

**Kansas Historical Society**  
**Curtis House Acquisition & Museum Gallery Renovation Update to**  
**Legislative Budget Committee**  
**December 11, 2024**

Thank you for inviting us to provide an update on the Curtis House acquisition and the museum gallery renovation.

**Curtis House**

In 1986, The Kansas legislature enacted K.S.A. 76-2049 and 76-2050, declaring the property at 1101 Topeka Boulevard to possess “unusual historical interest,” and authorized the Kansas State Historical Society to purchase the house and property. The 2024 Legislature appropriated \$300,00 in SGF to purchase the Curtis House. The house had been listed for sale with a realtor for \$750,000, which included the antique furniture and contents, and the Kansas Historical Foundation, our sister 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to raising funds to assist our agency in our mission, was tasked with raising additional funds to ensure the purchase.

On August 7, 2024, we received the completed appraisal report by three certified appraisers, in accordance with the statute, valuing the property at \$300,000. On August 12, 2024, the personal property appraisal came back with a total of \$46,274.00.

In September, we reached a verbal agreement with the sellers to purchase the property for \$300,000, and they generously agreed to donate the furniture and contents within. Since that time, we have worked to finalize the sale, but one of the delays has been our statutory requirement for the Attorney General’s office to review and approve an abstract of title, which does not currently exist for this property. In discussion with the realtor and title company, abstracts of title are no longer being done for property transactions, and we are working with the AG’s office to determine our next steps.

**Museum Gallery Renovation Update**

The Kansas Historical Society, established in 1875, has as its mission to actively collect, preserve, interpret, and share Kansas history. The initial museum exhibits were located here in the State House. We moved to the Memorial Building in 1914, and to our current facility in 1984.

As early as 2008, our staff began discussing the need for an updated museum gallery and visitor experience. A feasibility study was conducted, and a capital campaign announced in 2015 with private fundraising by the Kansas Historical Foundation. That year we received our first \$1 million donation from the Hansen Foundation. In 2019, we received our second \$1 million donation from the Sunderland Foundation. In 2021, we signed a contract with Dimensional Innovations in Overland Park for the design and fabrication of the new museum exhibits. KSHS staff would develop the scripts and select the artifacts.

In April 2022, our longtime agency director, Jennie Chinn, unexpectedly passed away. To stay on schedule, we announced in June that the gallery would be closing on September 2, 2022. Since then, we have completed the long process of removing over 3000 artifacts, dismantling the

old exhibit cases, and storing the artifacts temporarily. New concrete sidewalks and the exterior plaza drainage project was completed in the fall of 2022. A new lobby concept was finalized, and demolition completed in 2023.

### **Timeline Delayed**

Unfortunately, the situation has changed since my museum gallery update presentation last year when I announced that work should be completed late in 2024, and the grand opening was planned for Kansas Day, 2025.

At a meeting on May 9, 2024, with Dimensional Innovations, we discovered that the gallery exhibit walls, ramp and supporting engineering work were not included in the cost of the project. In addition, this work triggered additional life safety compliance. With a new estimate of an additional \$904,500 needed for the new infrastructure and life safety upgrades, we met with Secretary Proffitt on June 4, 2024, to discuss potential funding alternatives, and it was determined that we should request supplemental funds in FY25. It should be noted that total private expenditures for the museum gallery renovation are still expected to be approximately \$6.45 million.

On August 27, 2024, OFPM accepted the project, and a well-attended, pre-bid meeting was held on September 17, 2024. All seemed well, but on October 2, 2024, we were notified that no bids had been submitted. We re-posted and actively solicited contractors to bid. We received 5 bids the second time on November 7, 2024. But. . . on November 15, 2024, we were informed that the low bidder forgot to include material cost in their bid. Once that was resolved, we signed the contract for construction on December 4, 2024, with the work to be completed by March 21, 2025.

We are currently waiting on the approval from the Department of Administration to proceed with contracting for the life safety plan, which will include new pull stations and monitoring along with new sprinklers and lighting. Other work remains ongoing, including the lobby café construction and the outside dining terrace.

While this isn't the timeline that we had hoped to relate to you, we remain excited about the new gallery design, as you can see from the accompanying PowerPoint presentation. We are awaiting a new installation timeline from Dimensional Innovations based upon the March 21, 2025, completion deadline for the wall construction. At this time, the best that we can project is that we will open sometime in mid-2025.

I will be happy to answer any questions.

Patrick Zollner, Executive Director  
Kansas Historical Society  
patrick.zollner@ks.gov  
785-272-8681, ext. 202