

HB 2018 Testimony

State Historical Society of North Dakota

Bill Peterson, Director

The State Historical Society is authorized by North Dakota Century Code [NDCC 55-01] and associated rules.

I am pleased to report the agency did not have any audit findings.

### **Attach Organizational Chart**

The State Historical Society of ND's total appropriation, including one time funding was \$19M. in the last biennium.

We are organized into four Departments:

**Administration** – which handles Budgeting and Accounting, HR, Custodial Services, Purchasing, Security, IT, and 10 Retail operations etc.

**Archaeology and Historic Preservation** – 3,000 Annual Reviews of Federal projects in ND, National and State Historic Preservation Laws, North Dakota Historic Preservation Review Board, Certified Local Government Coordination. They also manage more than 40 historical sites in North Dakota

**State Archives** – The mandated repository for ND Government Agency Records, Private Records, they provide Public Access and Statewide technical Assistance. They also have extensive collections of Photos, film, and are legislatively mandated to collect all ND newspapers in publication.

**Audience Engagement and Museums** – Publications, Exhibits, Museum Collections, Education, Visitor Services at 2 museums and 8 interpretive centers across North Dakota.

Salaries and Wages are for Salaries and Benefits for 78.75 FTE. Also, we may employ up to 125 temp employees during the tourist season.

Operating Expenses cover IT, Data Processing and Communications, Utilities, Service Contracts (mainly mowing), Advertising, Travel, Repairs, and Insurance.

Capital Assets include bond payments for the Chateau Interpretive Center and Archives Expansion, which will be paid off in 2024, and mowers.

Grants are to Certified Local Governments under the Historic Preservation Funds Grant.

Cultural Heritage Grants are state grants given under an application process.

Now I will discuss the Optional Budget Changes by priority and how they go along with our Strategic Plan.

In 2022, the agency undertook strategic planning and identified areas of strategic importance. I challenged the team to tell me what it looks like to be the #1 State Historical Society in the United States. This list of priorities represents the start of that journey

#### Priority 1 Inflationary Expense

#### Priority 2 GIS Remote Access Upgrade

- Current practices require contractors to physically come to the Heritage Center to gather information on cultural resources.
- During the pandemic, due to cultural sensitivity, we had employees responsible for gathering information. The information was then emailed to contractors. The contractors liked not having to physically come to the building.
- This funding would allow the agency to update our GIS system and put in the IT security measures in the implementation of remote access to ensure that all contractors obtaining culturally sensitive information are vetted.
- The agency requests general funds of the ongoing cost of \$14,400 for software and maintenance contracts.
- We would be able to use revenue collected from archaeological permits and fees to cover \$25,000 of the \$250,000 needed for one time funding.

#### Priority 3 Updating Newspaper Preservation Workflow-

- The current process requires an employee to manually take pictures of every page of each newspaper that comes in and process microfilm (develop the film) for proper preservation.
- This request would provide funding for a scanner and microfilm plotter to replace the current practices and allow us to ingest newspapers digitally.
- Since posting the budget we have been awarded a grant from the ND Newspaper Association for \$11,800 dollars toward this equipment. The Cost of the scanner and microfilm plotter is \$236,044 requested in one time funding.
- The Agency requests general funds for the ongoing costs of \$12,045 for software and maintenance contracts.

#### Priority 4 Digital Interactive Initiative

- We are concerned that the agency will fall far behind more modern projects such as the Science Center and the Roosevelt Library in terms of state of competing with these state of the art facilities.
- The agency will use this funding to create digital history content at our statewide museums and interpretive centers.
- Ongoing general funds would be for hiring and additional FTE to create and oversee the new digital content and the software and maintenance of these new technologies.
- One time funding is needed to replace our antiquated technology and to hire consultants to research, plan, design, and implement these new technologies.

#### Priority 5 – Historic Structure and Building Improvements

- We want to thank all of your for the \$4.2 million in the last biennium that helped us begin to address our 20-30 year backlog of historic building improvements, repair, and maintenance.

- We have supplied with our testimony our list of building and site needs and while the cost is nearly 20 million, we are asking for one time funding in the amount of \$6.751Million to address our most pressing priorities on the list. Due to the size of our agency that is about as much as we can work through in a biennium.
- The agency is requesting ongoing funding in the amount of \$500,000 in general funds to keep pace with regular repairs and maintenance of our historic structures, interpretive centers, historic sites, and associated buildings.
- Eliminating Portable toilets and outhouses.

#### Priority 6 - Medora Planning

- In keeping with the speed of the TR library progress, the agency requested one time funding in the amount of 150K for planning in Medora. The executive recommendation increased that amount by \$2 Million. With announcement of the donation to TR Library Foundation by Mr. Hamm, we would utilize these funds to ensure future vibrancy of the valuable state properties in Medora.

#### Priority 7 – Marketing Budget Restoration

- The agency’s marketing budget was eliminated during the allotment of 2016 special session and only a minimal amount has been restored since. Marketing cuts = false savings over time.
- Ongoing funding would be used for more robust marketing and increased brand awareness of all the agency has to offer and increase visitation at our 59 museums and sites throughout North Dakota.
- There is currently a fully benefitted .5 FTE in a marketing position. The agency is requesting the authority and additional ongoing funding to make this position a full FTE as we have determined the workload requires such.

#### Priority 8 – Engaging Exhibits

- Exhibits showcase the best of North Dakota’s History and people.
- Upgrades to exhibits are needed at the Heritage Centers Inspiration Gallery, Pembina State Museum, Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, Welk Homestead, Chateau De Mores, etc.
- One time funding is needed to hire consultants to plan and design the updated exhibits.
- We have included \$75K in one time funds that may be received by the foundation to replace several popular exhibits at the Heritage Center that include the Tractor Cab in the Inspiration Gallery and the Flight simulator in the Treehouse.

#### Priority 9 – Large object Storage

- The agency currently has two offsite storage facilities that are in poor condition and do not meet curatorial needs.
- One time funding has been requested to construct a 70K sqft building to accommodate our future needs for storage.

#### Priority 10 – America 250

- A National Commission has been established to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the United States. In the previous biennium the legislature established the North Dakota 250<sup>th</sup> Commission.
- One time funding is requested to provide for the items in that legislation as well as grants to North Dakota communities to help in their commemorations.
- Funding will be used to allow the state to plan and track events in North Dakota.

Priority 11 – .75 FTE to 1 FTE

- There is currently an FTE that is .75 appropriated and .25 non-appropriated that is responsible for event rental and coordination at the Heritage Center.
- We are asking for the authority and ongoing funding for this position to be a full FTE.

Priorities 12-14 – Grants

- One time funding authority is being requested to provide grants to subrecipients and for training costs, etc.

Priority 15 – FTE Authority

- We currently have 3 FTE positions that are established and fully funded by continuing appropriations through our museum store. We are asking for the authority for these three positions.

Thank you. I am now pleased to answer any questions.