

# Seneca County Museum Proposal

*“Looking forward”*

► Commissioner  
Anthony Paradiso  
October 8, 2020



# Timeline

- **March 19: Museum closed due to COVID-19**
- **April 10: Museum Director laid off due to anticipated revenue losses related to health crisis**
- **July 30: Commissioners presented with unsolicited proposal from Barnes-Deinzer Seneca County Museum Foundation to take on more operational control at the museum.**
- **August 27: Commissioner Thomas makes proposal**
- **Sept. 3: Commissioner Kerschner makes proposal**
- **Oct. 8: Commissioner Paradiso makes proposal**

## The importance of the museum

- I believe in the museum and I value it
- It encapsulates our past, present and future
- It was a gift to us in the 1940s, and under any plan we adopt, we will continue to be the owners of the Seneca County Museum.
- We have financially supported it for decades
- The county owns the property, the buildings and most of the artifacts within the museum. I feel as commissioners, we have a fiduciary responsibility to care for it.

Research,  
interviews and  
other data  
collection

- I have recently visited the museum, walked through
- Interviewed numerous people on all sides of the issue
- Read and researched documentation related to the museum
- Spoke with the Ohio History Connection, representatives from the Hayes Presidential Center, people from Wood County about their museum, and more
- Received much correspondence from interested citizens and former elected officials
- Took some time to think about it, considered both Commissioner Thomas and Kerschner's proposals

## A compromise option

- Having listened to everyone and considering all viewpoints, I am proposing a compromise option
- **No one gets exactly what they want, but everyone gets something. We have many ideas and proposals to make the museum better. If everyone works together and are willing to compromise on some aspects of what they want, the biggest winner of all will be the people of Seneca County.**
- This proposal requires involvement and teamwork from the Seneca County Historical Society, the Barnes-Deinzer Foundation and county government.
- The next few slides will break down my proposal for each of the involved groups.

# My proposal: Barnes-Deinzer Foundation

- A three-year contract with the Barnes-Deinzer Museum Foundation giving the group operational control of the museum.
- The foundation would be financially responsible for operational expenses above utilities and basic maintenance, including capital projects.
- It would also work on fundraising ideas and opportunities, with the long-term goal of reducing the museum's reliance on county funding
- The foundation would be tasked with:
  - Hiring the director
  - Creating and executing a marketing plan
  - Scheduling tours and events
  - Working with schools on educational programming and collaborating with area businesses
  - Maintaining the building and creating a long-term facility plan

## My proposal: Historical Society

- The organization is full of volunteers with great institutional knowledge and ideas
- We must thank them and give them credit for their dedication and resiliency at the museum
- Under my plan, the museum would bring back former director Tonia Hoffert in a new role, cutting her to 30 hours per week while maintaining her benefits
- In cooperation with the foundation, Hoffert and other volunteers could be assigned projects such as:
  - Completing inventory
  - Facebook page management
  - General programming and displays in the Fort Ball Room
  - Biccentennial preparations
  - Several other ongoing and future improvement projects
  - Docent (help with tours)

## My proposal: Seneca County

- The county would continue paying Hoffert's salary and general light maintenance and utility costs
- Under this plan, the county would save about \$10,000 annually. Making the future of the museum less reliant on the unpredictable swings of the local economy
- It would create synergies, maximizing the efforts of the people most passionate about the museum, and directing those efforts
- Restructuring opens the door for other stakeholders from across the county to become more involved
- It's not the historical society's museum, or the foundation's, it belongs to the people of Seneca County



## A new museum *advisory* board system

- I believe we should re-organize the advisory board, similar to Commissioner Thomas' suggestion.
- This board will help set clear goals and direction for the museum.
- Would assist in guiding the museum forward to reach its long-term goals and with accountability related to those goals.
- Will serve as the eyes and ears of the commissioners. The commissioners still own the museum, and although they would not micromanage, they could lean on this board if there are ever disputes.
- Attempts to be more successful than last board by combating "gridlock" effect.

# Summary

- I believe this accentuates the strengths of each of these entities
  - We gain some big picture planning, marketing and other strategies with foundation leadership, while retaining the institutional knowledge from Hoffert and other Historical Society volunteers
- This leads to a better product at the museum, at a lower cost to county taxpayers
- Why turn operations over to the foundation?
  - They are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a dedicated and stable funding source. Making it so the museum becomes less reliant on public funding from the county to keep its doors open.
  - A change in administrative structure is warranted
  - Fresh ideas and a different perspective
  - Although the Foundation does not get exactly what its members proposed in July, the organization still has the opportunity to be more involved in operations.

## Summary (Pt. 2)

- The Historical Society's volunteers and former Director Tonia Hoffert don't get exactly what they want, but Hoffert keeps employment while being able to continue being actively involved with the museum.
- The county doesn't save as much as it could via the Foundation's first proposal, but it saves a significant amount of money. This makes the museum less reliant on taxpayer funding to keep the doors open.
- No one gets exactly what they want, but everyone gets something.

## What's next?

- With COVID-19 still being a challenge, an immediate public opening is not possible
- Would like to see a 4 or 5-month plan devised, with an opening planned for sometime in March.
- Much work to be done in that time period:
  - Form advisory board and begin meetings immediately
  - Work on devising structure and duties
  - Complete digital inventory
  - Review and prioritize current and future projects
  - Create marketing and events calendar
  - Clean and prepare museum for public opening
  - Approve a 2021 budget, work on a long-term capital projects budget