



News Release

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DETROIT CITY COUNCIL APPROVES AGREEMENT WITH THE DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOR THE OPERATION OF THE

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DETROIT – By a vote of 7-1, the Detroit City Council approved a proposed Memorandum of Agreement that immediately transfers operational responsibility for the Detroit Historical Museum, the Dossin Great Lakes Museum and the Museums' Collections Resource Center to the Detroit Historical Society.

The agreement will ensure the continued operations of the Museums, while significantly decreasing the City's level of financial support. Additionally, the City retains ownership of the Museum's assets and operational responsibility for Historic Fort Wayne.

"On behalf of the Society's board of directors, I would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the individuals in both the Mayor's Office and the City Council who have worked diligently to ensure the future of the Museums through this agreement," said Detroit Historical Society Executive Director & CEO Robert Bury. "In addition, thank you to our many donors, members, trustees and friends who have supported us during this time and remained committed to the belief that our history is worth preserving for future generations."

Discussions between the City of Detroit, which currently owns and operates the Museums, and the Detroit Historical Society began last spring when the Mayor announced his intention to eliminate all City funding for the Detroit Historical Museums by the end of the 05-06 fiscal year.

City support for the Museums, which include the Detroit Historical Museum, the Dossin Great Lakes Museum, and Historic Fort Wayne, has declined dramatically in recent years. In fiscal year 2003-04, the City provided \$3.5 million for the Museums. In the 2005-06 fiscal year, that number is expected to fall to approximately \$1.5 million. Under the approved agreement, the City's level of support would be further reduced by two thirds, saving the City an additional \$1 million.

Key points of the agreement include the following:

The City will maintain complete ownership of the Museums, property and assets, including an extensive collection of priceless artifacts.

The Society will manage the day-to-day operations of the main museum in the Cultural Center and the Dossin Great Lakes Museum on Belle Isle. The City will retain operational responsibility of Historic Fort Wayne, although the Society will have access to, and will operate the Collections Resource Center at Historic Fort Wayne, which houses the Museums' artifacts.

The Society has reached tentative agreements with both unions representing existing Museum staff members and will include these positions in the new organization.

The City will provide an annual grant to the Society to assist with this transition and to ensure the organization's ability to advance its mission and continue its service to the community.

Maintaining the role of the Detroit Historical Commission, whose members are appointed by the Mayor, and a provision for the Detroit City Council to appoint representatives to the Society's Board of Trustees.

This agreement enables the Detroit Historical Museum and the Dossin Great Lakes Museum to remain open to the general public, including the thousands of schoolchildren who visit each year as part of organized classroom tours. The Museum's docent-led tours have long been recognized for their alignment with the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) benchmarks for elementary school students.

"In the weeks and months ahead, the Society will need the help of everyone in the community to ensure the Museums remain strong and vibrant cultural resources for our region," Bury said.

The Detroit Historical Museum is located at 5401 Woodward Ave. (NW corner of Kirby) in Detroit's Cultural Center area. Permanent exhibits include the famous Streets of Old Detroit, Frontiers to Factories, The Motor City, and The Glancy Trains. For more information, call the Museum at (313) 833-1805 or check out our website at www.detroithistorical.org.

The Dossin Great Lakes Museum is located at 100 Strand Drive on Belle Isle. Permanent exhibits include the S.S. William Clay Ford Pilot House, the beautiful Gothic Room from the City of Detroit III, the anchor from the S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald, and more. For more information, call the Dossin Museum at (313) 833-1805.