

**Virginia Museum of Natural History**

**Strategic Planning Committee Minutes 11.15.24, 9 AM**

**VMNH Directors Conference Room 236 and participation by Zoom option**

Members of the Committee: Roberto Quinones (Chair), Mark Buss, Cord Cothran, Sherri Jordan, Barbara Truman, DB Poli, Art Evans

Present in Person:

Dr. Joe Keiper  
Ryan Barber  
Jonathan Martin  
Dr. Art Evans  
Dr. Kal Ivanov  
Jennifer Whitlow (minutes)

Present by Zoom:

Ben Williams  
Mark Buss  
Bobbie Dillon  
Cord Cothran

Meeting called to order at 9:00 and welcome by Mark Buss.

Dr. Keiper facilitated the review of the one-page synopsis from Latala's larger report from the full board strategic planning meeting in August 2024.

## **Research and Collections**

Dr. Ivanov mentioned support for another FTE as an additional curator to work with specimen collection possibly invertebrate paleontology as an example and to assist in developing exhibits.

Dr. Evans mentioned the need to develop a list of our vast collections and their current curators. This would make evident the collections that do not have a dedicated curator and document where the needs are located.

Dr. Evans also mentioned working with other agencies with a similar scope. For example, there is a group putting together GIS maps of VA data our researchers are collaborating in this effort

Dr. Ivanov reported he and Dr. Means are working with the 2025 Wildlife action plan in a statewide project to protect areas and wildlife.

Providing feedback to other agencies to work collaboratively should continue to be a part of the strategic plan.

Dr. Keiper emphasized that work to hire a new curator is under way.

Mr. Martin reported the Douglas Ave. project is ongoing. Utilizing \$500,000 of Maintenance Reserve funds for building rehabilitation. Primarily this building will be used as future research and collections storage.

## **Financial Sustainability and Diversification**

Dr. Keiper highlighted the desire to leave the museum in better shape than the way we found it. As such, partnerships are important for investment as the endowments grow.

We are always looking for ways for public engagement growth. "Museums for All" success part of the financial plan going forward.

Mr. Barber reported the planned renovations to rehabilitate the former library into the Young Explorers Center as a way to engage families. There are no other local spaces like the one planned.

Dr. Evans mentioned collection space needs. Mentioned YMCA next door that will be available in the next few years or a new wing or space added to the current building to include space allocations for collections as well as exhibits.

Other diversifications include to potential to reinstate fee-based field trips and/or enhanced tours given by curators.

Mr. Buss added a challenge to the foundation to advance fundraising to complement the museum's budget and state allocation. He would like for the Foundation board to think big in our fundraising efforts. Mr. Cothren echoed need to grow the endowment at a faster rate.

Dr. Keiper mentioned the efforts to create a space for VMNH in the VA 250 project. Reaching out across agencies and network to act as a catalyst for statewide research and strategically aligning our message. All of us are responsible for education and collections, this is our mission.

Mr. Buss asked about adding financial goals to support technological advancement in digital/virtual efforts in education.

Dr. Evans mentioned R&C committee work with the curatorial staff to determine knowledge gaps and areas that can be improved with collaborators.

### **Long-Term Vision and Growth**

Strategies for physical growth focusing on the use of the mobile unit trailer currently located in Waynesboro.

Dr. Evans volunteered to contact a colleague (Megan Walsh) who ran a mobile museum program in LA County for best practices and insight.

Dr. Keiper mentioned the underutilized resource of Wilson Park. Museum staff have continuing conversations with local leaders.

### **Human Capital and Institutional Standards**

Dr. Keiper reminded the committee that they will need to be available for a March or April meeting for AAM reaccreditation peer review. Dr. Evans volunteered to be involved with AAM review and site visit.

General discussion about the latest strategic plan adoption being postponed (maybe until the August Board of Trustee meeting) following the AAM reaccreditation decision in summer. The consensus is that this is appropriate. Mr. Cothren mentioned that board members going off in 2025 and new board appointments may need to be more involved if the strategic plan adoption is delayed.

### **Stronger Boards Working Together**

Dr. Keiper mentioned the need for closer collaborations between boards.

It is also important to remember to keep ourselves in an agile position as new opportunities evolve.

Mr. Buss agreed the synopsis is a good representation of the full board meeting in August.

Dr. Keiper reminded the committee that the VMNH mission includes being an “essential government function”. As a staff we want to see this phrasing in the forefront of our projects, mission, and outcome.

Mr. Buss reminded the committee that staffing should be considered before new initiatives.

Dr. Keiper reported that the education staff are currently collecting data in a salary survey to make sure the educators' salaries are equitable with other state agencies.

Strategically the museum is in a good position to utilize contractors for large projects such as the resurfacing of the parking lot.

Mr. Buss asked that the one-page synopsis be given as a hard copy to the board at the meeting tomorrow. Staff will also make a digital copy available

Dr. Evans reiterated the need for collection space. Mr. Cothren echoed the one-page synopsis document as a clear and precise representation of the August meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:54 AM.

DRAFT