, and act as an advocate." Members who speak in the community give reports on their efforts and the feedback that they receive. The Fire fighters who sit on the board serve in an additional capacity of being the "Fire face" of the museum. They try to communicate the importance of supporting the museum to their fellow fire fighters. They do this with conviction and with patience as they do not always get the response they want or expect. But, they keep up the effort and try to reach every single fire fighter with their message.

The Draft Trustees Manual includes a section on the expectations for the financial support of trustees. The manual states that members must use prudence in the control and transfer of funds, read and understand all financial statements, give an annual gift in keeping with personal means, and to help in fundraising through personal influence. Three out of thirteen points detailed in the Trustee Statement of Understanding deal directly with the fiduciary responsibilities of board members. One item that is not listed, but that seems appropriate, is a requirement that board members become members of the museum. Given the dedication on the board, I feel sure that this is definitely already in practice, but a written requirement would state the expectation.

The Draft Trustees Manual and Statement of Understanding also address expectations of volunteering time and expertise to the institution. In a listing of Individual Board Member Responsibilities, some of these duties include, “serve in leadership positions and undertake special assignments willingly and enthusiastically..., follow trends in SFFHS field of interest..., prepare for, attend, and participate in board and committee meetings, including appropriate organizational activities.” Included in the Statement of Understanding are expectations of active participation in fundraising and special events, and in actively promoting and supporting the SFFHS and staff of the museum.

The interactions I witnessed showed that the expectations for volunteering and promoting the museum, though not approved in a final written format, are definitely the practice of the organization. In two brief days, I heard about two board members’ presentations to civic groups, two members’ representation on the Illinois Museums board, three members paying for museum expenditures out of their own pocket, one member making and donating a promotional sign, two members writing about the fantastic history preserved at the museum, and numerous examples of spreading the message of the SFFHS and museum to the public and fire force. When the additional step of having a formal manual and orientation is in place, all board members – new and old – can have the same, solid expectations of performance outlined.

Accountability and Ethics

The Draft Trustees Manual includes a section on the responsibilities of board members. Ensuring legal and ethical integrity and maintaining accountability is listed. There is also an entire section dedicated to ethics, with completed areas addressing the Code of Ethics, Ethics Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, and Disclosure Statement. All of these policies outline the ethical responsibility that the board has a non-profit organization. The Code of Ethics includes the statement, “To devote time to learn how the institution functions – its uniqueness, strengths, and needs, its place in the industry.” This small, dedicated board is so strapped for time and resources that they have not had the time or energy to dedicate to fully understanding the ethical roles and accountability involved in operating a museum. They need to place a new priority on understanding museums as a profession and becoming familiar with museum standards and best practices. An area that might be further developed is museum collections-related ethics. The American Association of Museums Code of Ethics is available on their web site at <http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/index.cfm>.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

One of the main goals of the SFFHS board in this assessment is to seek recommendations on how to ensure the organization has adequate resources. They have begun what might be a start to improving this area – they have hired the company of Marketing Resources, as mentioned in a previous section, to expand their audience and help them undertake a new fundraiser. The board has set a limit to how long they will contract with Marketing Resources, understanding that it will take a certain length of time to see results. The board has no reserve funds and no endowment fund in place in the event that other sources of revenue dry up. The vast majority of the museum

budget is comprised of membership revenue. Of the \$39,736 in membership revenue raised in 2007-2008, \$39,205 was derived from fire fighter payroll deduction, \$156 from individual memberships, \$75 in retired fire fighters memberships, and \$300 other. The main area where resources need to be diversified is in memberships. By increasing communications, marketing and promotion to the community at large, more income could come in through varied sources, and the SFFHS could better fulfill its mission.

Another area of diversification that needs to be pursued is grant funding. In order to pursue grants, however, the board needs to be prepared. The SFFHS must get a certified audit done of its finances. The staff had a potential grant application prepared and ready to submit, but the board did not have an audit prepared. Most grantors will require a certified audit annually or biannually in order ensure that their funds will be spent wisely and prudently. The board will also need to revise and update its Strategic Plan. Grantors want to see that the organization is truly organized, purposed, and strategic in its thinking. It is not sufficient to have good ideas. Those ideas need to be written down, voted on, and promoted. It would be beneficial for the SFFHS to pursue the Collections Management and Institutional MAPs. The findings and recommendations from both of these assessments could provide the board with ideas for fundable, grant-worthy projects that would improve their overall museum operations.

The SFFHS board needs to be more intimately familiar with the finances of the organization. The board experienced a recent scare in which they discovered that the

former director had not filed their 990 forms for a few years. They were in jeopardy of losing their non-profit status and facing thousands of dollars in fines. A lawyer on the board got this situation resolved through much effort, but this should be the ultimate example of the importance of informed knowledge. At the board meeting I attended, the profit and loss statement for the previous year was presented. Not a single board member asked any questions about this statement. Discussion of the financial realities of the organization is imperative. During my visits to the museum, they had their internet/e-mail connection shut off due to lack of/late payments. This totally disrupted business with researchers, potential visitors, colleagues, etc. The problem with accounts payable was being taken care of, and other means of bookkeeping secured. Last year's expenditure of \$6,750 for accounting services that did not include an audit seems extremely excessive for an organizational budget of this size. I would encourage the board to have frequent dialogue about these financial issues and to be more directly involved in financial matters.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The SFFHS is fortunate to have a long-term staff that has not had a problem remaining classified as part-time employees. The Fire Fighters Shop Manager, Louise Sweeney, has been involved with the museum almost since its inception. She is married to a fire fighter and helps with collaboration between a Fraternal Order of Leatherheads group and the SFFHS and museum. She also takes stock to outreach events to sell outside of the museum. She researches what items might sell well with their audiences and tries to keep costs for merchandise down. If the Fire Fighters Shop was slightly larger, an even broader range of merchandise could be offered. This position works no more than

16 hours a week. Curator John Berry started with the museum as an intern in 1999, soon became Collections Manager, and was appointed Curator in 2005. A retired Coast Guard officer, Berry brings an advanced history degree to the museum, and has worked on professionalizing the museum operations. His improvements will be discussed in the next two sections. The Curator position is budgeted at no more than 21 hours a week. The Office Manager, Sharon Jenkins, joined the museum right after Berry. Her main duties are to provide customer service and administrative functions, but she is also the editor of the SFFHS newsletter. She has vast experience in non-profits and brings many skills to the museum. The Office Manager is allocated 18 hours a week.

This is an enormously talented and dedicated staff. Due to their years with the museum, and the institutional knowledge that they possess, the board would be wise to start interviewing the staff about the depth and content of their duties and to seek their input on a Succession Plan for staffing the museum. Since their hours are limited due to current budget necessity, it would be useful to know what programs, services and resources they could produce if the positions were budgeted full time. This is not to say that three full-time positions is the goal – only an exercise in seeing what the potential of the museum could be with greater staffing levels.

The board does have a thorough Personnel Manual that was approved by the Executive Board May 17, 2001. It includes sections on Working at SFFHS (attendance, conduct,

work related illness or injury, separation, termination, etc.), Payroll Procedures, Benefits, Employee Performance, and Policies (EEO, Non-Harassment, Substance Abuse, and Discipline). There is an acknowledgement page for the employee to sign. This policy should be reviewed for accuracy, legalities, and the need for updates at least every two years. In the absence of a director, the board should also ensure that the staff receives annual evaluations. This appraisal period will provide opportunities for performance feedback, but it will also provide the board an opportunity to check in on the employee, their intentions for continued employment for proper planning, and allow the board to hear first-hand what happens at the museum on a daily basis.

INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

The SFFHS currently has no mechanism in place to evaluate the museum's performance with its audience. An easy way to do this would be to place a guest register with a place for comments by the door, or to place a visitor survey with a closed suggestion box by the door. Comments left by visitors can be a key element in proving need to potential funders. For instance, if a majority of comments say that the visitors wished they could have seen more exhibits, or a display of fire vehicles, there is evidence that this is truly a desire of your audiences. Numerous sample visitor surveys can be found by doing a Google internet search for "museum visitor surveys." The museum has interesting exhibits, and Curator Berry has worked diligently over the years to professionalize many of the exhibits with better labels and display techniques. There are still several older exhibits, but time is scarce to complete this part of his duties. There is a potential for projects that would appeal to college interns in public history, museum studies, or related fields. Case Western University has a graduate program in

Art History and Museum Studies, as well as undergraduate and graduate programs in History. The program obviously has a main focus in art museums, but there may be some students with a history focus as well. Investigating the possibility of making the Springfield Fire Fighters Museum an official internship site, or even a volunteer opportunity, would be beneficial for tackling projects that the small staff can not accomplish alone.

COLLECTIONS STEWARDSHIP

The SFFHS has an admiration and thorough appreciation for its collections. The artifacts and documents contained in the collection are truly remarkable, and document not just the Fire Department, but a large part of the history of Springfield as well. The Fire Department and the community at large should feel very fortunate that this dedicated group of board members has cared enough over the last 25 years to amass this collection and commit themselves to caring for it. Although they have a great sense of the importance of the collection, the board doesn't have as great an understanding of the principles of caring for the collection. They have been presented with a Collections Management Policy by the Curator, but have not yet acted on approving it as policy. Having an approved policy will give staff the official direction and backing to enact and uphold the professional policies that the field requires. It will also prove to potential funders that they are committed to caring for the collections that they hold in the public trust. In order to compete for funds for collections care, preservation projects, or general grants as a "museum," there are standards and best practices that must be followed. In the bibliography is a new book published by the American Associations of Museums on this very subject. It is a compact, easy to read publication on the duties of

museums and trustees. Curator Berry has focused much time and energy to transferring collections information into PastPerfect Museum Software. This is a great asset for the museum operations and for the many researchers who contact them. The tools from PastPerfect could also prove useful to coordinating a membership and volunteer database and fundraising efforts.

SUMMARY

The Springfield Fire Fighters Historical Society is to be commended for their commitment to the Springfield Fire Fighters Museum and for seeking assistance through the Museum Assessment Program. They have expressed a desire to make themselves more professional as an organization. Listed below are recommendations to assist them in their efforts.

Short Range Objectives (within six to nine months):

- Understand and train board on standards and best practices of museum operations.
- Review existing mission statement.
- Update the 1996 Strategic Plan.
- Finalize the Trustees Manual.
- Finalize and approve the Collections Management Policy.
- Improve financial reporting process.
- Complete a certified financial audit.

Medium Range Objectives (within nine to eighteen months):

- Start pursuing more museum project grant opportunities.
- Complete a succession plan.
- Establish a method of board member evaluation and orientation.
- Establish a method of visitor evaluation.
- Expand concept of membership base.

Long Range Objectives (within eighteen to thirty six months):

- Establish a solid method of board recruitment to ensure diversity of all types.
- Be prepared to hire a Director.
- Increase days/hours open to the public.
- Pursue internship and volunteer programs.
- Pursue other assessments through MAP (Institutional, Collections Management, and then Public Dimension).

I was honored to visit with the board and staff of the Springfield Fire Fighters Historical Society and Museum. They are such a dedicated, skilled team. Having the tools and resources necessary to improve their operations will only make them more successful.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AAM Information Center online <http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ic/index.cfm>, is available to AAM members. Reference services and sample documents are available to AAM institutional members.

www.BoardSource.org - BoardSource, the voice of nonprofit governance, is dedicated to increasing the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations by strengthening their boards of directors. Its highly acclaimed programs and services mobilize boards so that organizations fulfill their missions, achieve their goals, increase their impact, and extend their influence. BoardSource, formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, is a 501(c)(3) organization. Free monthly online newsletter.

www.blueavocado.org - Blue Avocado speaks for and from the people in community-based nonprofits.

www.state.il.us/hpa/iam/ – Illinois Association of Museums; workshop and conference opportunities.

[Handbook for Museum Trustees](#) by Harold and Susan Skramstad - Make your museum board the best that it can possibly be! This book from Harold and Susan Skramstad, two of the field's most highly regarded experts in museum management, gives you the tools you and your board need to handle the challenges facing museums today. *A Handbook for Museum Trustees* was written to help museum trustees better understand the "why" and the "how" of trusteeship, giving board members and museum directors a thorough understanding of their critical and non-negotiable duties. The book clearly identifies areas of responsibility and offers valuable, how-to advice on board discussion and decision-making, providing practical guidelines for improving board practices and fine-tuning the work of the effective board.

Museum Governance by Marie Malaro - Marie Malaro explains the purpose and use of professional codes of ethics and offers practical advice about board education and its role in fostering the long-term health of an organization. She discusses how to set collection strategies, balance mission and entrepreneurial ventures, handle deaccessioning, maintain effective board oversight, approach automation, and deal with repatriation requests.

Ultimate Board Member's Book by Kay Sprinkel Grace - Operate with maximum effectiveness, clarify exactly what their job is, ensure that all members are on the same page with respect to roles and responsibilities. It will take your board members only one hour to read, but they'll come away with a firm command of how to help your organization succeed. This title explains how boards work, what the job entails, time commitment, role of staff, serving on committees, fundraising, conflicts of interest, group decision-making, effective recruiting, de-enlisting board members, board self-evaluation, and more.

Manual of Strategic Planning for Museums by Gail Dexter Lord and Kate Markert - There are no guarantees that the outcomes of a strategic planning process will be entirely successful, or that all change will be positive for everyone. However, if the process is well planned, open and transparent, the result is more likely to be a relevant, inspiring and effective plan that brings Board and staff together around common goals that will move the museum forward and improve performance. *The Manual of Strategic Planning for Museums* offers proven methods for successful strategic planning in museums from two experienced leaders in the field.

National Standards and Best Practices for U.S. Museums Commentary by Elizabeth E. Merritt - For the first time, the U.S. museum profession's current operating standards in areas from public accountability to facilities and risk management are available in a single publication. This guide is an essential reference work for the museum community, presenting the ideals that should be upheld by every museum striving to maintain excellence in its operations. An introductory section explains how virtually anyone associated with museums will find the book valuable, from trustees to staff to funders and the media. It is followed by a full outline of the standards, including the overarching Characteristics of Excellence and the seven areas of performance they address. Throughout the book is commentary by Elizabeth E. Merritt, former director of AAM's Museum Advancement and Excellence Department and founding director of AAM's Center for the Future of Museums.

APPENDICES

Board of Directors Self-Evaluation

Written by Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD, Authenticity Consulting, LLC. Copyright 1997-2008.

Adapted from the Field Guide to Developing and Operating Your Nonprofit Board of Directors.

The following table can be used by all board members and the chief executive to get an impression of how well the board is doing. The table is a rather basic form for board evaluation. But, if the evaluation is conducted wholeheartedly, the form should indicate how the board is generally doing in conducting its role.

Each member and the chief executive should complete the form about four weeks before a board retreat. Members attach suggestions about how the board could get higher ratings for any or all of the following 14 considerations.

Ideally, someone outside the organization receives the completed forms, collates the results and writes a report indicating the number of respondents who rated the board for each of the 12 considerations.

	Considerations	5 Very Good	4 Good	3 Ave.	2 Fair	1 Poor
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1	board has full and common understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a board					
2	board members understand the organization's mission and its products / programs					
3	structural pattern (board, officers, committees, executive and staff) is clear					
4	board has clear goals and actions resulting from relevant and realistic strategic planning					
5	board attends to policy-related decisions which effectively guide operational activities of staff					
6	board receives regular reports on finances/budgets, products/program performance and other important matters					
7	board helps set fundraising goals and is actively involved in fundraising (<i>nonprofit</i>)					
8	board effectively represents the organization to the community					
9	board meetings facilitate focus and progress on important organizational matters					
10	board regularly monitors and evaluates progress toward strategic goals and product/ program performance					
11	board regularly evaluates and develops the chief executive					
12	board has approved comprehensive personnel policies which have been reviewed by a qualified professional					
13	each member of the board feels involved and interested in the board's work					
14	all necessary skills, stakeholders and diversity are					

	represented on the board					
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Please list the three to five points on which you believe the board should focus its attention in the next year. Be as specific as possible in identifying these points.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Individual Board Member Evaluation Form

Your name: _____

Part 1 Are you satisfied with your performance as a board member in the following areas: (check spaces that apply below)

	Very good	Adequate	Needs work
Input in policy development and decision-making	_____	_____	_____
Committee participation	_____	_____	_____
Fund-raising	_____	_____	_____
Community outreach	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____

Part 2: What factors contributed to your performance or lack of performance in the areas above: (please be specific)

Part 3: Here's what I would need from the organization to maintain/increase my level of board commitment:

Part 4: Do you have any other comments or suggestions that will help the board increase its effectiveness?

Individual Board Member Self-Evaluation

Use the following questions for individual board member evaluation. For board members answering yes to these questions, they are likely to be fulfilling their responsibilities as board members.

Yes No Not Sure

1. Do I understand and support the mission of the organization?
2. Am I knowledgeable about the organization's programs and services?
3. Do I follow trends and important developments related to this organization?
4. Do I assist with fund-raising and/or give a significant annual gift to the organization?
5. Do I read and understand the organization's financial statements?
6. Do I have a good working relationship with the chief executive?
7. Do I recommend individuals for service to this board?
8. Do I prepare for and participate in board meetings and committee meetings?
9. Do I act as a good-will ambassador to the organization?
10. Do I find serving on the board to be a satisfying and rewarding experience?

