

Meeting with Melissa Mann and Mike Martin August 4, 2022

Mike Martin, Flagship Niagara League President, introduced Melissa Mann from PHMC and Scott Nick the past president of the FNL who is working on the negotiations for the sailing agreement.

Mike reviewed the instructions and the goals for the meeting.

Melissa Mann

- Worked for PHMC for ten years, nine years at the Drake's Well Site. She began as a volunteer, moved into a paying position, and eventually became the site administrator.
- She oversees twenty five sites across Pennsylvania.
- She is aware of the tensions and anxiety in Erie and said that we will not get all the answers in this meeting.
- She hopes to extend the relationship developing between PHMC and the FNL to the volunteers.
- She wanted to make the point that she does not want Niagara to become a static display.
- She said the mission of the ship is to sail and sailing is the goal.

PHMC relationship model (as defined by Melissa Mann)

- The same model is used at all the sites.
- Years ago, all employees of the ship were PHMC employees.
- Sites have associate leagues that work with PHMC to fill in when budgets fall short.
- These associates have contractual relationships. Erie is different because it is the only site with a ship.
- There is the negative impact of lack of workers, paid and volunteer, following Covid.
- Her goal is to go beyond the contractual relationship to a partnership relationship.

2023 Sailing Season

- Melissa said there will be a sailing season in 2023 and there is a commitment to make it work.
- Mike Martin said they want the long term (5 year) agreement in place so the FNL will be able to hire crew at the proper time.

Volunteers

- No matter where you volunteer, museum or ship, you are a PHMC volunteer.
- Melissa said this has to do with worker's compensation.
- The goal is to work together at the site.
- Training
 - There was a question about volunteer training. Melissa said there will be training.
 - She wants the volunteers to have the best experience possible.
 - She wants to look at volunteer training in terms of training and retention of volunteers and evaluate the program.
- Recognition
 - PHMC has a yearly event.
 - Melissa feels that recognition at the site level should happen more often.
 - She said we need to work together at the local level to ensure this happens. She felt there was no reason not to have the Forester Society.

- Email list
 - The email lists fall under PHMC.
 - The site administrator oversees the lists.
 - The Volunteer Coordinator handles emails. The current situation is complicated by the fact that the volunteer coordinator is deployed at this time.
- Volunteer Newsletter
 - In order to use the PHMC mailing lists, Melissa feels the newsletter must be about the entire volunteer community
 - Bill Masiroff explained that past issues have covered people in the museum and people on the ship. He expressed frustration that the newsletter needed approval from Melissa.
 - Melissa said that is not normally the case. She also apologized saying that the newsletter sat in her inbox and she had been too busy to get to it.
- Communications
 - There is definitely a lack of communications here
 - Mike and Melissa said they are working on this
 - Melissa wants things to work together
 - Dutch Noll said the lack of communication leads to rumors and misinformation. He feels that we need first hand information.
- Museum
 - Goal is to be open five days a week. PHMC rules state that a paid staff member must be in the building when the museum is open. Again the situation in Erie is complicated by Chuck Johnson's deployment. The staff can only have so many employees and Chuck's position is still held by him and a replacement cannot be hired.
 - There was a question about interns. With the numerous colleges in the area it would bring in fresh, young blood. Melissa said that PHMC requires that all interns be paid. Drake's Well found grant money to pay interns. Plus, interns must be supervised by PHMC to ensure that they are learning skills.
 - The original directive when Melissa took over her position was that the ship could only operate 9-5 under museum hours. Steve Rhine pointed out that operating a ship does not fall under those parameters.
 - Melissa said she is a learner and asks many questions because she wants to learn how things operate. She asked us to trust her to take this back to Harrisburg.
 - Jean Baker asked what happened to the relationship that used to exist. She feels that we need to be one again. She feels the site administrator is "busting his butt" and wants people to work together.
- What caused the great divide between PHMC and FNL
 - The person who asked the question said it was time to stop blaming Covid.
 - Mike Martin said Covid was responsible for FNL to move out of the building since the state locked down all the state buildings and they were not permitted into the building.
 - Another issue was that the building was evaluated and many of the workstations were eliminated due to health and safety concerns.
 - Gary Dudenhoefer felt the divide was encouraged by the previous set up where the museum employees had a volunteer coordinator and the ship volunteers had their own coordinator.

The museum coordinator had a strong bond with the volunteers and they kept themselves separate.

- Melissa said it helps to hear what has been, but this is the situation that exists now that the site administrator and the volunteer coordinator oversee all the volunteers.

- Interim and Long Term Agreement
 - Deals with security issues
 - PHMC is over the site and FNL sails the ship
 - Mike Martin hopes that eventually they will not have to meet weekly, but only touch base to review the operation
 - Jim Rumm said there needs to be a connection between the site administrator and the FNL director. The ship and the museum need each other.
 - Melissa said that senior management needs to work together, that it needs to work on this level without her constant involvement.