

Minutes

Lincoln Legacy Committee
Friends Conference Room 215, Champaign Public Library

March 26, 2025

1. Call to Order-Meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m.

2. Roll Call-Members present: Barb Oehlschlaeger-Garvey, Barb Wysocki, Ray Cunningham, Allyson Smerz, Eric Thorsland, Adele Suslick. Absent: Kamryn Suttinger, Kay Grabow. Pat Cain

3. Approval of Agenda Ray Cunningham moved to approve the agenda; Eric Thorsland seconded. Agenda approved unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes, January 29, 2025 meeting. Barb Wysocki moved to approve the minutes of the January 29, 2025 meeting. Ray Cunningham seconded. Minutes approved unanimously.

Pat Cain arrived at 4:04 p.m.

5. Approval of Minutes, March 11, 2025 Subcommittee meeting.

Ray Cunningham moved to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2025 meeting. Allison Smerz seconded. Minutes approved unanimously.

6. Public Participation-There was no public participation.

7. Old Business

A. General Updates

Barb O-G noted that a Civil War Stories Day will be presented at the Museum of the Grand Prairie on April 20, 2025 from 2:00 to 3:30 with an appearance by an Abraham Lincoln interpreter.

Barb Wysocki wanted to bring attention to the article in the News-Gazette about the importance of museums and libraries in the community written collaboratively by the Museum Network. It was well located in the paper on the back page of Section A. Barb Wysocki said she really didn't expect all the photographs that went with it. Barb O-G elaborated that this article was written in response to the gutting of the budget of the Institute of Museum and Library Services by an executive order issued by President Trump. One ten-thousandth of one percent of the federal budget goes to IMLS for the support of museums. It is the only program that supports museums. Our exhibit in the courthouse was primarily funded by an IMLS grant. They are extremely competitive grants, only funded about 22% each year.

Pat Cain said there are some good resources being forwarded by American Alliance of Museums and the American Library Association to advocate for Museums and Libraries on their websites, including scripts to use to contact your congressperson. Barb O-G said the regional and state organizations are also assisting with advocacy. Barb Wysocki said it is important to write to our representatives regardless. Barb O-G said that the detail left out of the article was that the IMLS dollars were nearly all spent within the county, as LLC hired Rantoul's Taylor Studios to create the exhibit. A discussion ensued about the benefit of museums and libraries to local economies, with

Pat Cain recalled that in 2018 the museum consortium determined that 270,000 people had visited local museums, more than all home football games.

Pat Cain said that he had a meeting with Sherrie Bowser, Archives Librarian at the Urbana Free Library and Barbara Suggs-Mason, Angela Rivers, and Robert White (African American Heritage Trail) about possible programming and additional info for the Underground Railroad exhibit that UFL will be hosting January to March 2026. He said he would like to expand it to include Ford and Douglas County, and other areas of East Central Illinois in the exhibit.

Pat showed several images of the Underground Railroad exhibit from the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. It's a 2-dimensional exhibit which features freedom seekers, allies, and Black leaders all from Illinois in the pre-Civil War era. There are QR codes that give additional information about the

Barb O-G asked what the Lincoln Legacy Committee could do to support the UFL and their local exhibit. Pat Cain said he wasn't yet certain.

Barb Wysocki said the African American History group has been voted into the Champaign County Museums Network.

Adele Suslick asked if Tolono had an Underground Railroad connection. No one at LLC knew. Discussion of the difficulty documenting Underground Railroad sites ensued.

B. Exhibit Update

On March 11, the Exhibit Subcommittee met. Ray, Allyson, and Barb O-G watched the object theatre presentation twice and reviewed it for possible improvements. There are immediate concerns: the sound quality needs improvement on the secondary voices. The lighting of objects does not occur at all on a few pieces and poorly on a few others. And the contrast of the lighting makes reading of the subtitles difficult. Eric Thorsland said he has a contact at Taylor if we need one.

Our county budgeted 10,000 dollars earmarked, with five thousand dollars in cash to our committee this year which will probably cover the consultation with Taylor Studies.

Barb Wysocki said that in a discussion with Steve Summers she heard that departments are going to start moving into the Bennett Building in April. Moving is slow because of a national shortage of elevators. She asked Summers if an open house would happen and suggested that Mrs. Bennett would be invited. Eric Thorsland said that a committee is already working on it, with no funding because of the tight county budget.

Eric Thorsland said he is continuing to keep the location issue in the awareness of the County Board and that he had been told there was no room in the Bennett Building for us. Barb O-G said that Steve Summers did attend our subcommittee meeting and talk to us about the exhibit space and the space issues for the public defender's office. Barb O-G said she thought we should press on with our mission until we hear otherwise. Allyson Smerz said she thought the content of the exhibit held up pretty well although it could be made clearer what the circuit was. Barb Wysocki said it works well for school audiences, especially the eight-minute length of time. Eric said that we might

want to tap into the talents of students who do escape rooms which may cost less. Pat said that the Urbana Free Library is working with escape room and theatre students for the Fairy Tale Ball. Perhaps set design students could help out too. Adele Suslick said that the Champaign County History Museum uses History Department students as well. (Some of the discussions took place after the CCMN report, we circled back to the topic).

Barb O-G did also discuss that the story of the courthouse should be told in the courthouse.

Kay Grabow arrived at 4:30 p.m.

C. CCMN Report and 2026 Planning Champaign County Museum Network report: Barb Wysocki said there are some ideas floating around for 2026. Robert White, who works for Experience CU and is on the African American History Trail Committee, spoke about tours for members of the network to the trail. Possibly it will occur around museum day in June. There is other 2026 projects being discussed. Barb Wysocki said that the News-Gazette article did mobilize the group.

We are still working toward an event in the fall of 2026, we will continue to discuss the event.

7. New Business

International Museum Day is May 18; but Museum Week is June 2-8, 2025. (For future reference). Pat Cain said that they are doing an Archives Bazaar in October, but the theme and date are not yet determined.

8. Adjournment: Ray Cunningham moved to adjourn. Kay Grabow seconded. Meeting adjourned.

9. Upcoming Meetings- All Meetings at 4:00 p.m.

March 26, 2025 Friends Conference Room, Champaign Public Library

May 28, 2025, Busey Bank Meeting Room, Champaign Public Library

July 30, 2025 Busey Bank Meeting Room, Champaign Public Library

September 24, 2025 Busey Bank Meeting Room, Champaign Public Library

December 3, 2025, Busey Bank Meeting Room, Champaign Public Library