PITTSFIELD, MA – Art sales by the Berkshire Museum are complete, as the Board of Trustees voted Monday (11/26) that there will be no further sales, though additional sales were permitted under an agreement between the Museum and the Office of the Attorney General (AGO) and approved by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. The Board also approved work beginning on needed repairs to the Museum’s more than 100-year-old building.

The agreement with the AGO allowed the Museum to sell up to 40 works approved for deaccession in groups or tranches, to raise up to $55 million for the museum’s endowment and needed repairs and improvements to the building. With the final works in the second tranche purchased at auction in November, a total of 22 works were sold raising $53.25 million. There are more than 40,000 pieces in the Museum’s collection.

“We are moving forward having secured the future of this museum for generations to come,” said Elizabeth McGraw, President of the Berkshire Museum Board of Trustees. “Our work ahead is focused on making this Museum ever more interesting, inspiring and engaging to the broad community in the region it serves and consistent with our unchanged mission.”

Work will move forward on needed repairs to the Museum building, with necessary capital improvements expected to begin in Spring 2019, including waterproofing to better protect the collection, and improvements to sewer lines and the Museum’s loading dock. There are no structural changes planned to the Crane Room.

The Board of Trustees and Museum staff remain committed to expanding interdisciplinary experiences to more deeply interpret the Museum’s collection for all audiences. Additional plans for improved and enhanced exhibition and programming spaces, including an expanded and upgraded Aquarium, are still in planning stages.

“Our goal is to transform a more than 100-year-old building in need of repairs and upgrades to function as a 21st Century Museum,” said McGraw. “The museum will continue to include art, science, and history. Objects from our collection will be presented in a new way that allows these three areas to combine in exhibits that provide new interpretations and relevance to historical objects.”
This interpretive approach already is visible in current Museum programming and exhibits, including the recent exhibit of Josh Simpson’s glass work of galaxies, a coming exhibition of 40 full-size working models of the best of Leonardo da Vinci’s machines, as well as exhibitions featuring local oral histories, women’s suffrage, and the Museum’s musical instrument and shoe collections. In addition more than 40 schools have signed up for free class visits to the Museum now available to all schools.