



March 1, 2021

Matt LeCerf
Town Manager
Town of Johnstown
450 S. Parish Avenue
Johnstown, Colorado 80534

Subject: Museum Director, Initial Progress Report

Dear Matt,

Despite the unprecedented challenges nation-wide on so many levels that would define the year 2020, JHS actually had a great year overall.

We owe that to the Town of Johnstown, new members, and other generous volunteers and donors who reached out to give us a hand up from a bleak outlook after Covid-19 hit hard last spring.

The JHS Board's objective for the museum director's role was to have that person manage the day-to-day operation of the museum by performing the most critical functions of their organization and to work with the Board to grow the museum's presence in the community. The first year would be mostly an investment of time updating and improving on existing policy and procedures, working on rebuilding the Society/Museum website, creating fresh displays, and enacting a plan to increase our volunteer and member retention.

To that end, I remain confident that we are on the right path moving forward. I'm working with the new board on this year's continued transition.

This letter report provides the details of our progress and an outline of this year's goals in the sections that follow.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Billie DeLancey".

Billie DeLancey
Museum Director
Historic Parish House and Museum

1. Purpose

This report serves two purposes. First, the museum director is responsible for providing progress reports to the Town of Johnstown. This initial report highlights Billie DeLancey's activities as the museum Director (MD) from August 2020 through February 2021, along with JHS plans for events and fundraisers this year. Secondly, these reports will serve as a tool for the Board and MD to measure progress over time to ensure we stay on track with our goals.

We're off to a great start!

2. August – December 2020

How We Invested the Town's Funding

In addition to the Town creating a paid position for a museum director to manage the Parish House and Museum, JHS also received grant money to offset lost income last year because of Covid-19 and the forced cancellation of our annual in-person events and fundraisers. The total amount of \$33,552.26 in grant funding to JHS in 2020 basically falls into three categories:

Museum Director and Social Media Coordinator Pay

The Town created a new position for a part-time MD in August and provided an allowance for JHS to hire Karla Humphrey as an independent contractor to carry out the critical function of managing our social media platforms – Facebook and Google Suite. The combined amounts for paid help in 2020 totaled \$10,242.60.

Parish House Building and Grounds

The Town's commitment to paying the Colorado State Historical Fund's (SHF) grant match requirements of 25 percent of each award to JHS has been instrumental in helping to return the Parish House and grounds to its original state of grandeur in the early 1900s. Our current grant is for the engineering design for the replacement of the property's failing retaining walls. The match was \$6,000.00. Typically, the Town has paid the match as the final payment to our architect, but for this grant, the Town paid the match as the first of the three payments to Sheuber + Darden Architects from their first invoice submitted in December. JHS will pay out the remaining SHF grant proceeds to the architect as the remaining deliverables are met. This engineering design/construction documents project will be completed this summer.

Additionally, the Town paid for tree trimming services coordinated by the MD and performed by The Tree Guys of Milliken. For safety reasons, and because the current SHF grant is a "paper" grant with the anticipation of a new grant application submission later this year or in 2022 for the actual retaining walls reconstruction, it will be a few years before the trees can be removed as part of that project. The tree trimming also enhanced the exterior aesthetics of the property as well as brought it into compliance with Town regulations on street tree overhang clearances. This project totaled \$3,600.00.

The MD also managed the first part of a three-year window improvement project by Heritage Window Restoration in Commerce City, a historic building contractor. The remaining three of five original porch screens to the Parish House had been in storage for years. In lieu of storm windows, and because the screens were original to the house exterior, the three existing screens were restored by Heritage Window Restoration, and two more were manufactured to match them for a total of five porch screens. This portion of the project totaled \$5,995.00.

Together, these improvements to the Parish House property under the Town's 2020 budget totaled \$15,595.00.

Last November, mold was discovered in the east basement room at the Parish House. The MD worked with the Town Manager and ServiceMaster of Fort Collins/Loveland to coordinate the remediation. ServiceMaster removed the affected drywall under negative air pressure and used bleach to clean the wall and floor surfaces. This portion of the project totaled \$443.73, which was not included in the 2020 budget, but paid by the Town under a separate invoice.

Given that the wall and wood trim beneath the windows in the room have visible signs of past repair from water damage, and that it has reappeared, the Town Manager and MD agreed to wait until spring 2021 to replace the drywall in the room. The MD will continue to monitor for moisture once the sprinkler system is turned on and the spring rains begin. The Town maintenance crew will complete the drywall installation once we determine the source of the water intrusion, correct it, and ensure that the condition and integrity of the basement wall has not been affected.

Equipment, Supplies, and Digitization Services

Lastly, the Town budgeted an additional \$7,714.66 to be used for equipment, supplies, and digitization services. The MD researched the costs and purchased new office and computer equipment, an upgraded web version of JHS's museum software, archival and office supplies, and sent off our obsolete VHS and audio cassette tapes to be converted to .MP4 format. Having this extra funding available gave JHS the resources to help the MD fulfill her responsibilities at the Parish House.

Reorganize First to Support our Growing Community's Needs

Having a MD to manage the Parish House has changed the dynamics of JHS and the museum operations. It adds value to JHS's and the Town's vision for the downtown area and facilitates the changes needed to ensure sustainable growth for JHS and the Parish House. The MD is also an active participant of the recently created JDDA group and serves as a liaison to the JHS Board in this capacity.

Other initial work performed by the MD during 2020 included supporting the Society's most immediate needs and administrative tasks, assisting with fundraising and events, and working with the Board on internal organizational improvements, starting with the JHS Annual Meeting and Board member elections.

New and Expanded JHS Board of Directors

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit cultural organization, JHS holds an annual meeting each November for the purpose of electing/re-electing the next year's board members to fill vacancies and to present recommended changes to the Society's bylaws. Information is passed along with plans for the upcoming year, and we generally take this opportunity to recognize the hard work and generosity of our volunteers, members, and donors.

When Billie DeLancey started her position as MD in August 2020, she was actively serving as the JHS Board Secretary. Because of the potential conflict of interest this relationship presented, Billie became the Acting Secretary and continued to fulfill her responsibilities until a new Secretary could be elected. As Acting Secretary, Billie supported the Board in the effort to seek out and vet new board members.

The Board aims for diversity in its directors and reached out to five candidates; four of whom accepted an offer to interview with the Board. Interviews were held on October 7, 2020 at the Parish House with candidates Becky Lassen, Jamie Desrosier, and Cathy and Clair Hull. The Board agreed that all four candidates were qualified, and their names were placed on the ballot.

As the November 17th meeting date approached, the Board considered the recent surge in Covid-19 infections and the associated risks of having an in-person, indoor gathering, and that the Town had recently closed its buildings to the public for these safety reasons. The Board opted to cancel the Annual Meeting five days before the event and had the current JHS membership vote by absentee ballot. The completed ballots were returned via email, mail, or in-person to the MD as Acting Secretary, who tallied and documented the results. The new Board consists of the following members. The green shading represents the incoming directors:

2021 JHS Board of Directors	
President	Beverly Kirkpatrick
Vice President	Ardis Briggs-Tomlinson
Treasurer	Becky Lassen
Secretary	Cathy Hull
Director	Chad Young (formerly Treasurer)
Director	Jamie Desrosier
Director	Clair Hull

Considerable thought was put into this new Board. We improved upon our method of selecting Board members with proactive vetting and an interview process. We spelled out the increased time commitment for Board members and added a requirement that all members complete an online non-profit board member training course provided by the Colorado Secretary of State's office. Also, by increasing the number of directors from five to seven, along with having the MD and the social media coordinator involved in managing the two legs of our organization – the Parish House and Museum and our online presence, JHS will benefit from more talent and skills plugged into committee assignments. With the MD and social media coordinator also attending Board meetings – this brings the number to nine for discussion and planning.

3. Moving Forward – 2021 and Beyond

2021 Town Budget

The Town budgeted \$44,496.20 for JHS in 2021, which includes the MD's wages and an allowance for our Social Media Coordinator. The total for these expenses is \$25,991.20. Additionally, the Town provided \$4,500.00 for JHS toward website development and the second phase of the Parish House windows project in the amount of \$14,005.00.

Website

As part of JHS's re-organization efforts the MD and social media coordinator are working together on a new website. JHS will retain the ability to update and make changes through a user-friendly interface with the software. We are in the process of transferring our domain name to a new JHS account, and we will meet with a website designer/hosting service this month.

Parish House Storm Windows

The MD will continue to manage the ongoing Parish House windows project by Heritage Window Restoration. The Town budgeted \$40,000.00 for the overall project. The porch screens portion of the project was completed in December 2020, as stated above. This year, the budgeted \$14,005.00 will be applied toward the second phase of the project – energy-efficient storm windows, with the remaining

\$20,000.00 to finish the storm windows installation in 2022. This upgrade to the Parish House exterior will serve to reduce energy consumption and annual heating costs, in addition to protecting the interior windows.

Work Plan and Long-term Goals

This year will be a defining one for JHS and the Parish House and Museum. Our new leadership team is reviewing existing missions and vision statements, logos, bylaws, policies, procedures, and job descriptions. It is determining how to best grow into a bigger coat of responsibility in a sustainable manner to meet our community's needs. We have a working 2021 project timeline in place with tentative dates and an order for accomplishing this year's goals.

We also have a start on a 10-year plan with the following anniversaries as major events on the horizon for JHS and the Town of Johnstown to consider:

- July 6, 2024: 100th anniversary of the Johnstown Meteorite fall.
- July 4, 2026: National 250th (Sestercentennial) celebration of the USA.
- June 29, 2028: 100th anniversary of the Johnstown tornado.

For the first half of 2021, the MD will continue to work with the Board on reorganization efforts. She will also develop a volunteer program with the Membership/Volunteer Committee, taking advantage of these remaining few months before we reopen while the pandemic subsides as more and more people become vaccinated.

Reopening the Museum

We are currently working on a phased plan for reopening the museum starting in April with limited capacity to view the displays and our video tour of the Parish House in the Visitor's Center. An online tour request form will allow guests to sign up and schedule an appointment. We plan to reopen the Parish House on Wednesdays by this summer, with two additional open days by fall – one on the weekend to accommodate guests who work weekdays. When we reopen, we will be ready to roll with new plans, fundraisers, and events.

For the second half of 2021 (provided that Covid-19 restrictions allow it), JHS is planning to hold its *Stitches in Time Quilt & Craft Fair* and other events and fundraisers with the focus on replenishing our financial cushion. Other sources of revenue include membership dues, book sales, and donations. The MD will participate in these committee-managed activities, although most of her work this year will be focused on museum collections as the museum's curator.

Museum Collections

The MD is responsible for managing the JHS collections. This year will see a significant change in the process of how collection objects are handled and catalogued. The MD will engage in museum collections care and preservation training in June. JHS has a backlog of donated objects that will be accessioned into our collections database, which will be perfect for hands-on training for new volunteers on the importance of handling and caring for historical artifacts. Other Collections projects this year include:

Museum Software

The MD and the social media coordinator have been working with our museum collections software company – PastPerfect – on upgrading to the web version of the software to better align with our needs. This conversion is already underway and, when completed this spring, will allow us to integrate many of our separate functions, such as contact management, tracking volunteer work hours and assignments, and managing our memberships and donations.

Historic Photograph Collection

With our new museum software, flatbed scanner, and archival storage boxes and materials for a photograph and historic document collection, the MD will lead the effort to scan and catalogue our collection of historic photos and properly preserve and archive them.

Oral History Collection

The MD catalogued the inventory of VHS and audio cassette tapes and sent them out for digitization last year. A total of 140 oral histories were sent. Two of the four boxes have been returned so far, along with the accompanying digitized files. The Collections Committee will begin to review these narratives and select and edit them for various uses in new historical outreach projects as well as having them available on the JHS YouTube channel.

Johnstown Breeze Newspaper Collection Digitization – Joint Project

The MD will work with The Johnstown Breeze to research options for having the Breeze's collection of newspapers digitized from their original physical state. It is a near-complete collection dating back about 114 years, with the oldest papers reaching a critical state of deterioration. The Breeze newspaper is perhaps the oldest and best resource of local history and every-day happenings since the early 1900s, and JHS is on board to help with preserving this extensive collection of Johnstown's history.

"A Tribute to Johnstown" by Rebecca S. Healy, 1977

This little paperback book has been a great resource of Johnstown history over the years, and we are bringing it back with a fresh look. It was researched and compiled for the country's 1976 bi-centennial celebration. JHS will sell the updated versions as a revenue stream.

Museum Displays and Offsite Exhibits

The MD is working with the Collections Committee to create a display at the museum about Johnstown's fires and firefighters. Additional exhibits are being planned for bringing history to meet people where they are – at the YMCA, the library, and other public locations around town that will expand our footprint in the community.

4. Our Continued Commitment

In conclusion, JHS and the MD are committed to bringing the Parish House and Museum and our programs to the next level of museum professionalism. Together, we thank Matt LeCerf and the Johnstown Town Council for your generosity in helping us to make this leap of faith to better serve Johnstown and the region.