WAYNESBORO ADVOCACY COMMITTEE  
Meeting January 3rd, 2023

Attendance: Jonathan Martin, Maggie Van Huss, Len Poulin, Tom Benzing, Joe Keiper, Mary Zell Galen, Greg Hitchin

Virtually: Mark Buss, Carole Nash, Ryan Barber, Steven Blashfield, Jaclyn Miller  
  
I. Mr. Gene Smith, VMNH-Foundation Board of Directors, WAC Committee member

Joe Keiper: Updated the committee on the recent death of Gene Smith, and explained that the museum will plant a tree in his honor. The museum currently doesn’t have a recommendation for a replacement.

Potential names: Quay Parrot, Len D. Hal Aaslestad, Jon Miles, Joann White. Other potential names can be passed along to Joe for future considerable.

Tom Benzing: Would like to recognize him for his service at future meetings. The museum will look to   
  
II. Governor's 2023-2024 budget

Tom: Governor’s budget was given in December, but funding was not included for the Waynesboro project.

Joe: While the museum’s funding remanded level, additional funds were not moved to the capital pool. Suggested that DGS is delaying funds while waiting for construction expenses to decrease. VMNH is still in the budget as a line item.

Len: Did the building get delayed by DGS or by the governor’s office staff? Jonathan: explained that the VMNH submitted to the Department of Planning and Budgets, who then submits it to the budget office. This item was not included in the governor’s budget. Significantly smaller budget than last year, but funding will be continued next year.

Tom: Because local representation has changed, is concerned that the project won’t have the necessary level of support. As citizens and volunteers, could consider introducing an amendment. Potential to consider asking a Preston Bryant- type for advice.

Carole: Need to focus on having a unifying story when visiting the general assembly. The budget’s underlining story surrounding tax cuts, so we need to be strategic with our message.

Greg: Wants to know the need for pushing, instead of just waiting an extra year? Tom explains concerns about the unknown of new political presentation.

Len and Tom: No downside of advocating to include it in this session. Joe and Greg provided clarification about the hard stop for current phase is in July. As it stands today (with zero money on July 1, 2023), money will be received on July 1, 2024. Joe Keiper volunteered to reach out to Preston Bryant about advice on how to move forward.

Greg: Because we didn’t get the money we didn’t receive funds from earlier phase, could we get that released sooner? Jonathan: explains that the process isn’t possible, as we first need to complete the first cost estimate.

Action items from Tom:

Reach out to Preston Bryant,

Committee members can send out letters, and need to work off the same script

VMNH staff can also share language for advocacy letters

Tom requested latest update from Glave and Holmes, but Jonathan explained that we can push for that material earlier

Greg: talking points are- education (especially STEM), current workforce/ economic development/ tourism, rural initiatives, and construction costs  
  
a. What it means for VMNH  
b. What it means for VMNH-Waynesboro  
  
III. General Assembly 2023 advocacy  
  
a. Thursday, January 26th at 900am  
b. Leave behind  
  
IV. Detailed Design progress and upcoming

Steven and Jaclyn from G&HA:

Steven: Working on design, and completing an in-house review of the design package. Will be submitting to DEB towards to end of the month. Additionally, the archaeology investigation has occurred, which identified everything we expected and nothing we didn’t expect. Geotechnical survey has also occurred, which tested the soil types of the building site. Will have a hard cost estimate by the end of the month. Also, working on submission to the state architecture review board, which will be submitted for the February meeting.

Steven: After the end of the month, will get to preliminary design phase. By the summer, will begin next round of cost and project reviews, which will complete the planning portion of the project (by July). If approved, will be able to continue into the next stage of the process after July, but that hinges on the next stage of legislature approval.

Tom: Wants to know if the preliminary design will include exhibits? Steven: exhibit design is running concurrently, with different exhibit components designed. Typically, it runs slightly behind the architectural design process. At the end of preliminary design, VMNH will have a full schematic design of the building and exhibits.

Tom: Will we be engaging the community throughout the spring and summer on the exhibit design component? Steven is open to it to it, and Joe Keiper suggests working with Riggs Ward on the process, especially once the building design is more finalized.

Tom: provided an open invitation to visit on Third Fridays, and is happy to expand this event with others in the future.

Tom: Asks about the status of the property transfer between the city and state? Jonathan: Touched base with the Bureau of Land Management, and it will take formal legislative approval to transfer the property.

Len: Asked if we were premature to try and submit this session? Jonathan: explained we were submitted to DPP at the recommendation of the museum’s budget analysis.   
  
V. Continued Community Connections  
  
a. Lecture Series  
b. Board "Office Hours"  
c. Events (RiverFest)

Memorial Day event with fireworks and booths  
d. Other  
  
VI. Open Discussion

Tom: participated in the South River Watershed Coalition, and are interested in partnering with the museum

Len: is fundraising timeline pushed back? Joe: Fundraising team has advised until receive funding to wait.

Joe: Can include request for newsletter readers reach out to local officials. Tom also suggested information about the archaeological survey.

Greg: Suggests including all the updates on the website.

Mark: Requests including this information with local journalists.   
  
VII. Adjourn