**WAYNESBORO ADVOCACY COMMITTEE Meeting**

**May 2, 2023 – 1:00PM**

**Location: Virtual**

**Attendance**

Present: Mark Buss (BOT), Dr. Tom Benzing (BOT), Len Poulin, Maggie Van Huss, Faye Cooper, Greg Hitchin, Jonathan Martin, Ryan Barber, Joe Keiper, Mary Zell Galen

Absent: Dr. Carole Nash (BOT)

1. Welcome
   1. Approval of Minutes

Tom Benzing:

* Made corrections to April 2023 minutes: Need to include the motion to approval virtual attendees.
* Motion made to approve minutes was made by Len Poulin, was seconded by Mark Buss, and pass by a voice vote.

1. Chair’s Report

Tom Benzing:

* Reviewed planning meeting for Wayne Theatre Science Talk series
  + Discussed ways to make series more engaging and increase audience participation.
  + Suggestions for different speakers at planning meeting, scheduled will be finalized this summer.
* Provided updated about local politics
  + Sen. Emmitt Hanger officially announced his retirement but will be in office until January.
  + Discuss district boundaries and redistricting for the VA House of Delegates, VA Senate District, US Congressional District, and current representatives for Waynesboro.

1. Riverfest Review

Mary Zell Galen:

* Provided updated about Riverfest attendance and general interest in VMNH at the event
* VMNH displayed collection items and promoted the upcoming events
* Visitors were able to sign up for VMNH bi-monthly Waynesboro newsletter for further updates on the project

1. State Budget Update

Jonathan Martin:

* Current budget cycle is still in progress
  + $150 million shortfall in Education has been corrected through legislative action
  + Continue with current budget as a benchmark moving forward
  + VMNH will pursue additional during for detailed planning. Will know more information by July/ August about timeline to receive funding
    - Len Poulin: Asked if any new information about exhibit design funding? Jonathan Martin: No change, will learn about approvals and receive funding in the new fiscal year.
    - Faye Cooper: How does funding translate into our final phase of construction? Jonathan: No change to timeline yet and will continue to work with Glavé Holmes. Goal is to have a hard estimate of costs by October to be moved to the Capital Pool.
    - Faye Cooper: Do we know how the governor views this project? Joe Keiper: VMNH is in the six-year capital outlay as a priority one project and are legally obligated to complete this project. We’re in line and will get funded sooner rather than lately. Jonathan Martin: Budget Office makes these decisions which projects are ready when moving first, not elected officials.
    - Len Poulin: What is the worst-case scenario for the funding? Jonathan Martin: They will still take the cost estimates and will submit for the next budget cycle (and will be about a year difference).
    - Tom Benzing: Asked about any turnover in the budget office? Jonathan Martin: No turnover, governor’s budget will come out in mid-December.
    - Tom Benzing: Asked if committee has a roll in this process prior to the governor’s budget comes out? Jonathan Martin: Yes, for individual visits prior to the fall, especially if Waynesboro hires a lobbyist. Greg Hitchin: The current legislators will put the governor’s budget together, but after January 1, there’s the potential for the legislators to change because of elections. Jonathan Martin assures that there won’t be major change to for group making budget decisions.
    - Greg Hitchin: His lobbyist will be able to confidentially tell what representatives will look like following the June primary. In Waynesboro, its likely to remain represented by Republicans, which no incumbents are running.
      * Tom Benzing: Roll to play to let candidates know about project. Greg Hitchin: Suggests educating candidates about the project following June and meet with both parties.
    - Joe Keiper: Would like to propose as an action item to reach out to Mr. Bryant, to receive advice on where to put lobbyist efforts in the fall.

1. Potential grant opportunity

Ryan Barber:

* Applied for grant from the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge for $5,000 to support fall lecture series and need-based scholarship programs. Will find out about in early May. Grant celebration on June 7th if receive funding.
* Tom Benzing: asked who grant under the name of. Ryan Barber: Under the VMNH Foundation.

1. Detailed Design submission

Jonathan Martin:

* All documents have been submitted for Schematic Design, including indoor/ outdoor drawings, landscape, geo-report. Hoping to only receive comments on drawings.
* Two Value Engineering studies. Initially $1,000 a square foot. First round at roughly $700 a square foot, and second estimate is down to $640 per square foot. Price was able to decrease by lowering ceiling height, changing building materials to lower cost options, etc. Number will increase with inflation.
  + Tom Benzing: Is new estimate submitted to DEB? Jonathan Martin: Yes, the value engineering was submitted along with other documents.

1. Conclusion of Schematic Design phase (cost est.)

Jonathan Martin:

* 1. Next steps
     1. Preliminary Design

More detailed than prior stage, down to furnishings and interior finishings.

* 1. Exhibits
     1. Will also have an impact on preliminary designs. Will work internally to structure teams to work with A&E firms.

Joe Keiper: Working in-house to collect slides from Wayne Theatre Lecture Series to guide stories (like the wren songs around the South River). Also working in-house with the curators and Riggs-Ward Design.

* Tom Benzing: asked about staff trip. Joe Keiper: Staff trip is on 5/8. Mary Zell Galen: Will send out itinerary for the committee.
* Tom Benzing: Asked about folder of exhibit material. Joe Keiper: Mary Zell has already started and working in-house. Will send out shared document shortly.
* Tom Benzing: When do we have a hard stop to complete the design work? Joe Keiper: All initial design work had to be under the approved funding. Because VMNH is waiting on funds, will not start preliminary design until have the financial support. Would like specific designs about the stories to tell prior to engaging Riggs-Ward further, but do not want to risk not being able to pay bill. VMNH will have a stop with Riggs-Ward until can continue with preliminary design.

1. Continued Community Connections

Tom Benzing:

* 1. Lecture Series
     + Brook Trout lecture, on 4/11. Discussed prehistoric brook trout arriving from Pacific northwest and climate change’s impact.
  2. Public hours
* Len Poulin: Hosted April hours and had 8-9 people. Most were interested in potential volunteer opportunities. The Chamber will help promote future hours.
* Faye Cooper will be hosting in May and asked about advertising.
* Len: Suggested discussing on public TV about event and project.
* Tom Benzing: Future dates are June 16, July 21, and August 18.

1. Open Discussion

Joe Keiper:

* Christy Deatherage will be hosting an event on May 21 from 1-4 at Kate Collins Middle School
* Grottoes Cave Day on Saturday June 10th
* Kline’s Dairy Bar event on Sunday July 30th

Len Poulin:

* Potomac Riverkeepers meeting updates? Any donors? Tom Benzing: Good group of nonprofits and others involved in environmental protection in Virginia. Nancy Stoner (Director of Potomac Riverkeepers) is from Waynesboro, but primarily folks from Charlottesville. Joe Keiper: Nancy remained the most important relationship to cultivate. All were donors of Potomac Riverkeepers.

1. Adjourn

Len Poulin: moved to adjourn, Greg Hitchin: seconded.