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Dear Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors:

Thank you for calling a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors to consider the Milwaukee Public Museum's request for \$45M in bonded funding for a new facility. On behalf of the MPM Board of Directors and staff, I want to thank you for moving this request forward on a timeline that would allow us to maintain our accreditation should the request be approved.

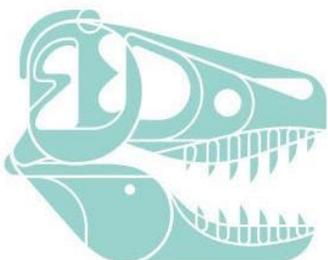
I understand that Supervisor Clancy will be introducing an amendment to our request to eliminate the County's annual support for collections care. I respectfully ask you to vote against this amendment, which would perpetuate the situation in which we currently find ourselves.

Milwaukee County owns the collections, and holds them in the public trust. The care of these collections is not without expense. Storage of the collections, including rent and utilities; supplies; personnel salaries and benefits; office equipment; security; and technology are just some of the expenses required to maintain and appropriately preserve and protect the 4 million precious objects and specimens in the County's collections.

We receive hundreds of research requests and inquiries on the collections annually. This includes local, national and international requests for information and collections access. For instance, representatives from Wisconsin's First Nations regularly request access to the cultural collections. Milwaukee County residents often ask to see objects that their families have donated. And as an example of just one of the research projects underway, MPM's Botany curator is collaborating with other researchers on an identification guide of all the Wisconsin plants, which remarkably has never been compiled, and the collections are an important source for this project. Caring for the collections requires internal expertise to field and staff those requests, space and materials to research and inspect the items, and technology and equipment to research, catalog and store them.

Recognizing that if MPM were to lose accreditation, the museum would eventually shutter and turn the collections back to Milwaukee County, we modeled that scenario. To resume full operations of the museum, the County would require approximately \$10M in annual support above and beyond the revenue raised from admissions, and that does not consider the capital costs that would be incurred to build a new facility and move the collections, which would still need to occur.

Given that the County does not have funds to take over full operations of the museum, we also considered what it would cost to simply maintain the collections at a very basic level. In addition to the \$20M required to move the collections to a satisfactory environment (\$10M if the current,



What will you find?

inadequate storage equipment is retained), it would cost Milwaukee County \$1.3-\$1.5M annually to maintain the collections.

MPM has presented the County with a proposal that alleviates the County's capital burden after the life of the bond, reduces annual operating costs and preserves the museum and the collections. We are asking the County to contribute less than the full cost of caring for the collections and the museum is prepared to assume the remainder.

Milwaukee County has an obligation to financially support its collections in the future. I appreciate that our capital request is significant, but the reason we are coming to Milwaukee County for support is because the county's deferred maintenance that has accumulated in the current building has resulted in a dire situation for the museum and the collections. We have developed a sustainable plan for the future, but that plan assumes the County continues to support the care of the collections, even if at a lower amount than the full cost.

We spent the last few months negotiating with the Office of the County Executive, Department of Administrative Services, and Office of the Comptroller to determine a long-term plan that ensures a secure financial future for the museum. **The proposed amendment jeopardizes that long term sustainability and disregards the County's obligation to care for its collections.** This amendment would not only perpetuate the vulnerability of the collections, it would materially alter the terms the museum and the various County departments have agreed to and would send us back to the drawing table.

As I've said, this is a pivotal moment in the museum's history, and our future rests in your hands. Thank you again for taking up this request in a special meeting, and for your continued work on behalf of the community the museum serves.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincere regards,



Dr. Ellen Censky
President & CEO
Milwaukee Public Museum

