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*"We want to create a world class science center that will inspire children in the sciences, enable our adults to navigate the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we'll do all this through the lens of the Ozarks, our people, our culture, our innovations." – John Lewis, former president, Northwest Arkansas Museum Foundation (1939-2007)*

## **Science Museum Advances Vision, Passes Business Plan, Receives Donations Will Spring Into Site Selection Next, Executive Director Says**

FAYETTEVILLE, AR — The Northwest Arkansas Museum Foundation board of directors unanimously approved a 250-page business plan this spring. True to his character and humility, John Lewis waited to cast his vote last on May 25<sup>th</sup>, exactly one week before he passed away.

Accepting this business plan allowed the board to move forward with site selection and other significant steps associated with the project. But after Lewis' death, acting Executive Director of the Northwest Arkansas Museum Foundation Brent Robinson came to the June board meeting unsure if Lewis' vision would continue.

The question of quitting never came up. Everyone asked what he or she could do, including members of Lewis' family who were present at the meeting. To everyone's delight, Lewis' wife, Helen Lewis, said she would like to be part of this project.

"She said, 'This is John's vision, and I'd like to contribute my energies in helping the museum become a reality,'" said Kay Palmer, Chief Information Officer of JB Hunt and vice president of the board. "We all were so happy, and immediately voted Helen on to the board."

In addition, just prior to Lewis' passing, Jeff Wilkins, an executive at Proctor & Gamble became a board member. Shortly after, Dr. Ron Goforth, president of local companies Beta-Rubicon and EquityNet, was added.

"We are ready to spring ahead, and having this plan in place allows us to focus on making the vision a reality," Robinson said.

Within weeks, each board member dug into his or her own pocket and made contributions to fund operational expenses for the next several months. Since then, additional donors have pledged their support, including the John M. Lewis Trust. In just four months, the Foundation has raised an additional \$75,000 in contributions. The initial project in 2004 was funded by Fayetteville Community Foundation, Hannover House and the Happy Hollow Foundation. Many of Lewis' friends have supported the project over the past several years as well as regional foundations including the Thomas and Natalie Garrison Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation. To date, we've raised more than \$565,000 toward the museum effort, Robinson said.

The board is discussing relationships with numerous research partners that include Arkansas Archaeological Survey, Audubon Arkansas, Beaver Water District, the Ozark Natural Science Center, the UA Center for Advanced Spatial Technologies, the UA Fulbright College of Arts of Sciences and the UA Watershed Research and Education Center. They have already partnered with the Sam. Walton College of Business MBA program and have ongoing relationships with the UA Honors College and the UA Center for Mathematics and Science Education.

Important developmental steps have also been taken. The business plan, completed by Marblehead, Mass.-based White Oak & Associates, is under review by peer science centers across the country.

"We're having other science centers that have recently built new facilities or made additions review our assumptions and validate our plan," Robinson said.

Once this is complete, the site selection process will begin.

“We are working with Steve Luoni at the UA Community Design Center on a process for evaluating sites based on the criteria in the business plan and establishing the best location for the project,” Robinson said.

Robinson said the Foundation plans to make sustainability a key component of the museum effort, from site selection and construction to using parts of the building as sustainability exhibits and real-world labs.

With the adoption of a business plan, Robinson said the board expects to begin the capital campaign later in 2008. If all the dominoes fall into place, the museum could open 2011 or 2012, he said.

Architect selection will begin once a site is chosen, Robinson said.

“It was very important to first come up with a business case and let that concept dictate where the museum should be located, and not the other way around,” Robinson said. “We didn’t want to select a site first and limit our vision of what is possible to what can be done given the location.”

For additional information, including a complete list of documents, board members, etc., please visit:

[www.nwamuseum.org](http://www.nwamuseum.org).

Note: Due to proprietary, real estate and monetary interests, the business plan is not currently available for review by the press. It will eventually be released, but likely not until the site selection process is complete.

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