Waynesboro Advocacy Committee

Virginia Museum of Natural History

5 December 2022, 100PM in Waynesboro

In-person: Len Poulin, John Ross, Tom Benzing, Mary Zell Galen, Greg Hitchin, Gene Smith

Online: Carole Nash, Mark Buss, Joe Keiper, Faye Cooper, Jonathan Martin, Maggie Van Huss

AGENDA & MEETING NOTES

I. Welcome

II. Update on activities

Tom- shared the update on the Carter Proposal with the board, and will send the recommendation to the Foundation Board

a. Detailed Design update

* 7 November meeting with Dept of Engineering and Building
	+ Flood plain analysis

Joe:

* + - Not complete to Joe’s knowledge. Timmons did not have all the FEMA updates at the time of the meeting, but the map provided to VMNH is still current.
		- Will have to level out the lot to be even with the high point, and cannot dig down into the water column.
		- If place a building at the northwest corner of the lot, the building and landscaping will not impede the flow of the river

Jonathan:

* + - Because this site has already been built on (lot, previous construction), the lot is not a green build space
		- Joe: Spared Carole’s documents with the team
	+ Parking considerations
		- Joe: Are supposed to be responsible for 200 parking spaces, and the current lot does not yet have 200 spaces.
		- Working with Laura Martin of the city to designate other city parking lots throughout the city, so we can still compile with the parking space requirements.
			* Greg: asked where spot number was coming from? Joe/ Jonathan explained it’s a guess based on occupancy of the building
			* Tom: if spots are offsite, how fare away can they be away from the building? Joe did not have an answer to that question, and working to confirm an answer.
			* Len: last parking study identified over 1,000 parking spaces in downtown area. Greg: explained no parking requirements in downtown area, and have an overabundance of parking spaces
	+ Calculations of square footage considerations
		- Jonathan: For spaces outside that are considered occupiable, 50% of that amount goes to the scope.
		- Tom asked for clarification, and the terrace also counted as .5 of a square foot
* Recent work with Glave Holmes & Vernor Johnson (along with other subcontractors)
	+ Jonathan: Lining up exhibit plan with options in building design
		- Making progress on layout, how education will fit in, how people will flow through
		- Major focus on the space as being interchangeable and flexible, with a push to use every square foot as efficiently as possible
		- Need to determine how donors will be recognized
		- Edited the exhibit narrative
		- Emphasis is that larger second story ceiling needs to be used efficiently
		- Need to make sure that any water systems and drainage is compartmentalized, and the benefits of having that housed in the same area
		- Need for multi-use classroom space
		- Still working to determine percentages of workspaces
	+ Joe: While no organization can be everything for everyone, this scaled down campus really can’t be. Is the aesthetic purposes enough of a justification for the larger open space?
		- Needs this committee to challenge the plans, to ensure that all spaces meet the most need
		- Goal of this project is to meet concerns from AAM reaccreditation, including diversifying revenue streams and creating increased access throughout the state
	+ Tom: remind committee about the need for donor recognition system. Asked Joe how he sees this committee being involved with the exhibit design revisions.
		- Joe sees this committee as experts on the project. Provide options to the committee, both as content experts or as approving.
		- Up to Tom and colleagues on the board, and but maybe there’s another iteration of the committee with a slightly modified mission, including fundraising, etc.
		- Tom, and also Faye: expressed concern for the upcoming general assembly session. Tom: reminds committee needs cost estimate before the General Assembly session starts.
		- Len: Asked for the process of the general assembly. Thought the budget staffers just brough it to the committee, since the funding has already been approved. Jonathan: explained that this will be a budget amendment. Will know a lot on December 15th, after funding appears from capital pool.
			* Len: points out the risks of the project not surviving this round. Jonathan: explained that the capital request is already funded. It could be delayed or partially funded, but even if fully funded, we might not get the full check today.
			* Tom: asked about timing for the update, doesn’t the update need to be ready for the Dec. 15th document. Jonathan: update went in in October for the full amount of money, and are targeting to include the same amount of money that we requested.
			* Joe: Originally approved for one amount, and then we were able to update that amount (from $18.6 to $30 million), to account for inflation, etc. Joe reminds us that we may need to also request more money from the foundation as well.
			* Carole: if budget comes out and original funds we requested are not in it, we will know by the 15th. Is there a point in the process when we can reconcile for that amount. Joe: explained that the commonwealth is interested in ensuring the building is complete and meets set goals. We hope anything that’s removed is justified. Jonathan: many numbers are based of off the St. Louis Fed rates, and any spikes in inflation will be worked through at all cost estimate stages.
			* Mark: is we’re asked for 45% and everyone else is too, how will that negatively impact the funds. Are we overly concerned that inflation make the capital pool is unrealistic?
				+ Len- thinks the key is how much cash the state is sitting on in surplus
				+ Joe- yes, the capital pool will go up, but they can keep it down by delaying some projects
			* Tom: number of projects, and some in capital pool will be approved, depending how much funding they have. Jonathan: They are keen on making sure that other projects are not approved before other pre-approved projects.
		- Tom: can VMNH create a sheet about this process as talking points for board members when they speak with their legislators? Joe/ Jonathan will
* Archaeological survey
	+ Joe:
	+ VMNH paid Bob, a colleague of Dr. Bassett, to identify archaeology research, to do Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and determine what’s under the asphalt.
	+ Carole will be able to turn it into a teaching opportunity for her students
	+ Can see old tailrace that ran the mill and other historic buildings on site.
	+ Carole
	+ Carole: findings are consentient with the historic maps. Carole explained that mill is actually on the site of the economic development office. Anomaly in the northwest section of the lot, and it appears to be in the location of the millers hours
	+ When dovetail comes in, they will be able to avoid the powerlines and other items of historic significance.
	+ Joe: potential to collaborate with the Waynesboro Heritage Foundation, and provide them with some of their collections and historic resources
* Next steps (trenching)
	+ Happening tomorrow and Thursday, Tom and Carol will be there
* Next steps
	+ Cost estimate (already discussed)

b. Lecture Series – 15 November 700pm at Wayne Theatre

Tom- now in the 6th year of the lecture series. Last talk happened in November, and next talk will be on January 17th from the Fish and Wildlife Service, and will talk about eels

John Ross: Discussed the update for the April 11th talk, and how brook trout potentially ended up in the Blue Ridge Mountains

Tom- great venue for sharing updates about the project

Tom- also hosting info sessions at the library, with having people the chance to answer questions about the project

III. Carter proposal for fundraising

* Joe: explained talked to Board about it, and they’re comfortable with it. Next, the VMNH-F executive/finance committee, will dip into Waynesboro restricted fund to have six months of service with fundraising consultant.
* Will be “in the queue” and ready for passage of budget legislation

IV. Other

* Group visits to VMNH
	+ e.g., Rotary, OLLI, AARP
		- Joe: These groups are in the future queue to have a tour. Once we bring in outside groups to the museum, they’re more supportive.
		- Carol and Mark provided contacts for similar lifelong learning programs with JMU and University of Richmond.
* Presentation to the Colonnades retirement community in Charlottesville. Setting up a periodic lecture series from museum personnel through 2023.
	+ Good opportunity to increase outreach

V. Open discussion

Len: Got called from Bob Stuart this morning, as he’s the local reporter for the newspaper. Slow news day, and wanted to a story for the paper. Downplaying the money side, but asked what wanted included in the story.

* Team suggested GPR work featured, because it shows real, tangible work. Not just conceptually, and shows work.
* Carol expresses concern, as the Department of Historic Resources has not been fully involved.
* Decision to increase focus on flood study.

Tom: meeting from South River Watershed Collation, with a focus on education, as the museum is playing an important role on education. Cortexo (Dupont team) is providing the support.

There will be technical thoughts on the South River Science mercury monitoring, on Dec. 14th from 1-3 pm.

John Ross: In process of completing a book on Virginia’s valleys and rivers, and can be published in 2024. Goal is to provide why and how of history.

Joe: will put together some information about advocacy, including a form letter for the full board to send to their delegate and senators. Additionally, House appropriations committee staff is visiting today about the project. Lisa Carter is working with government affairs folks for the best time to the general assembly trip.

VI. Next meeting, 3 January 2023

VII. Adjourn

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NOTES FROM 1 NOVEMBER 2022 MEETING OF WAC

* Jonathan and Joe will meet with Dept of Engineering and Building next week. Glave Holmes and our Construction Managers will also attend.
* An archaeological survey of the building site will be performed. We will attempt to get Ground Penetrating Radar work on site in advance of any trenching. Glave Homes will coordinate this.
* The Lecture Series at the Wayne Theatre continues to do well. November 15th at the Wayne Theatre featured a Landslides in Virginia Talk by Anne Carter Witt of the VA Dept of Energy.
* The timeline of current work will provide a hard cost analysis in January 2023.
* Tom Benzing held a public engagement hour at the Waynesboro Public Library, with the next opportunity scheduled for November 18th, 400-500PM. Participation was encouraging.