

Seneca County Museum – Commissioner Mike Kerschner’s thoughts

- I.) **Commissioner Shayne Thomas proposed a roadmap last week**
 - a. Biggest agreement: a stakeholder group to help plan the future of the museum.
 - b. Previously had a Museum Advisory Board, could modify it to fit our needs.
 - c. Biggest disagreement: creating another layer of bureaucracy.
 - d. Just because we can afford it, does not mean it is the best decision for those that we represent. Our expenditures cannot be looked at in a vacuum, we have to consider and prioritize all budgetary items.
- II.) **Barnes-Deinzer Historical Foundation proposal**
 - a. Over the past 4-5 years, the foundation has saved the county more than \$50,000 by funding improvement projects.
 - b. Projects include work done on the porch, windows, doors, shutters and storage cases.
 - c. The foundation has helped to support the museum since its founding in 1977.
- III.) **Current costs to the county running the museum**
 - a. It costs about \$70,000 annually to operate the museum, not including deferred maintenance costs.
 - b. There are some structural issues, including a large electrical project that is in need that could cost \$100,000.
 - c. In February, the museum had 56 guests ... this means taxpayers were spending about \$100 per guest that month.
- IV.) **Irreconcilable differences between the Historical Foundation and the Historical Society**
 - a. There is a long-lasting conflict between the foundation and the historical society. I don’t place blame on either side.
 - b. We’ve made several attempts to bring them together under a common goal: to improve the museum, but with no success.
 - c. I’d like nothing better than to see the two bury the hatchet and work together, but the lack of cooperation and collaboration has led us to this difficult decision.
- V.) **Remove emotion, make a logical decision**
 - a. There is rarely, if ever, a situation where the government runs an organization or entity more efficiently than the private sector.
 - b. When government is in charge, it adds unnecessary layers of bureaucracy, which consequently leads to inefficient operations.
 - c. Take a deep breath, step back, take the personalities out of the situation, and decide what is best for the taxpayers we represent.
- VI.) **Advantages to the foundation’s offer**
 - a. The foundation has the financial resources to lend stability to the museum’s future
 - b. Each time there is a financial hiccup in the county, the museum is the first thing to close.
 - c. The offer would reduce the burden on the county’s budget and the taxpayers.
 - d. It also would improve the long-term viability of the museum, ensuring that our children and grandchildren can enjoy our community’s history.
 - e. The savings created by this decision would allow the county to use those funds on other pressing matters, such as EMS coverage or sheriff’s office training, equipment and personnel.

VII.) We appreciate the historical society, the foundation and all the folks who have worked hard to make the museum what it is today.

- a. This decision is not a personal indictment of the previous leadership.
- b. We must consider the long-term sustainability of the museum.
- c. We hope the volunteers find a way to put aside their differences and to stay involved.
- d. When millions were cut from budgets earlier this year, everything had to be looked at a little closer.
- e. With the foundation's offer, we may have found a way to continue offering the museum with no interruptions, regardless of the fiscal climate.

VIII.) After reviewing the facts, the unemotional, logical decision is to turn it over to the private sector

- a. We should form an advisory committee, but final operational decisions would be made by the foundation.
- b. The foundation would be responsible for maintenance, hours, displays, fundraising, marketing etc.
- c. Not only would the county save about \$70,000 annually with this plan, we would also save time so we can work on resolving other issues.
- d. We must honor our responsibility of doing what is best for the people who put us here.
- e. It is very clear this would relieve the burden on taxpayers while increasing the odds of long-term viability for the museum.

IX.) Conclusion

- a. If you remove the emotion and the personalities, the decision is relatively simple. This is the most logical decision that is in the best interest to the taxpayers.
- b. Do what is best for the long-term sustainability of the museum.
- c. Reduce the financial burden on the county budget and on taxpayers.