



**Virginia Museum of Natural History
Facilities Committee Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2024, 8:30 AM
Director's Conference Room 236 with Zoom option**

Committee Members: Dr. Tom Benzing (Chair), Jennifer Burnett, Cord Cothren, Lauren Hall

Present In-Person: Dr. Tom Benzing, Mr. Jonathan Martin (staff), Dr. Joe Keiper (Executive Director), Ms. Abby Gump (Office of the Attorney General Representative), Ryan Barber (staff), Jennifer Whitlow (staff)

Remote Participants: Jennifer Burnett

Welcome and call to order by Tom Benzing at 8:34 AM. No quorum was present, therefore no votes to be taken.

Ongoing Projects

Mr. Martin reported on the ongoing cleaning and mold remediation at the Douglas Ave. site. Progress is going well and as expected. Noted that the Board will have the opportunity to visit the site today to see the improvements made to date.

Mr. Barber reported the pavilion project is moving along as expected. All components are going well and according to plan. UV protective film to be installed on back windows of the museum leading out to the pavilion. The "Pelagornis" model is being readied for installation, banners are in the design stage, rail signs have been designed.

Parking lot resealing is under contract with work to begin soon.

The Young Explorers Center project is ongoing. The current shelving is out to bid in the state surplus or the opportunity for transfer has been advertised to other state agencies.

Staff worked with the two US Senators to seek a Congressionally Directed spending request grant for \$640,000 that was not approved. However, there is an opportunity to tweak the proposal and resubmit in March with a decision in August. Dr. Keiper mentioned that we may want to launch a local capital campaign for this project for local buy-in and supplement with applications for matching grants. Depending on funding approval, we may want to continue to apply for the Congressional funds in 2026.

An additional earmark of 2 million in state funds was requested with notification of status expected in December 2024.

Small maintenance projects on the building are ongoing and continual.

Mr. Martin mentioned new pump for water has been installed thereby increasing volume of water and likely eliminating the need for port-a-johns during festivals. Mr. Barber also mentioned the elevator has been upgraded and is working well.

Dr. Benzing questioned the energy consumption of the building and how that is being communicated to the public. Mr. Martin noted there is a website that publishes our energy usage and production, and he also gets reports to that effect. Dr. Benzing suggested thinking about linking the museum webpage to the energy website.

Dr. Keiper will look for the trailer VIN number on Tuesday to talk with the trailer repair contractor. The electric box needs major repairs. The HVAC system seems to be working adequately. Staff will request a formal scope of work for all repairs and upgrades. Trailer will be moved to the contractor site for repairs. When the trailer is returned, we'll want to put it on the black pavement rather than in the grass where it is currently located. Thinking long term, board will need to think about where to keep the trailer during the construction of the permanent building.

Dr. Keiper mentioned as a future growth opportunity the addition of a new wing (additional space) at the Starling Ave. site. Dr. Keiper is looking ahead for some insight on adding a wing. This would come in the form of an architect's perspective or engineering advice on the existing building and to offer recommendations about the placement of additional space. If there are funds in the Foundation budget, Dr. Keiper would like to see a small-scale recommendation in preparation for any capital improvement funds requested from the state. This would be added to the 5-10 year operational plan. More interpretive space is needed to attract visitors. Research and Collections is also outgrowing current space.

Having no further business Dr. Benzing adjourned the meeting at 8:55 AM.