

THE ATHENÆUM OF PHILADELPHIA

219 South Sixth Street  
East Washington Square  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-3794

May 31, 2019

To The Athenaeum of Philadelphia Shareholders, Subscribers and Staff,

I am enormously pleased to tell you that our Board of Directors has chosen Beth Shalom Hessel as our new Executive Director, succeeding Peter Conn, who will retire on June 30.

We believe Beth is the ideal person to take on leadership of the Athenaeum at this critical moment, when both the Board and the staff are working to enhance the institution's range of activities, its physical environment and its visibility as a forum for Philadelphians in pursuit of cultural engagement and a life of the mind.

Beth comes to us with an outstanding record of accomplishment as Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS), where she has been a transformative leader, known for working in close collaboration with staff, board members and community leaders. She is an ordained Presbyterian minister as well as a PhD in American History who has taught at Texas Christian University and Randolph Macon Woman's College.



At PHS, where she has overseen a staff of 25, Beth has spearheaded major strategic planning and realignment initiatives, revitalized archival activities, increased fundraising by nearly 60 percent, overhauled communications and grown the society's contemporary history collections. She has also cultivated institutional partnerships and collaboration across a wide spectrum of cultural and community associations—here in Philadelphia and nationwide.

Anticipating her first meeting with our search committee, Beth wrote to us: "I am excited by the potential inherent in leading at this crucial time an historic institution with deep roots in one of the most culturally and intellectually rich cities in our nation, an institution that sees itself as an extension of the great liberal arts tradition of engaging the body, mind and spirit to better the individual and the community."

Since then, I and the rest of our search committee have met with Beth a number of times. We've been deeply impressed by her experience, her commitment and her energy, and we feel confident that she is the right person to succeed Peter and to lead the Athenaeum to new heights.

Most Sincerely,

Ned Scharff  
President, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia