



Date: February 13, 2026

To: Chairperson Willie Johnson, Jr., Committee on Finance
Vice Chairperson Steve Taylor, Committee on Finance

CC: Janelle Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager
Allyson R. Smith, Committee Coordinator

Subject: P 26-46 Report from the President of the Milwaukee Public Museum, providing an informational report regarding programs and financial statements.

The Mission of the Milwaukee Public Museum is to inspire curiosity, excite minds and increase desire to preserve and protect our world's natural and cultural diversity through exhibitions, educational programs, collections, and research.

Attendance and Programming –We are in the second quarter of our fiscal year, and attendance is tracking slightly ahead of projections with January attendance exceeding our goal by almost 9,000. More than 31,000 visitors made MPM part of their winter break plans, December 20-January 4, including a record-setting 7,658 people on January 1 Kohl's Thank You Thursday, the highest KTYT attendance to date. Throughout the two weeks, Educators were stationed on the exhibit floors, sharing insights with guests about cold weather animals—both prehistoric and present-day—and their unique adaptations. Other activities during the holidays were European Village Alive with enactors in the village sharing holidays traditions from Europe. The Crystal Lake High School Madrigal Singers provided entertainment; our members had a chance to visit with Santa; and the Florentine Opera returned to sing Christmas classics.

MPM shared with the public that we will be open throughout 2026 marking our final full year in our current building before we move to the Nature & Culture Museum of Wisconsin. The last day of operation will be January 3, 2027.

In January, we kicked off a year-long celebration called Greatest Hits that commemorates MPM's iconic exhibits with exciting theme days, after-hours socials, guest lectures, activities for young learners, official merchandise, and more. MPM's Greatest Hits features a lineup of five different month-long celebrations of special events and programs highlighting MPM's most popular and impactful exhibits—or "greatest hits."

Ancient Civilizations: January 10-February 14, 2026; The ancient world comes to life as we explore the rise of the earliest civilizations across the globe. Programming will celebrate the exhibit *Crossroads of Civilization*, which highlights ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Persia.

Diorama-RAMA: March 14-April 17, 2026: MPM's world famous "Milwaukee-style" dioramas, including *Muskrats* created by taxidermist Carl Akeley, will be the inspiration behind several fresh, engaging programs and interactive events that put a fun twist on some of the

Museum's oldest displays.

Rainforest & Butterflies: May 7-June 6, 2026: This Greatest Hit takes visitors to the tropics to celebrate two of MPM's groundbreaking and immersive exhibits, *Rainforest* and *Puelicher Butterfly Vivarium*, which showcase some of the planet's most beautiful biodiversity—using recreated and real specimens.

Dino Days of Summer: July 11-August 6, 2026: Dig up discovery as we travel 65 million years into the past to the age of dinosaurs. From examining real fossils to competing in *T. rex* trivia, dino lovers of all ages will unearth fascinating details about these prehistoric creatures.

Streets of Old Milwaukee & European Village: October-December 2026: Two of MPM's most beloved exhibits close out Greatest Hits with a bang. The walkthrough streetscape dioramas set at the turn of the 20th century will be decked out for Halloween and Christmas – the perfect backdrop to celebrate both holidays.

Canstruction Milwaukee returned to MPM in January and February! The annual canned food sculpture exhibit kicked off with Sculpture Build Day, January 31, when the teams carefully assembled their creations. Visitors viewed the fully assembled sculptures beginning Sunday, February 1, in the Steigleder Special Exhibits Gallery.

This year's theme was "*CAN't Forget the Magic*," with MPM's iconic exhibits serving as inspiration for the designs. Each sculpture was made of at least 1,000 canned and non-perishable food items. After "de-canstruction," nearly 40,000 food items were donated to the Jewish Community Pantry.

Research – The museum's paleontology department is including museum visitors in our research on ancient shells that are 1-2 million years old. Visitors gain authentic experience assessing biodiversity and providing initial specimen curation by separating well-preserved shells from scraps and grouping together shells that look the same. The tiny shells found by visitors are being studied by MPM postdoc Nathan Wright to determine how they developed and how that relates to their survival.

Status of Current Facility

We continue to have escalator and elevator outages. The most recent occurred on Martin Luther King Day. Both elevators were shut down at 3pm on a busy holiday because an elevator motor generator failed (this is the AC to DC generator that powers the traction elevator). This motor is obsolete and needed to be re-wound/rebuilt. The elevator was out for several weeks. When this motor burned out, it triggered an evacuation of the building which sent our museum visitors and staff out into 3-degree weather.

MPM Fiscal Summary - 9/1/2025 To 12/31/2025 (FY2026)

For the four-month period ended December 31, 2025, MPM consolidated financial statements reported an operating surplus of \$1,273,000 compared to \$1,049,000 in income from the same period as the previous year.

Consolidated operating revenue decreased to \$5.8M compared to about \$6.0M in the previous year. Consolidated operating expenditures decreased to \$4.5 million compared to \$4.9 million in the prior year.

In other non-operating activity, MPM and the Endowment's unrestricted investments reported an

investment gain of about \$595,000.

Restricted net assets decreased \$587,000. After taking into account all financial unrestricted and restricted activity, the consolidated net assets of MPM increased by approximately \$646,000 during the 4 months ending December 31, 2025.

New Museum Progress

Exhibit Progress – Exhibit fabrication continues. This includes building scenic elements such as rock walls, grasses, trees, buildings, and diorama backdrop paintings. We have also begun to remove those objects that will go on exhibit in the new museum. We have contracted with Research Casting International, the premier large specimen mount-maker, to provide assistance in moving many of the large specimens and objects. The first to be removed was the *Torosaurus*, our only real dinosaur specimen, which they disarticulated and moved to their shop for cleaning and repositioning for the new display. Another large object removed by them was the Haida fishing boat. This was crated and will be moved into the new museum prior to the last windows being installed. It is the only object that is too large for the new museum’s freight elevator. Labels and graphics are in their final review before production. And we have begun to develop the media elements for the new museum. That includes soundscapes, videos and interactive elements. Prototyping of the interactives has been taking place. We have tested 10 different prototypes of interactives with our visitors to learn what they like, how they engage with them, etc. This information helps to refine the interactive.

6th and McKinley Site - Construction continues to move along on-pace. Since last December, the 5-story bank of windows above each of the three entrances were mostly installed. In addition, the framework for the vivarium windows was installed, and installation of glass began. Work on the inside – mechanical, electrical and plumbing continues. In addition, studs for walls and drywall are being installed. The rails for the collection storage equipment were installed on floors 3, 3.5 and 4.5. The framework for the 5-story monumental staircase was installed – this is a hanging staircase that is supported from the top floor by steel cables. This type of construction requires less space thus allowing us more space for exhibits. As an aside – the current museum’s exhibits take up about 23% of the building. Exhibits in the new museum will occupy nearly 50% of the space. We continue to exceed our goal (50%) for workforce onsite residing in Milwaukee County. We are proud to be at 56%.

Collections Move – The collection staff continue to make progress inventorying, barcoding and packing the collections. With the offsite storage facility upgraded and some storage equipment installed, some of those collections that will be permanently housed at offsite storage have been moved and staff have begun to unpack them. Once crates are empty, they will return to MPM, and more collections will be packed.

Surplus Personal Property and Fixtures - Last September, the County’s DAS and the Museum co-presented an overview of the Disposition Plan for MPM’s surplus personal property (County Board File No. [25-586](#)). As MPM works toward vacating the building, we still have a lot of planning to do, but we can provide a little more clarity as to this process and when it will commence. On the first and third Tuesday (at 11am and 1pm) from August to December, County departments will be invited to tour the facility to identify surplus personal property or fixtures that they may wish to have. From September to December, Museums will be invited and from October to December, non-profits will be invited to tour. Surplus property and fixtures will not be taken from the building at this time, but interest will be noted, and priority will follow the tiered priority system in File #25-586. During these

tours, the County may consider requests for fixtures. After the museum closes to the public, we will contact those interested and set up a time for removal. All costs associated with removal will be the responsibility of the respective entity, including County Departments. We have not yet determined that schedule or how/when a public auction will happen. This is a work in progress, and we will provide updates as available.

Fundraising – We will provide a fundraising update at the meeting.

We are happy to take questions during our appearance before the Committee.

Sincerely,



Ellen Censky, PhD
President/CEO



Thomas M. Oechler
VP Finance and Operations

MPM Consolidated Statement of Activities for the Four Months Ended 12/31/25

	YTD	YTD		Prior Year	Prior Year
	Actual	Budget	Dev	Actual	Change
Revenue:					
Contributions	1,436,254	1,179,246	257,008	1,189,136	247,117
Membership	464,157	413,087	51,070	473,786	(9,629)
Special Event Revenue	0	0	0	728,549	(728,549)
Public Support	1,166,667	1,166,667	0	1,167,245	(578)
Admissions	637,371	615,880	21,491	614,673	22,698
Theatre/Planetarium	36,522	44,953	(8,431)	48,059	(11,537)
Programs	43,108	28,348	14,760	45,979	(2,871)
Contributed Services	0	0	0	0	0
Restaurant and Facility Rental	80,563	60,570	19,993	66,751	13,812
Retail	280,917	248,785	32,132	247,777	33,140
Other income	58,759	103,243	(44,484)	44,670	14,089
Net Assets released from restrictions	1,550,222	354,198	1,196,024	1,346,350	203,872
Total Operating Revenue	5,754,539	4,214,975	1,539,564	5,972,974	(218,435)
Operating Expenses:					
Cost of Goods Sold	122,385	104,732	17,653	109,441	12,944
Supplies	271,837	336,171	(64,334)	279,127	(7,290)
Salaries and Wages	2,450,840	2,531,548	(80,708)	2,441,138	9,702
Benefits	579,695	597,649	(17,954)	465,512	114,184
Travel	31,944	43,568	(11,624)	17,862	14,082
Insurance	26,651	26,194	456	24,629	2,022
Marketing/Public Relations	106,119	131,497	(25,378)	239,112	(132,993)
Member/Donor Development	43,540	72,639	(29,099)	21,106	22,434
Subscriptions/Memberships	19,279	24,998	(5,719)	24,724	(5,445)
Maintenance	193,760	178,409	15,350	267,459	(73,700)
Utilities	386,056	371,856	14,200	370,856	15,200
Professional Fees	196,130	183,114	13,016	599,489	(403,358)
Interest Expense	1,283	1,694	(411)	1,476	(194)
Miscellaneous	52,479	59,459	(6,980)	58,116	(5,636)
Tax Expense	0	0	0	4,016	(4,016)
Contributed Services	0	0	0	0	0
Total Operating Expenses	4,482,000	4,663,529	(181,529)	4,924,064	(442,064)
Inc/(dec) from Net Assets in Operating Activities	1,272,539	(448,554)	1,721,093	1,048,910	223,629
Non-Operating Items:					
Investment Earnings (Loss)	595,214	68,000	527,214	25,146	570,068
Transfer to Endowment	0	0	0	(27,389)	27,389
Pension & Post Retirement Expenses	(120,000)	(120,000)	0	(120,000)	0
Depreciation & Amortization	(515,105)	(515,104)	(1)	(516,538)	1,434
Non-Operating Income - Covid Related	0	0	0	0	0
Total Non-Operating Items	(39,891)	(567,104)	527,213	(638,782)	598,891
Inc/(dec) in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	1,232,648	(1,015,658)	2,248,306	410,129	822,520
Changes in With Donor Restricted Net Assets:					
Contributions	605,408	125,500	479,908	1,327,064	(721,656)
Investment Earnings	357,923	0	357,923	(31,963)	389,886
Net Assets released from restrictions for operations	(1,550,222)	(354,198)	(1,196,024)	(1,346,350)	(203,872)
Inc/(dec) in With Donor Restricted Net Assets	(586,891)	(228,698)	(358,193)	(51,250)	(535,641)
Inc/(dec) in Net Assets	645,758	(1,244,355)	1,890,113	358,879	286,879
Total Net Assets at Beginning of Period	34,040,221	8,416,285	0	30,889,986	3,150,235
Total Net Assets at End of Period	34,685,979	7,171,930	1,890,113	31,248,865	3,437,114

MPM Consolidated Statement of Financial Position as of 12/31/25

	<u>12/31/25</u>	<u>8/31/25</u>	<u>Change</u>
Assets:			
Cash and cash equivalents	2,368,489	2,251,823	116,666
Investments	3,992,458	4,511,559	(519,101)
Accounts Receivable	130,991	99,162	31,829
Note Receivable	0	0	0
Contributions Receivable -Current	2,203,611	2,785,866	(582,255)
Due From Other Funds/Entities	0	0	0
Inventories, net	85,625	68,542	17,083
Prepaid Expenses	72,849	70,350	2,499
Total Current Assets	<u>8,854,024</u>	<u>9,787,302</u>	<u>(933,278)</u>
Other Assets:			
Cash and investments held for endowment	22,074,927	19,590,082	2,484,845
Contributions Receivable - Long Term	3,249,295	3,732,820	(483,525)
Pension Benefit Asset	179,404	184,404	(5,000)
Total Other Assets	<u>25,503,626</u>	<u>23,507,306</u>	<u>1,996,320</u>
Property & Equipment:			
CIP	0	0	0
Building Additions	19,875,741	19,875,741	(0)
Furniture, equipment and other improvements	13,177,078	13,177,078	(0)
Right to Use Assset	65,637	65,637	(0)
Gross Property & Equipment	33,118,455	33,118,456	(1)
Less-Accumulated depreciation & amortiization	(29,041,887)	(28,526,783)	(515,104)
Net Property & Equipment	<u>4,076,568</u>	<u>4,591,673</u>	<u>(515,105)</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>38,434,218</u></u>	<u><u>37,886,281</u></u>	<u><u>547,937</u></u>
Liabilities and Net Assets:			
Accounts Payable	442,898	362,492	80,406
Accrued Payroll & Benefits	625,493	734,147	(108,654)
Deferred Revenue	909,258	1,003,587	(94,329)
Lease Payable - Current	13,630	13,630	0
Current Portion of Post Retirement Benefits	149,526	149,526	0
Line of Credit	0	0	0
Total Current Liabilities	<u>2,140,806</u>	<u>2,263,382</u>	<u>(122,576)</u>
Accrued Postretirement Benefits	1,518,736	1,479,301	39,435
Due to Other Funds/Entities	0	0	0
Annuity Payment Liability	77,734	87,934	(10,200)
Lease Payable	10,965	15,444	(4,479)
Total Liabilities	<u>3,748,241</u>	<u>3,846,061</u>	<u>(97,820)</u>
Net Assets:			
Without Donor Restrictions	19,526,734	18,294,086	1,232,648
With Donor Restrictions	15,159,243	15,746,134	(586,891)
Total Net Assets	<u>34,685,978</u>	<u>34,040,220</u>	<u>645,758</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u><u>38,434,218</u></u>	<u><u>37,886,281</u></u>	<u><u>547,937</u></u>