

Thomas County Historical Society, Inc.  
Long Range Plan  
2017-2020

Approved by the Board: January, 2017



THOMAS COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## **Section I – Introduction**

The Thomas County Historical Society, Inc. has been in existence since 1952 and has operated a physical museum since 1972. Over the last 65 years, much effort has been made towards long range planning with the majority of that work taking place between 1983 and 2007. Although great strides were made to confirm the areas that most needed attention, most of these convenings resulted in “to-do” like documents with tasks both small and large being listed. Many of the items listed were in fact completed and accomplished including a substantial capital campaign in 2004 and a new building being added to the Museum in 1991. Still a long range “vision” of the Museum is needed, which is where this document comes in.

In February of 2016, after 23 years of dedicated service to the Museum, Ann Harrison retired as the Executive Director. During her tenure, many aesthetic changes were completed. The Metcalfe Courthouse was added, the Bowling Alley was restored and the Museum added the Davis Wing to mention just a few such changes. Ann and the Board did a tremendous amount of work to get the Museum to where it is today in 2017.

It was decided in November 2016 at the TCHS’s initial Long Range Planning meeting, that this a three year plan would be most helpful so that we can have a “bridge” document that will be in place until 2020. This will allow the new director to get settled and work through some initial objectives while also working on a more robust long range plan for 2020-2025.

## **Section II – Core Values and Vision Statement**

This section is currently incomplete but should be added to the next long range plan as this is a vital part of any organization’s focus.

## **Section III – Review of SWOT and Past Planning Initiatives**

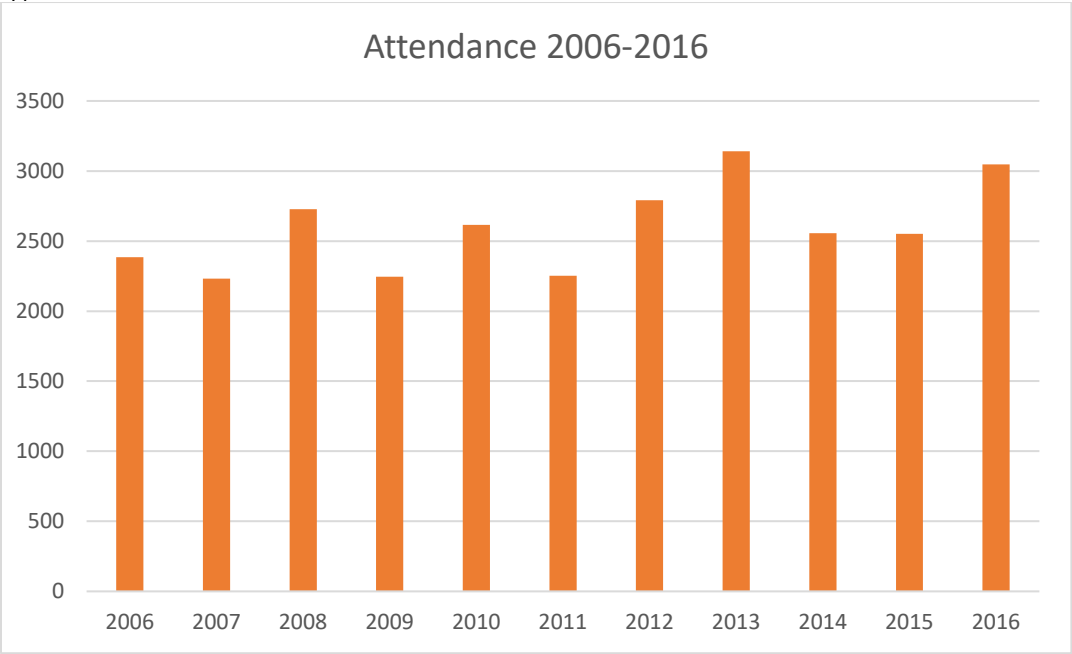
Since the early 1980s’ the TCHS has engaged in long range planning exercises with the Board, staff, and outside constituents; there have been long range planning committees and a retreat was held in 2003. A SWOT analysis was done in 2000 and although it is 16 years old, it still holds some relevance to today. The Strengths Weaknesses and Threats are still applicable today while the Opportunities could easily be updated as things like social media and marketing avenues have expanded. Although all of these internal and external planning exercises were handled professionally and resulted in some comprehensive documents, a concrete Long Range Plan never materialized. Therefore efforts to “fix” or address problems have existed in a type of vacuum or one-off type of scenario. Such responses have resulted in many improvements over the years (structural building repairs, new buildings added, cosmetic face lifts, and the occasional revised exhibit content) but not as many strategic initiatives. There is, in fact, a long list of accomplishments from 1997 onward that show a level of dedication from the staff, board and

local funders to support the mission of the Museum and undoubtedly these types of improvements will continue to occur as they always do – without notice and on as needed basis. But we also want to work within the structure of a long range document so in regard to the administration and operational needs of the Museum, we will use this three year plan to guide us accordingly. There are many areas that need to be addressed both in this document in regard to day-to-day policies and procedures but for the immediate future, the core documents (Code of Ethics, Long Range Plan, Collection Management Plan, Mission Statement, and Emergency Plan) will be the focus of the administration. At the same time, it has become clear that the By-Laws will need to be updated as they are over 25 years old.

## Section IV – Historical Data (2006-2016)

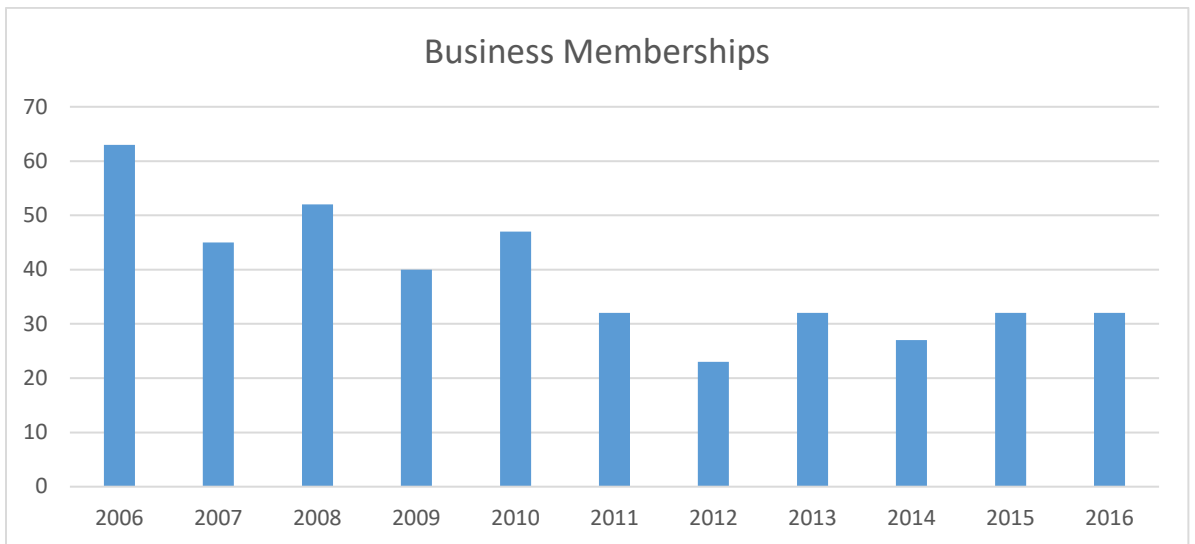
### A. Attendance

Over the years, attendance at the Museum has been tracked both manually and electronically. Demographics have not been the main focus of this data, rather just the gross number of visitors on a particular day or for an event. We have begun to track this data more efficiently and more accurately so that we can validate our assumptions about what our typical visitor is.



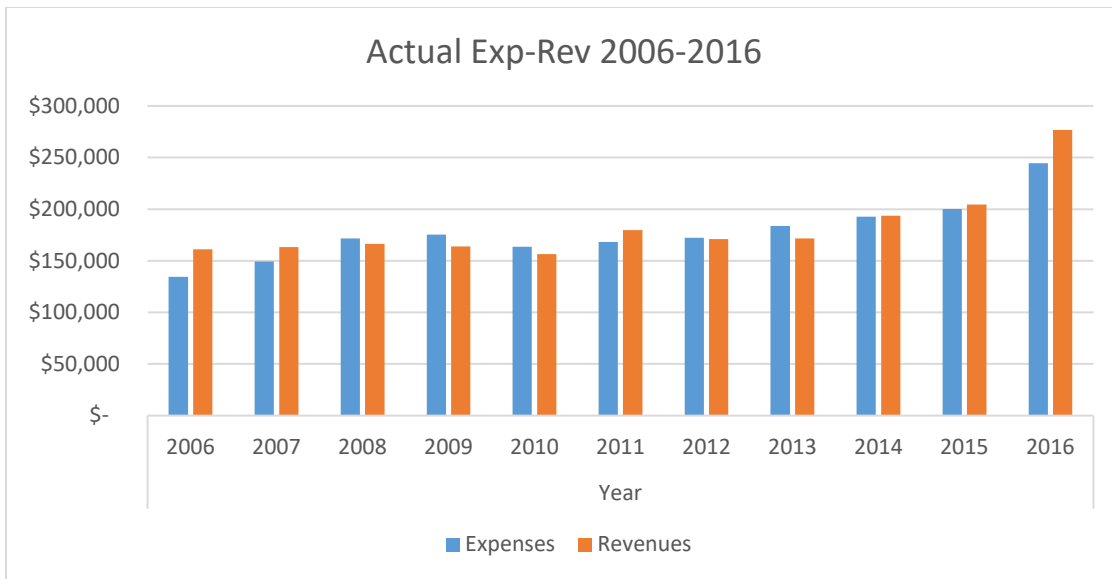
## B. Membership

For decades, the membership program was run on an annual basis with all members being solicited from Oct-Dec. for a one year renewal. In June of 2016 it was decided that we would move to a “365” or calendar system. The data provided in this document shows fairly consistent numbers for the past ten years, with two exceptions: 2011 and 2016. In 2011 there were staffing changes that caused the membership program to be handled by various individuals which allowed renewals and solicitations to sometimes fall through the cracks. In 2016 the program was redesigned into a calendar year structure and it is believed that the data began to reflect a more accurate picture of our membership.



### C. Revenue/Expenses

Revenues and expenses have remained consistent over the past 10 years with fixed costs rising an average of 5% each year. Our revenues biggest hit came in 2008-2009 with the national economic downturn and was handled appropriately by the board and administration. The expenses have increased on average 26% annually, this is largely due to an increase in salaries and additional staff being added. There has also been a steady increase in insurance premiums, and utility costs over the last ten years have increased on average 3% each year.



### D. Collection Categories

The collections at the Museum have been built upon since before the Museum opened to the public. As with many locally focused institutions, the Historical Society has collections that were obtained over decades of time, from a variety of sources and focused on a variety of topics. Although there are probably collection pieces that will need to be de-accessioned, the majority of the collections (both archival and three dimensional) are relevant to the regional history and are therefore central to our mission. Considerable work still remains to get the collections properly stored, cataloged and exhibited and some of those areas will be addressed in this plan. Roughly speaking, our collections break down as such:

- Fine Art = 250
- Documents = 50,000
- Photos = 350,000
- Furniture = 100

## E. Industry Trends

There have been two substantive surveys conducted by the AAM in 2016, one focused around governance and one around salaries and compensation. The results of these surveys have not been released as yet but we hope to include their findings into our future planning discussions.

## Section V – Critical Success Factors and Metrics

Throughout its history, the Historical Society has not consistently tracked metrics beyond basic things such as attendance and memberships sold, etc. Beginning in 2006 the attendance metrics were tracked to a higher level of specificity (type of group, # of students vs. chaperones, etc.). In 2016 an attempt was made to begin formally tracking metrics from across all divisions of the Museum. These include collection related data such as donations and research requests; Educational data by age groups, date of visit and geographic location. Administratively we have begun to track restricted funds, expenses and income down to the line item level, board statistics and divisional finances within the Museum. Our ways and means of collection metrics will take some time to perfect and standardize but efforts will be made to correlate what we collect with the standard professional areas as outlined in the AAM's accreditation process. In regard to critical success factors, there has not been any detailed discussion about these other than general responses provided by board members at the one of the 2016 strategic planning sessions when asked "What needs to happen to ensure that the TCHS is a long term success?" There were consistent responses to this question, including:

- Be more interactive and engaging
- Be more creative
- Address younger generations
- Improve our operations

That being said, there were six areas/responses that rose above all of the others and that, if considered more intently, could become the basis for a long range plan but for now they will act as the foundation for a three year plan that will direct our work until we can complete our re-branding process and better educate the board and staff on what their roles should be within the planning process.

## Section VI – Goals and Objectives

The following goals will be our focus from 2017-2020 at which time we will draft a more substantive 5-10 year Strategic Plan. Each goal below has 3-5 accompanying objectives but no owners. The reasoning behind this is that at this point in time, with only five staff, the tasks required to accomplish these goals will be shared by all. When a comprehensive Strategic Plan

is outlined in 2020, there will be a more in-depth level of responsibility and it will include staff and board assignments.

***Goal #1 - Secure a base of passionate supporters who remain consistently involved***

Objectives

- a. Create 2-3 lists in Past Perfect of longtime supporters with defined parameters for how each list will be constructed
- b. Track baseline reviews and comments from program attendees at as many programs as possible
- c. Build a contact list in Past Perfect of our core audience members of millennials and other under-utilized demographics
- d. Institute a strategy for collecting prospect information at all events
- e. Institute a Thomasville based membership ask

***Goal #2 - Utilize the collections more effectively***

Objectives

- a. Complete a basic inventory of all collection items
- b. Revise the Collection Management Policy (Collection Development Policy)
- c. Build an educational collection and design parameters for its use and storage
- d. Set up touch screen for researchers to access digital archives
- e. Identify distressed textiles and objects for de-accession

***Goal #3 - Create a personal connection between the visitor and the stories we share***

Objectives

- a. Initiate 3-5 interactive components into the visitor experience using social media
- b. Apply for a 2017 IMLS MFA grant for interpretive re-design for the entire campus
- c. Hold 4 live crowd sharing thematic events to identify people in selected images
- d. Set up touch screen accessible archives for the public to use
- e. Install an interactive "ask" component into the Log House and Joyner House
- f. Install elec. In Tool Shed and set up basic identifying information for the tools

***Goal #4 - Identify diverse revenue streams***

Objectives

- a. Reach out to all potential grantors identified from the FDO site
- b. Identify 2-3 local partners to co-host an annual income producing event
- c. Design a campaign for focused funds for an interpretive component
- d. Re-design Fall Dinner to attract a more diverse audience

***Goal #5 - Utilize our space(s) more efficiently***

Objectives



- a. Thoroughly clean and declutter the Attic
- b. Convert the 1<sup>st</sup> floor bathroom alcove to Educational supply storage & work space
- c. Draft a plan for Webster Street property as part of an assessment of the Dargan plan and its feasibility going forward
- d. Complete the basement renovations
- e. Install new shelving for Curator's office and in the Attic

*Goal #6 - Adapt to cultural changes and address timely topics*

Objectives

- a. Include at least one contemporary museum and/or media topic in the lecture series
- b. Incorporate one culturally diverse "mini" exhibit into the Davis Wing entrance hall each year
- c. Continue to build 2-3 experiential adult focused programs into the annual program calendar
- d. Complete re-branding process and properly market it

## Section VII – Conclusion

This plan will act as a guiding document for all staff and board members throughout the next three years. It will need to be instituted and referred to regularly when planning for events, programs and for any capital changes to the property. Its secondary purpose will be as a litmus test for future planning. Since there have been decades of planning meetings and discussions but no implemented plans, this document will help the staff, board and funders acclimate themselves to the way planning should and can work at the Historical Society. Just as any other document is not written in stone, neither will this one, but it is expected that at the conclusion of 2020, the stated goals and objectives will have been accomplished or perhaps even exceeded.

It will be the responsibility of the Executive Director (primarily) and the staff and board (secondarily) to adhere to this document and compare it to the work completed in these three years.