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## Valdez Museum & Historical Archive Board Planning Retreat Report, June 2025

**Dates of Retreat :** June 17 and 18, 2025

**Participants :**

Day 1 and 2

- Gary Minish – President
- Martha Barberio- Vice President
- Rich Duncan – Secretary
- Jim Shirrell – Treasurer
- Margaret Caldwell – Board member
- Karen Allred – Board member
- Linda Guthrie – Board member
- Dan Gilson – Board member
- April Vasher-Dean – Executive Director  
(Day 1 only)
- Faith Revell – Staff
- Karen Oberg – Staff
- Amber Dennis – Staff
- Andrea Searles – Staff
- Emma Brainerd – Staff

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- **I. High-Performance-Teaming Activity Outcomes :**

- **Purpose** : to identify which actions/behaviors on our team contribute to lower performance and which contribute to higher performance
- Actions that contributed to '**Balls on the Floor**'
  - Note: This is a potential parallel to actions that contribute to lower performance on the team
  - Lack of training
  - Size, shape, weight of each ball
  - Knowledge of what balls were representing
  - Variations in ability (to catch, throw)
  - Focus – panic – confusion
  - Lack of listening – not following through with agreement
  - Some people were holding alot of balls
- Actions that contributed to '**Balls in the Air**'
  - Note: This is a potential parallel to actions that contribute to higher performance on the team
  - Focus
  - Communication
  - Mirroring your partner
  - Cooperation
  - Moving closer
  - Respect for different abilities
- PRO Qualifiers of High-Performance Teams
  - Purpose
    - Everyone on the team having the same overarching purpose (why you are here)
  - Role & Responsibility
    - Knowing each others roles and responsibilities / and how each impact one and other
  - Optimize Systems
    - Identifying strengths and weakness of 3 keys systems :
      - Operations sytems (processes and procedures)
      - Communication systems
      - Decision making systems



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- **II. Vision – Mission – Values Review**

- **Purpose** : To revisit our organizational foundation
- Vision : Directional / identifies where an organization is going
  - Museum – Not developed
- Mission : Purpose / identifies why an organization is here
  - Museum : *To preserve, present and interpret the heritage and culture of Valdez, the Copper River Basin and Prince William Sound of Alaska*
    - Core purpose : *To share the past and present with integrity and honesty*
- Values : What an organization stands-for ; code of conduct ; drives professional behaviors
  - Museum : *Education, Diversity, Community, Authenticity, Integrity, Stewardship*
- **Outcome** : **Several Board members identified the need for the Museum to develop a Vision statement**

- **III. SWOT**

- **Purpose** : To identify where we are today and what is coming up tomorrow  
(The results are typically used to drive goal setting)
- **Outcomes** :  
The following complete SWOT results are listed in order of priority.  
The number in ( ) identifies how many participants (Board & staff members) (out of 14) who identified this item as a priority.



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## ○ Strengths

- (7) Huge economic engine for community
- (5) Cruise ships / Tours
- (5) Displays & Exhibits
- (5) Local, national, global, relevant and unique stores (preserve stories with global impact)
- (4) Staff expertise, skills & abilities
- (3) Museums adaptability to/in situations
- (3) Educational support for teachers and programs
- (3) Organization of archives
- (2) Community outreach / local community is more educated on history (due to Museum) / Strong community support – shared goals
- (2) Funding / Financials
- (1) Strong Board / Strong Board/Staff relations
- (1) Big impact / small town
- Staying on mission
- Internal communications / coordination
- 2 buildings allow for freedom to make changes
- Long term commitment / cooperation / same goals & direction

## ○ Weaknesses

- (10) More exhibits - move beyond pipeline ; more relevant, recent history ; more native history ; more oral history ; more fishing /maritime history ; more economic history ; not all stories are told
- (6) Lack of space (working) / inadequate facilities / office environment detrimental to visitors / ADA focus / Conference room / Activities / Discovery space for children/ cramped infrastructure
- (5) Stale exhibits – need to keep up with technology & story telling / need more interactive exhibits
- (5) Low local membership and sponsorship
- (3) Getting local people to visit more often / Brand awareness
- (2) Non-profit – can sometimes create limited vision re : innovation & imagination
- (2) Corporate member (City Council) involvement
- (1) Internal staff communication (staff siloed – leads to lack of teamwork)
- (1) Update old town museum
- (1) Funding sources going away
- (1) Co-dependant on City- limited vision – afraid to make money, don't want to lose City funding
- (1) Staff efficiency – Don't have enough staff or perhaps not using all staff's strengths – need inclusivity and diversity
- (1) Low compensation for staff / salaries not competitive / impacts retention & expansion
- Don't collaborate with Partners outside of Museum
- Board recruitment and scheduling
- Lost new museum
- Don't acknowledge that 'same ways' may still work, although some ways may need refreshed



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- **Opportunities**

- (8) Use existing funds to promote growth and innovation
- (7) Reimagine facilities
- (6) Larger global audience in person and virtual / Featured in Best Town Museum / Expansion / Acquire national reputation / Develop Marketing Intern / Create on-line store / Maximize gift shop sales
- (5) General technology innovation
- (3) Gain more support for digitalization
- (3) Tell stories using technology
- (1) Develop research program
- (1) New packaged educational experiences
- (1) Increase earned revenue
- (1) Reimagine new Partners outside of Museum realm
- (1) Seasonal operations
- (1) New leadership (in staff and on Council)
- (1) Valdez becomes year-round destination
- Untold stories

- **Threats**

- (10) Loss of long time financial support from City, State, Federal funding (+ increased funding competition)
- (9) Infrastructure / Facilities are aging
- (6) Diminished access to Museum by global community / Demographic shift of visitors and economic uncertainty of visitors / Global unrest / Climate change
- (6) Loss of living memory
- (3) Inability to adapt to changing environment (natural, political, economic, community)
- (2) Cost of living and lack of housing in Valdez
- (1) Isolation of Museum – not Partnering
- (1) Inability of Museum to be recognized as economic driver
- (1) International policy changes (Partner with Canada)



- The following are the top-priority SWOT results :

Note : The number in ( ) = the number of Board and Staff members (out of 14) who identified this item as a top priority

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (7) Huge economic engine for community (need to sell)</li> <li>• (5) Local, national, relevant, global &amp; unique stories (preserve stories with global impact)</li> <li>• (5) Displays &amp; Exhibits</li> <li>• (5) Cruise Ships/Tours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (10) 'More' ... relevant/recent; fishing &amp; maritime; economic; native; &amp; oral history; (not all stories are told); move beyond pipeline</li> <li>• (6) Inadequate facilities... lack of space; having 2 buildings; ADA; conference room; activity space; discovery space for children; office environment detrimental to visitors; cramped</li> <li>• (5) Stale exhibits / Keep up w/Tech / Storytelling / More interactive exhibits</li> <li>• (5) Low local membership &amp; sponsorship</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (8) Use existing funds to promote growth &amp; innovation</li> <li>• (7) Reimagine facilities</li> <li>• (6) Larger global audience in person &amp; virtual; Develop marketing internship with College; Maximize gift shop sales; Create on-line store; Featured in Best-Town Museum; National recognition/reputation</li> <li>• (5) Tech innovation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (10) Loss of long time \$ support by city or small funders; City, State, Fed \$; increased competition</li> <li>• (9) Infrastructure &amp; facilities are aging</li> <li>• (6) Loss of living memory</li> <li>• (6) Diminished access to museum by global community; Demographic shift of visitors; economic uncertainty; Global unrest; Climate change</li> </ul>



- The Board members discussed the 'Strategic Story' behind the top priority SWOT results, (on p. 6) which resulted in the following :
  - Facilities
    - Need to 'reimagine'
    - Consider : Town square / campus
  - Communication
    - Global outreach
    - Local community
    - Technology
  - Financial Sustainability
    - Consider that Museum is a financial generator
  - Vision
    - Need a vision statement for Museum
  - Programs
    - Diverse
    - Enhance tourism
  - Need usable, sustainable budget
  - Exhibits
    - (More !)

#### • IV. 2023-2027 Goals Updates Results

- **Purpose** : To identify progress made on the Museums previous Top 4 goals :
  - Sustainability
  - Mission Impact
  - Communication
  - Infrastructure
- The following identifies each goal & objectives and whether the objective was :
  - *Completed*
  - *Is being done and is ongoing*
  - *Is being 'worked'*
  - *Not addressed*



- **Sustainability** : VMHA is a sustainable organization
  - A. *Doing & ongoing* > Maintain existing and develop new sources of revenue
  - B. *Doing & ongoing* > Strengthen human capacity to include board and staff, volunteers and partners
  - C. *Doing & ongoing* > Maintain and improve efficiencies of operation and infrastructure to minimize cost
  - D. *Completed* > Programs of work and operations are responsive to the community
  - E. *Not addressed* > Reduce our impact on the environment
  
- **Mission impact** : VMHA maximizes mission impact
  - A. *Doing & always ongoing* > Ensure diverse program of work
  - B. *Doing & always ongoing* > Enhance community engagement
  - C. *Doing & always ongoing* > Apply best practices of American Alliance of Museums (AAM) to the development of collections care
  - D. *Doing & always ongoing* > Apply best practices of AAM to the development of education
  - E. *Doing & always ongoing* > Apply best practices of AAM to the development of permanent and temporary exhibitions
  
- **Communication** : VMHA has a successful strategy for communicating globally and internally
  - A. *Completed* > Expand and enhance effective external communication
  - B. *Working* > Expand and enhance technological resources
  - C. *Working* > Expand and enhance internal communication (Board /staff)
  
- **Infrastructure** : VMHA has a museum that meets present and future needs
  - A. *Doing & Ongoing* > Obtain community support – verbal, written and financial
  - B. *Working* > Invest in current museum to make it safe, functional and efficient
  - C. *Unable to Address* > Build a new museum
  
- **Summary** :
  - 9 (out of 16) Objectives are : Doing & Ongoing
  - 2 (out of 16) Objectives are : Completed
  - 3 (out of 16) Objectives are : Working
  - 1 (out of 16) Objectives are : Not addressed
  - 1 (out of 16) Objectives are : Unable to address



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- **V. Tools for Goal Discussions. Review**

- Purpose : To recognize how to identify focused, impactful and clear goals
- 1. Purpose of Goals (Goals need to do 1 of 5 things)
  - (1) Maintain Mission
  - (2) Get organization closer to Vision
  - (3) Uphold Values
  - (4) Capitalize on strengths and opportunities
  - (5) Address or guard against weaknesses and threats
- 2. Goal Qualifiers
  - Qualifiers help us filter ideas for goals, so they make the most amount of impact and are the best use of resources
  - Typical Qualifiers are :
    - Number of people (or ?) impacted
    - Benefits
    - Risks
    - Cost to implement
    - Cost to sustain/maintain
- 3. Goal Identifiers
  - Identifiers help us write goals that are clear, understandable and measurable. Each goal should be written with the following identifiers :
  - (1) Topic
  - (2) What about that topic needs to be addressed
  - (3) Action to be taken
  - (4) Measurability
  - (5) Date completed /acheived



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- **VI. Goals for 2025-2027**

- Purpose : to identify what the Museum needs to focus on in 2025-2027
- Board members discussed and proposed goals.  
The following are the results of that discussion.  
Please note: the number in ( ) indicates how many Board members /Executive Director (out of 9) identified this goal as a high priority.  
A goal needed a minimum of '5' votes to move to a high-priority goal
- (8) Maintain and reimagine existing infrastructure and facilities
- (5) Grow interpretive and programic offers
  - Exhibits : 1900-1920's ; Keystone Canyon ; 'Off sites' ; Create museum news outlet ; More recent history ; Review old exhibits ; increase technology ; living memory ; preserve buildings ; activities outside of the museum ; hands on activities ; educational experience for students ; old town
  - Accessibility : make exhibits and programs accessible
- (5) Community in Partnerships
  - Local relationships and partners ; share our impact ; communications with City ; memberships
- (4) Improve financial stability
  - Viability and sustainability ; existing revenue ; new funding ; donor relations ; trusts/endowments
- (3) Advance collections and Archive stewardship
- (1) Develop a financial work plan
- (1) Improve mission impact (promote our mission)
  - Global communications ; public communications ; technology
- Sustainability
  - Programs ; finances (maintain existing and develop new sources of revenue)

- **Please note Consultant error :**

*Consultant listed 'Accessibility' under : 'Grow interpretive and programic offers'. The board member who proposed this goal, intended for 'Accessibility' to be the overarching goal. This error did not allow for board members to vote on 'Accessibility', by itself, as a goal*



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- The following are the : **Top-3 Prioritized Goals / Focus areas for 2025-2027**
    - **Reimagine infrastructure & facilities**
      - Have a plan for reimagining select infrastructure and facilities by June 2026
    - **Exhibits & Programs**
      - Update, provide new and improve access (accessibility) to programs, interpretive materials and exhibits by June 2027
    - **Community Partnerships**
      - Increase and maintain community partnerships by June 2026

- **Suggested Next Steps**

- **Planning Next Steps**
  - 1. ED and staff identify objectives to achieve each of the Top-3 goals
  - 2. ED shares objectives with Board – Edits ? – Receives approval
  - 3. ED and staff write action plans for each objective
  - 4. Begin work on action plans
  - 5. ED provides Board with quarterly (or ?) updates on objectives
- **Additional :**
  - Executive Director provide Board members with AAM Best Practices
  - Board determines if they would like to develop a Vision statement (for direction)
  - Consider addressing 'Accessibility' as an overarching goal for all Museums exhibits, services and facilities