

**ConCom:** Betsy Casey, John Frick, Pamela Webster, Brian Anderson, Dana Beaty

Board and Members of the Mindbridge Foundation:

We are Elizabeth (Betsy) Casey, John Frick, Pamela Webster, Brian Anderson and Dana Beatty, and it is our pleasure to announce our bid for ICON ConCom for ICON 45 or 46 (whichever it should be numbered as) in 2021.

### **ICON 45/46: Seeking Further Horizons**

The theme we are presenting is the same as the proposal we submitted last year. We have chosen to stick with this theme as we strongly believe in its message and it continues to be relevant, perhaps even more so in current times. It encapsulates our vision not only for the 45/46th ICON, but also for the convention's future. To seek further horizons is to base ourselves in the roots of our beloved convention while looking forward to what's next, to reach beyond where we are to where we could be -- and isn't that the heart of speculative fiction? Con-goers can expect to explore the question "What is science fiction/fantasy, and what is it becoming?"

In review:

Where are science fiction and fantasy growing? The stronghold of literary spec-fic is steadfast, but in comics both print and online, in video gaming and tabletop gaming, in TV shows and in movies, fantasy and science fiction are gaining ground, and gaining complexity. Radical politics and unconventional viewpoints are keystones for SFF -- and that encouragement to critically question and explore is now presented in a greater mainstream, and to a wider audience.

Psychological studies have shown that fiction increases empathy; that consumers of fiction are practicing putting themselves in another's shoes, of experiencing situations they might otherwise never see. We argue that speculative fiction is at the heart of that, by presenting not only people to meet, but also new worlds to explore in all their wonder and terror. Creators and consumers of SFF are the future of our society -- those who seek those further horizons.

In addition, keeping current world-wide events in mind-our theme is increasingly relevant. Not only are we seeing advances in medical science, but the continued need as a global community for an increased sense of the very empathy SFF encourages!

With the approval of the Board, we will begin to invite guests; we intend for Jim C. Hines to be our toastmaster, and of course to invite the Haldemans. We have decided on David Weber as our author Guest of Honor, but have not yet decided on others. Our budget is similar to that of ICON 44 - we intend to offset the uptick in expense by making small cuts across the board, making pre-registration and registration more affordable, increasing publicity, and with the approval of the board, seeking sponsorship donations from local businesses in Iowa City and Cedar Rapids.

In addition we are working on formulating a contingency plan for a virtual version of ICON, should the continued pandemic again make meeting in person an unwise choice.

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Some department heads have been contacted already as per the following summary; those who intend to step down from their positions will be asked to serve as advisors if they so choose. We will be continuing to reach out to department heads as we progress.

### **Our Vision for ICON**

What does our vision mean for ICON? Our future plans will always seek to include those traditions that set ICON apart from other SFF conventions. To seek further horizons is not to cut ties with where we've been -- instead, that firm foundation is exactly what's needed to extend our reach. John, Pam, Brian, Dana and I intend to take what works from past ICONs, the efforts that have been made to expand our visibility to lovers of speculative fiction in the Corridor and beyond, and press further. We see in our daily lives that spec-fic lives on in younger generations, in Millennials, and Z's -- but often, that crowd is cut off from conventions due to a host of factors, choosing instead to connect online to a wider community at the expense of finding a local home. And this is where a virtual presence could give us an advantage. We mean to make ICON, and by association, all of Mindbridge's efforts, that local home.

Therefore, one of our initiatives for ICON as ConCom is to draw in new members -- through the efforts in accessibility and inclusivity, but also in creating a 'New Blood' discount, wherein returning members who bring in new adult members earn a \$5 discount, up to \$20 total, to pre-registration or weekend-at-door registration. Word of mouth is a powerful tool, and incentivizing it could make all the difference. We also plan to expand our publicity to and seek sponsorships from businesses and organizations who have contact with SFF lovers of different stripes. Again, adding in the possibility of some virtual components to the convention could aid us in reaching out to persons otherwise unable to attend for a multitude of reasons.

Another initiative is to increase accessibility for ICON's members, and those who wish to be. Members of ICON have mental illnesses, are neurodiverse in a variety of ways, have mobility concerns, are financially unstable, or any combination of these. While efforts have been made towards accessibility, Pamela, Brian, John, Dana and I feel this could be expanded to welcome in people who may have heard of ICON, but are priced out, can't make it to Cedar Rapids, or fear it may be too overwhelming mentally, emotionally, or sensorily. We also intend to internalize and expand the efforts to welcome members of all genders, sexualities, and expressions, abilities & conditions by creating an Inclusivity and Accessibility Department. This new department is not expected to add much to our expenses, however we see it as reaching out a hand in the very empathy we propose to celebrate.

Our final initiative is to place responsibility firmly in the hands of those who love it most -- while we place ourselves at the head of the table as ConCom, we feel that all of ICON staff should, and indeed deserve to, have their voices heard and their abilities respected. We intend to make communication clear and pursue efficiency. All meetings will be scheduled in advance for the year with changes in that scheduling to be communicated to all concerned with no less than 3

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weeks notice. Because we intend to work as a team, there is every reason to believe that any one of us on the concom will be capable of leading every meeting. With the continued improvement of virtual communications, we anticipate attendance at staff meetings to be made easier for all involved. In fact, all meetings are to be held virtually until we have received notice from the medical experts which declares meetings of more than 10 to be safely attended.

We mean to make ICON a project that Mindbridge can be proud of -- by raising memberships, increasing accessibility by current and future members, by increasing donations and publicity, making all staff responsible and accountable, by streamlining communication & continuing to improve communication across the board, by seeking better and more efficient processes, and by ensuring ICON is known as the place for all lovers of SFF to come and be welcome.

### **Who We Are**

I am a writer and poet under the pseudonym Casey Vox, and a longtime reader of all things fantasy and science fiction. My work is in human services: I am pursuing my Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, I'm a respite care worker, occasional temp, and freelancer. As a jack of all trades, I turn my hand to anything that needs doing, and my best work is with people -- listening, observing, gathering support, and mediating concerns. I collect SFF books, the vast majority of my webcomic reading list is spec-fic in some form or another, I play JRPGs generally, and I'm involved in a number of tabletop games using a variety of systems. I am a nonbinary person who uses they/them pronouns but will accept she/her and he/him, and have been serving as an advisor to ConCom and department heads on gender diversity for ICON 44. I have attended ICONs 41-43, have won the Vogon Poetry Contest twice and gotten a Dishonorable Mention once, I'm a member of TICC as of last year, and I've volunteered at every ICON that I've been a part of in one way or another.

John Frick has been a Mindbridge member since 2005 and ConCom for ICON 31 and 44. He is an IT professional with 26 years experience and works as a sysadmin at Ulowa College of Engineering. He became an Eagle Scout in 1992. In short, he says, "I know what I am getting into, I have the needed experience to do the job, I am local, dependable, and have experience as an Evil Overlord ... err ConCom. Am I an expert at running a convention... no. But I am wise enough to build a team that can fill gaps in knowledge when possible, I know that I cannot do it all, and I believe that you need to be able to trust your team to do the job. I believe strongly in what ICON is. I remember what it was, what it has been, and know that any changes/forward movements needs to pay respect to ICON's history."

Pamela Webster is a musician, artist & gamer, a lifelong science fiction fan and reader. She attended her first ICON because of Jim C Hines & how much she loves his books. She has management experience in the realms of retail, educational classrooms & live theater. She is a former band director, has managed a retail store & is on the board at a community theater where she also directs plays. She has many years of convention attendance under her belt from very small one-day events up to events attended by thousands. She has been a volunteer at

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many cons & has had dealer/artist tables. She has served as co-head for the Art Show at ICON and as head of the Animelowa art show's return. Despite Animelowa needing to be a virtual convention, she & Robin Buskirk with input from Adam Brower developed & executed a Virtual Art Show for Animelowa 2020. She has experienced first hand what kind of positive effect the local con can have and is driven to help others experience con life in a positive & welcoming manner. In her 'real life' she has her own business as an artist, crafter & costume builder. In between all that she also works as a customer service rep.

Brian S. Anderson has worked on staff at ICON for 17 years as volunteer coordinator, cartographer, and logistics. He has attended since ICON 21. He has also attended over 40 other science fiction and gaming conventions.

Dana Beatty has previously been on staff as publicity & has been an attendee of ICON for many years. He works as a custodian in an area high school which keeps him in tune with the pulse of the teenage population.

### **Our Mission**

We have not wavered from our initial mission statement: Speculative fiction is a space for the radical acceptance of difference; is the home base for all those who dream of something better, or who warn of what may come should negative patterns continue in our society; is the broad spectrum of answers to the question "what if?" Our mission, to seek further horizons, is simply an outgrowth of that drive. We believe that ICON will continue, no matter whom is chosen to lead it -- but also, we believe that ICON has the potential to flourish under our care, and we would be honored to be trusted with that responsibility.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With best regards,  
Betsy Casey  
John Frick  
Pamela Webster  
Brian S. Anderson  
Dana Beatty

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ICON 45/46

"Seeking Further Horizons"

Pamela Webster, John Frick, Betsy Casey, Brian Anderson

Advisor/Tiebreaker: Tony Penticoff

Initial income: 27425

Initial outflow: 27110

Guests of Honor:

*Author* David Weber

**Artist To be determined**

**Fan To be determined**

Confirmed Dept Heads under our bid (as of 9/5/2020):

*Programming* Tony Penticoff

*Treasurer* (tbd)

*Masquerade* Michelle Clark (tbc)

*Art Show* Pamela Webster

*Program Book* Beth Wheeler (tbc)

*A/V Tech* Fred Coverdill

*Volunteers* Brian & Ange Anderson

*Dealer Hall* Gregg Parmentier (tbc)

*Registration* Denise Gehling (tbc)

*ConSuite* Erica Schnore

*Hotel Liaison* Jenny Carhoff

**GoH Liaison To be determined**

**Webmaster To be determined**

*Publicity/Social Media* Dana Beatty

*Game Room* Michele Makstaad (tbc)

*Video Gaming* Adam Brower

**Logistics To be determined**

*Safety/Security* Sheril Bogenrief

*Room Parties* Susan Leabhart (tbc)

*Blood Drive* Jenny Carhoff

*Signage* Chelsea Eldeen (tbc)

**B&N Liaison To be determined**

**Costume Central To be determined**

*Chocolate Ceremony* Michelle Clark

*TICC* Beth Wheeler (tbc)

*Torchlit Study* Erin Casey (tbc)

*Inclusivity and Accessibility* Betsy Casey