

Virginia Museum of Natural History
Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Meeting
Waynesboro Office of Economic Development
April 8, 2025, 1 PM
Minutes

Attending in Person: Dr. Tom Benzing, Mr. Len Poulin, Ms. Maggie Van Huss, Mr. Rick Kane, Mr. Greg Hitchen, Dr. Joe Keiper (staff), Chris Selman with Selman Design Studio NYC (guest)

Attending Remotely: Dr. Carole Nash, Ms. Faye Cooper, Ms. Jennifer Whitlow (staff), Mr. Ryan Barber (staff)

Welcome

Dr. Tom Benzing opened the meeting at 1:05 PM and welcomed everyone attending in-person and remotely. Following a review of those in attendance, it was determined that a quorum was present.

The minutes for Waynesboro Advocacy Committee meetings held on January 6, 2025, and March 3, 2025, were accepted and approved as presented.

Dr. Benzing expressed his condolences to the family of committee member, Mr. Mark Buss. Dr. Keiper noted the family indicated through social media a celebration of life to be planned sometime in the summer. Dr. Benzing expressed his appreciation for the work and dedication that the late Mr. Buss demonstrated for the Waynesboro project.

Detailed Design

The most recent detailed design estimate for the Waynesboro project is approximately 20 million dollars. Dr. Keiper has also recently learned that a second value engineering estimate must be completed for the project to move forward. The design firm, Glave Holmes and our construction manager from James Madison University will be involved in obtaining this second independent estimate.

Dr. Keiper explained a square footage calculation error by DEB that resulted in a \$155,000 short fall in funds to complete the design phase. It is not expected that the DEB will retroactively rectify their error in funding, so we must come up with funds to complete the design.

Dr. Keiper suggested that funds be redirected from multiple sources including:

- \$70,000 from the Museum store sales (02) funds,
- \$53,000 from the VMNH-Waynesboro line item,
- \$32,000 in funds from miscellaneous closed Foundation projects.

Consensus of the committee recognized that 1/3 of the funding comes from money raised in Waynesboro and that using existing funds to avoid further delay is appropriate.

Advocacy

Mr. Poulin mentioned many local retirees are choosing charitable giving options at this time. He is willing to provide some names for a targeted fundraising effort. Mr. Barber will follow-up and develop next steps.

Dr. Benzing reported that the letter writing campaign continues. Many organizations and individuals in Waynesboro have participated. Reminders for those who have not sent a letter of support is suggested. Dr. Keiper reported that there is competition for funding with several other statewide projects seeking funding in the upcoming budget.

Dr. Benzing further reported the Center for Coldwater Restoration has been sunset. The group will now focus on fundraising for the branch campus.

Dr. Keiper noted that our Education Manager (Christy Deatherage) is working with a local science educator who will retire at the end of this school year. Following retirement, this educator will transition to providing educational programming in the Waynesboro area as an employee of the museum.

Community Connections

Interpretive signage is currently in production with the anticipation that it will be completed and installed by RiverFest on May 3rd. Waynesboro Parks and Recreation is handling installation. Project donor, Dominion Power representatives will be on hand at RiverFest for a photo opportunity.

Wayne Theatre Lecture Series continues with many accomplished presenters. The next presentation will be a Timmons Group representative who will speak about the pavilion project.

Additional speakers need to be scheduled. Several ideas included regional faculty members conducting interesting and timely research.

The VMNH trailer will be inspected on April 11th to determine scope and timing of work. The trailer will be moved to the contractor's site once rehabilitation begins. Dr. Keiper assured the committee that the museum will still participate in RiverFest and the Museum Rodeo even if the trailer has been moved for repairs.

Open Discussion

A brief discussion was held about evaluating the desired future outcomes of the Waynesboro Advocacy Committee and restructuring the committee as necessary.

The committee consensus is Dr. Benzing and Dr. Nash will inform the full Board of Trustees about the original design budget shortfall and the funding sources to be utilized to overcome the shortage.

The letter writing campaign continues with the template letter to be shared again for anyone who hasn't already participated.

With no further business, Dr. Benzing adjourned the meeting at 1:43.