



American Alliance of Museums

November 1, 2016

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Accreditation
Commission**

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William Tramposch
Gosnell Executive
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Nantucket Historical
Association,
Nantucket, MA

Ms. Sarah Mundy
Director
Riverside Metropolitan Museum
3580 Mission Inn Ave
Riverside, CA 92501-3321

Dear Ms. Mundy:

After much consideration, the Accreditation Commission voted to table its decision on accreditation for the Riverside Metropolitan Museum. We discussed your museum at great length at our October 13-14, 2016 meeting, reviewing the Self-Study, supporting documents, and the Visiting Committee's report.

We commend the staff's dedication, its openness to change, and the trust it has earned from local government leaders. We are pleased with the progress that has been made since the last accreditation review in a number of areas. The museum's work in obtaining grants and funding for interpretive planning and activities for the Harada House (made visible, in part, through an excellent website about the Harada family's story) is exemplary.

Unfortunately, the unique assets that make this museum a potential regional, if not national, resource are not receiving the attention (and in the case of the Harada House, the care) that they deserve. Therefore, we tabled our decision so that the museum can address, through planning, some serious deficiencies in collections stewardship:

- The City of Riverside has allowed the Harada House to deteriorate despite the prominent place the Harada House has to the community and the nation's history, as noted on the City's cultural website. While a neighboring property has been acquired to help tell a more complete story of the importance of the Harada family, the Harada House itself has been allowed to crumble. City leadership made clear to the Visiting Committee that it has no intention of budgeting the funds required to keep the Harada House from deteriorating further. Unless outside funds are secured or new funds are allocated by the City, this unique and nationally-recognized resource may well disappear. By the end of the tabling period, we need to see measurable plans and evidence of concrete steps taken to address the urgent need to stabilize, then conserve, then open the Harada House.
- The storage conditions of collections in the basement of the main museum building remain substandard, despite this having been identified as an issue in the last accreditation review and with some progress made in the interim. The museum needs to determine whether more culling of its collections is necessary, whether more resources need to be devoted to rehousing, or both. While this may not be fully accomplished within the tabling period, we need to see a plan for, and initial steps taken, to improve basement storage conditions.

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In addition to these two high-priority collections care issues, we also note that the basketry collection is one that makes the museum unique among museums of its size. However, two issues about it stand out:

- It provides an opportunity for exhibit and programming excellence that does not appear to have been fully exploited.
- The museum's planning does not adequately acknowledge the importance of this resource relative to other collections.

During the tabling period, we want to see some steps or plans to consider how to make better use of this important collection, whether through interpretation, research, exhibits, or other strategies.

On average, 30 percent of all museums are tabled at each Commission meeting. We find that museums often use their tabling decision as an opportunity to address issues they recognize as areas of concern and to leverage change. You will be reassured to know that in the majority of these kinds of decisions, tabling issues get resolved and accreditation is awarded.

A copy of the Visiting Committee's report is enclosed, along with more information about the tabling process. During the tabling period the museum must address the issues cited above. As part of the tabling process:

- ✓ The museum must submit a progress report with relevant supporting documentation to the Accreditation Program staff **on or before April 21, 2017** for review by the Accreditation Commission at our June 2017 meeting.
- ✓ We will review the museum's final report at our February 2018 meeting and make our decision regarding accreditation based on the progress the museum has made in addressing our concerns. A specific report due date will be assigned after we review your progress report.

I encourage you to contact Julie Hart, Senior Director, Museum Standards and Excellence, at (202) 218-7712 or jhart@aam-us.org if you have questions about the tabling process or if you would like to arrange a phone call with a Commissioner to discuss the Commission's decision.

Sincerely yours,


Burt Logan
Chair, Accreditation Commission
Executive Director and CEO
Ohio History Connection

Enclosures:

Site Visit Report
What You Need to Know About: The Museum's Site Visit Report
What You Need to Know About: The Tabling Decision and Process
Guidelines for the Institution: Tabling Action Progress and Final Reports
Standards Regarding Collections Stewardship

cc: Charles Wilson, Chairperson, Metropolitan Museum Board
Dennis Kois, Visiting Committee
Daniel Joyce, Visiting Committee