

AGENDA
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
May 23, 2021, 12:00 PM
Online Meeting

President Michael Berman called the meeting to order

Secretary Mathew Millen called the roll. See enclosure.

Michael Rugel provided a staff update on the museum's status and recent programs. See Reports transcript enclosure.

Pamela Elbe provided a staff update on exhibits and collections. See Reports transcript enclosure.

Michael Berman delivered the president's report. He hopes to open the Vietnam exhibition for Veterans Day. See Reports transcript enclosure.

Alan Paley delivered the Budget Report. Numbers are being prepared and will be reported at the August convention. See Reports transcript enclosure.

Elaine Bernstein delivered the personnel report. See Reports transcript enclosure.

Kim Queen delivered the exhibits and programs report. He discussed opportunities to collaborate with other museums. See Reports transcript enclosure.

Carol Berman delivered the collections report. She discussed planning for a Women in the Military exhibit including collecting stories via mailed survey and video interviews at convention.

Iris Goldwasser delivered the fundraising report. The Remembrance Walk is almost complete, there are approximately 30 pavers remaining. They can be reserved with a deposit. The Our Heroes Photos continue to be available for a discounted \$100. Work is continuing the development of the Memorial Garden. Four proposals for the work have been received. She recommended the Callaway proposal.

- Certificates Report (Hannah Deutch)

Old Business

- David Magidson recommended tying Vietnam exhibit to JWV 125th anniversary.
- Pledges were taken

New Business

Ed Goldwasser moved to accept the Calloway proposal for creation of the Memorial Garden. The motion was seconded and passed.

**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY
Board of Directors**

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Staff Updates

Michael Rugel: We are back, essentially, to being free of any kind of COVID restrictions from the city. So, we're open we're open to groups. We theoretically could have programs in the building but we've been keeping things online for the moment. We're also keeping the mask requirement in place as an institution. So that's where we are right now with regards to that. The recent online programs we've had talks. We just had one from Bryan Mark Rigg on Iwo Jima and we had two sessions of Vietnam veterans panels recently and both of those were online events that we got a lot of positive feedback for we've got one upcoming talk scheduled from Howard Mortman who wrote a book called *When Rabbis Bless Congress* and it's about the rabbis that have made the opening prayers before congress and a significant number of them are military chaplains. So, we're going to partner with the Jewish Welfare Board on that program so that's coming up June 10th. We should get some more stuff on the schedule for the for the summer and fall coming up there's a lot of good potential speakers that we have and for now we're keeping those online. I think by the fall we'll probably have a hybrid approach where we're both in the building and online in some format whether it's a meeting or streaming or what we'll have to figure that out.

We've been continuing to work on other online stuff including collaborating with the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia on a website project so that's gotten started and should be available before for too long we don't have a real schedule on that we ordinarily at this time of year are getting ready for our walk weekend with the other museums in the Dupont Kalorama Museums Consortium. That's off this year as it was last year, but what we're doing instead is trying to launch a virtual walking tour of the of the neighborhood and the museums in it that somebody could actually walk with their phone or they can do it on their couch and see the neighborhood. We're using a platform called Vamonde for that and so that walking tour should be available the first week of June that'll launch and that'll be with us and then the four other museums that are in the historic neighborhood consortium

Michael Berman: Yes, mike why don't you tell us how many people attended each of those three virtual events

Michael Rugel: Yeah, the Bryan Mark Rigg talk on Iwo Jima, it was it was around 160 and I don't have the exact numbers in front of me but it was around 160 and the Vietnam veterans panel were both in the 110 to 120 range for each of those sessions.

Pamela Elbe: Trying to be business as usual so i've been keeping up with the records retention for both the museum and JWV, handling inquiries about donations and research inquiries and actually been talking to i got a few inquiries about Jewish Medal of Honor recipients who is and who isn't included in our list and that led me to talk to a woman at the Congressional Medal of Honor Society about some people. They have a few people on their list that we do not include and so i was asking her about her documentation and, strangely, they don't really have any primary source documentation for these people. It's all based on in 1894, I think it was the American Jewish Historical society presentation. So there's no primary source documentation on them. So we were talking about maybe they have a blog on the

Congressional Medal of Honor Society's website. So talking about maybe putting something together about the Jewish Medal of Honor recipients for that.

One of the big projects I've been working on that is finally completed is the digitization of all of the issues of the Jewish Veteran from the first ones in 1925 until now so that has all been digitized and i'm working on trying to find a way to make it accessible to the public because it is a huge file so it's not like it'll be easy to just put on our website and people might not necessarily be able to find it that way anyway. So, working on a way to bring it to the public, but as of now all of the issues of the Jewish Veteran that we have have been scanned. So that's great and that was made possible by a donor.

The other big thing that I've been working on are exhibits the women in the military exhibit is still in the gathering information stage. The big one that we've been working on is the Vietnam exhibit which I'm sure Kim Queen and Bob Jacobs will probably talk about that more. But the Vietnam veterans committee is working on actually putting that together and i'm just kind of assisting them. So that is hopefully going to open november 10th. That's going to involve a lot of hustling and a lot of trying to pull stuff together in the next few months. But we're working on a November 10th opening for that. We have the financing for that I think i think we are pretty well funded for that we don't have an exact budget, but i think i'm based on the amount of money they raised we're pretty close to covering it all, no more than that.

President's Report

Michael Berman:

Okay we get down to the boring part, my report. Again you heard my report is basically Pam and Mike's, who are two of our directors now and are outstanding helping the museum. We're very proud of that museum we're very proud and looking forward to having the exhibit open November 10th, if at all possible. Perhaps we can reach out to someone from the municipality and from the Jewish Welfare Board and get a ribbon cutting like we have in the past and have a ribbon cutting to open that exhibit. The women in the military, I think Carol Berman's on the line and she can fill us in as to where she envisions that going. Carol has advanced degrees that will give us some help, a lot of help, and we look forward to that exhibit coming in.

Budget Report

Alan Paley: I'm waiting to get the financials from Julia at the end of June and then I will put my numbers together to present them at the museum meeting during the convention.

Personnel Report

Elaine Bernstein: First, I would like to announce that we have changed the title for Mike Rugel to Director of Museum Programs and Content and for Pam Elbe, her title is now Director of Collections, Archives and Exhibitions. I would like it known that i tried as much as i can to fight for them for a raise and they each both did receive a raise this year. And i just want to thank both of you for all your hard work. You guys do a tremendous job at the museum and we're looking forward to seeing both of you at the convention this year.

Exhibits and Programs Report

Kim Queen: First of all, I would like to thank Mike Rugel and Pam Elbe for their help in my ability to oversee this committee and as well as the committee members who have contributed so much to making this work. Since our last meeting, we've had two committee meetings. The most recent one was last week. We'll have another committee meeting in July just before convention.

So, what we've been working at is to increase our collaboration with other Jewish museums and military museums throughout the country to discover what they have in the way of jewish military history. Also to look at sharing programs with them.

I know Mike has made some great inroads with the National Jewish museum of history in Philadelphia. We think that that is going to be very fruitful for both organizations we're also looking forward to more activities of great success with the online programs and so we got that then the marketing committee of JWV has purchased a convention display booth and where working on getting the graphics together for that but it's a basically a four panel booth with a table cover and a cocktail stand and we plan on having advertising and information about the museum as a permanent part of this convention display we already have plans to go to two conventions with this and if you want more information on it you can contact me offline.

Collections report

Carol Berman: I'm going to be very brief this time. With the women in the military exhibit, like Pam stated this morning, we're in the information collection stage. At this time in speaking to my cousin, Mike Berman, I stated to him that I will be requesting reimbursement for postage, because I feel that, in order to adequately represent the voices of women who are not only members of JWV but to also maybe gather information from other sources, my intent is to ensure that a survey is sent out to every woman member of JWV to allow them to at least contribute their voice to this project. During the convention, my intent is to get us a sample of the voices of males and the women who are part of the auxiliary to survey them during the convention itself when you all come to here to New Orleans.

I'm also thinking, I'm not exactly sure, but once we get the committee for the women in the military exhibit together, I'm interested in possibly incorporating the voice of Israeli Jewish women as well. Because now

as we move forward and since we have strong bonds in Israel and there are many women who leave America and serve in the Israeli army that might be a point that we may want to incorporate in the exhibit. But I'm not exactly sure at this current time.

One thing I wanted to put out there. We are having a convention and it seems as if, I'm not exactly sure how to phrase this, is there a possibility for someone to set up, maybe a booth, or an area in which we can record the voices and experiences of our veterans when they come to New Orleans? Meaning, similar to other museums who are capturing the experiences of their members, is it possible for us to maybe set up a chair, a camera and let our folks talk about, not only the experiences of war but the experiences of being a Jewish individual in in the services? Is that possible?

Michael Berman: We've done that before.

Michael Rugel: That's absolutely possible. We have the equipment we just have to set up an area and set up a schedule for that type of thing. But there is no reason why we can't collect those stories on camera.

Carol Berman: Yes, and so if we collect those stories on camera, how will our members or the public access those stories? Meaning do we have the capabilities to where, if individuals come to the JWV website or the museum's website, they can see someone press a button and maybe hear their stories. I know that was a component of the museum but I'm just asking if it can be done to where individuals can access it externally.

Michael Rugel: yes, absolutely, there is no reason why not. That's technically not not that much of a challenge so it's just a matter of getting together and just you know deciding if we want you know hour-long interviews or if we want to just you know try to edit it into something that's going to be more short clips that people tend to watch, those kinds of decisions. But that's no problem getting video interviews on our website.

Michael Berman: Well, let me throw something out and I ask for a response. There is a possibility that some of our women suffered military sexual trauma that they are willing to have taped but not broadcast or shared but they want to get it out and put it on the table. Are we willing to have two versions: one for the public and one for the archives?

Carol Berman: You can, but that's a slippery slope there. It's a matter of protecting that information and how can you assure someone that total confidentiality within the realms of our organization. If we were a medical organization in our in our bases then I think we would have no absolute we would have no choice but to protect that but even so, for me dealing with that right now in in the military. It is something that that's very confidential and there's certain things in place to protect that. But I think we have to be honest up front to anyone in which we record with that that content in min. That it may not be 100% protected, but I really do believe this those individuals. Those women and look I hate to say this, but we look at just mostly women as victims there are men who are victims of sexual assault as well. As many of you know I'm currently a battalion commander and I have in the military we have what we called sexual assault

response coordinators (SARCs) and I have one within my formation and I've had to loan this individual out to another command dealing with the sexual assault of a of a male.

So, the overall situation is for anybody who's a victim, from my experience, if they decide to speak out, it's because of them wanting to make others aware of this happening and trying to prevent others from becoming victims. I tell my soldiers all the time that anyone who has the amount of time that I have in the military, at least 20 years or more, I can't think of one female that serves now or has served that has not been a victim of sexual harassment or sexual assault. The military is trying to change this culture. It's happening. To me, it's happening a little slow but it's happening. To deal with that, from our standpoint, I think it would be a very brave and bold step for JWV for the museum to do that. But at the same time we have to let those individuals know if you if you want to voice this, please note that we may not have the capability to keep it confidential.

Michael Rugel: We'll need a clearly worded release saying what we are going to use it for or not.

Michael Berman: Or not use it for. Pam, you agree, well we just we'll ask the questions we post to them hey this may become something that's vocal and you're definitely, Mike, right.

Carol Berman: right, you are definitely right Michael. You have to be a specific release but at the same time, we let them know that a hero or heroine comes in many forms and by them sharing they are contributing to the path and they are ensuring that we do what we do as men and women who serve. which is protect each other.

Fundraising Report

We have some work that we're working on, some projects but before i start i just want to remind you of some of our all the other projects that are not yet completed. While this pandemic has placed most of us in isolation, at least until recently, the NMAJMH has continued to operate as closely as normal as possible of course we continue to raise funds through our various projects. Our Remembrance Walk is almost complete, and we only have approximately 30 papers on the top step waiting to be engraved. If you have not yet placed your post or auxiliary family or some celebratory event on a paver, please don't wait anymore, Time is getting short, we will continue to allow you to place a \$100 deposit on a paver now and complete it at a later time. Right now, Ed and I will place the deposit ourselves for paver number 41 and I'll tell you the reason. Just above that is number 58. 58 was purchased in the name of our first great grandson Max earlier this year. Above it will be in the name of his grandmother Anita Goldwasser, our dear daughter-in-law who, unfortunately, passed away early this year and Max is her only grandchild and they will be together on the walk.

To continue, our kiosk heroes exhibit is still available. For some of you, we're missing your family's hero we don't see your hero's picture there. Why not? Everybody should have a picture on that cast aren't you proud of the part your hero paid in defense of our country. Although the cost is usually \$180 dollars, we're offering a special cost right now of only \$100. Please don't miss out on this special opportunity.

I hope many of you will remember our beautiful tree of honor that adorns a spectacular wall in our museum. While all the leaves have been spoken for there still remains several acorns and stones under the tree that remain available. We would like to really complete this project and look to you for help. More information will be forthcoming on that very shortly.

Work is continuing the development of the Memorial Garden, the newest project which will be implanted in the front of our building we have received four proposals for this newest project. But only one is complete and comprehensive that is Calloway which we have worked in the past including paver project and some other work that they've done inside the building. Their proposal oversees all aspects of this project and will be supervisory. The other three proposals did not include any of the electrical work or the provision of the blank pavers and for some even just the installation of the pavers we would like to investigate we would have to rather investigate and handle these parts of the project the electric and paver purchases and installation ourselves and act as our own contractors for part of this, Therefore we are unable to really make proper comparisons and so we recommend Calloway in as much as we have worked with them before and we've been satisfied with their work

I just want to remind everybody that we are at a board of directors meeting for this museum and as directors we have an obligation to promote and support these fundraising programs. We must raise the funds necessary to keep the NMAJMH viable in the future. This fundraising is vital to our success. Thank you.

Elaine Bernstein: Have we ever thought of having a special on the yahrzeit program, the computer yahrzeit program? Can you take that into consideration? Maybe running some sort of special on that?

Iris Goldwasser: We'll have to discuss it with Michael. That has not come up for a while.

Ed Goldwasser: I mean are we looking for bargains or are we looking to raise funds for our organization?

Elaine Bernstein: I think we're looking to raise funds but maybe we could raise some extra funds if we give some enticement.