



**Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting  
Saturday, August 9, 2025  
Virginia Museum of Natural History  
Conference Room 273 A with remote participation option**

The one hundred fiftieth meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Natural History was held at the Virginia Museum of Natural History at 10 AM on Saturday, August 9, 2025.

Trustees Present: Dr. Melany Clark (Chair)  
Ms. Cathy Hincker Dr. Art Evans  
Dr. Tom Benzing Ms. Lauren Hall  
Dr. David Furth Mr. Will Clements

Trustees Remote: Dr. Carol Nash (unable to attend – distance)  
Ms. Emma Ito (unable to attend – distance)  
Ms. Lisa Carter (unable to attend - distance)

Staff Present: Dr. Joe Keiper (Executive Director) Mr. Ben Williams  
Mr. Ryan Barber Mr. Jonathan Martin  
Ms. Christy Deatherage Ms. Jennifer Whitlow (Minutes)  
Dr. Adam Pritchard Dr. Hayden Bassett  
Mr. Zach Ryder (Remote)

Others Present: Ms. Lauren Coleman, Office of the Attorney General

Absent: Mr. Nathan Sanford

**WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

Dr. Clark called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM and welcomed all those in attendance both online and in-person. It was determined that a quorum was not present; therefore, no business or closed session can occur at this meeting.

**CHAIR'S REPORT**

Dr. Clark began the meeting by thanking the Building and Grounds staff, Ben and the scientists, Dr. Evans for volunteering in the collections area, and administrative staff manning the admission tents. Dino Festival was a wonderful two-day event that showcased the best of the museum.

Dr. Adam Pritchard presented a deep dive into the conclusion of the museum's collaborative dinosaur dig in Wyoming, partnering with Lynchburg College. This partnership was made possible by the National Science Foundation funding. This grant fully funded internships and field work in Wyoming from 2022 – 2025.

This summer the museum also hosted two successful Smithsonian interns in the paleo labs through the "Leadership for Change" program.

Dr. Clark urged the Board to continue to advocate for the museum in their realm of influence. Dr. Clark reported for herself and Ms. Carter on their recent meeting with Secretary of Education Guiderra and her assistant Zach Jacobs. Dr. Clark and Ms. Carter were very pleased with the meeting. Both felt their mission to advocate for retention pay and new positions were well received.

Dr. Benzing recognized and congratulated Mr. Clements and Dr. Clark's recent reappointment to the Board.

### **RESEARCH & COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Dr. Evans reported for the Research & Collections Committee that rehabilitation work on Douglas Avenue continues. This committee along with the Facilities Committee of this Board will soon be meeting jointly to review the first-floor architectural draft plans.

The open herpetology curator position will be advertised beginning August 15.

Dr. Hayden Bassett shared his recent work with the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab and the connection between the museum's science research and contemporary issues. Dr. Bassett noted following a natural disaster or military conflict, he and his team produce a peer reviewed "Rapid Access" report published through the Smithsonian. The team's goal is to produce these "Rapid Access" reports within 30 days of an event. The team has had success with as many as 44K downloads on the 36 reports written to date. Most recently the team assisted FEMA with the July 4<sup>th</sup> floods in TX. This important work allows first responders to pinpoint and prioritize recovery efforts in the most damaged areas as well as helping localities request appropriate funding from federal resources.

Dr. Bassett will share links to reports for anyone interested in reading more about the team's findings.

### **EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Education Manager, Christy Deatherage reported for the Education and Public Programs Committee. Ms. Deatherage reported that a Waynesboro based educator (Rosemary Wagner) trained this summer and is ready to provide programming for multiple grade levels. It was noted that outreach staff is part time and their salary is based exclusively on program delivery.

Locally, the Homeschool Science and Engineering Academy program continues to grow and due to overwhelming demand, beginning in September an additional session (afternoon) will be added to

this program to accommodate more students. Sessions are \$10 per student per session or can be booked the entire fall for 18 sessions at a reduced rate.

Summer proved to be busy for the Education Program as four camps were offered to any child in the community. This year field trips included Fairy Stone State Park and Philpott Dam. Students also got to work in the greenhouse, use the pavilion, and Wilson Park for a variety of hands-on science activities. The on-premises greenhouses were supplied by a grant from the Harvest Foundation.

## **BREAK**

Dr. Clark called for a short break at 10:43 for Board members to view the museum's temporary Petra exhibit.

The Board returned from break at 11:04 to continue the meeting.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Dr. Keiper presented high level strategic plan items and noted the Strategic Planning Committee will soon meet to determine measurable and attainable goals. The proposed timeline is to have the 2025-2030 strategic plan ready for Board vote in November and published by December 2025.

Dr. Keiper explained that the AAM Reaccreditation Site Visit Report provided some insight about increasing visitors and thoughtful renovation of Douglas Avenue. Dr. Evans suggested including the expansion of the Starling Avenue facility be included in the new strategic plan goals.

Dr. Keiper reported the plans for exhibits and events celebrating VA 250 and Thomas Jefferson's scientific work is ongoing.

Dr. Keiper recognized the friendliness of the box office staff and Building & Grounds staff members for the numerous projects completed.

Mr. Barber spoke briefly to highlight information from the Advancement Report. He noted exceptional giving and record investment growth from 6.30.24 – 6.30.25.

Mr. Barber further reported the museum has received several grant approvals. The museum received a \$10,000 Luck Stone grant, as well as a \$10,000 grant to support our VA 250 efforts from VA Tourism. The Advancement team is awaiting news about the Watershed Wellness Planning Grant for Waynesboro. Award details should be coming very soon.

Mr. Barber reported the Dino Festival had record gross revenue.

Upcoming events include the Natural History of Chocolate dinner, Bonez & Booz at the end of October and the Waynesboro Lecture Series resumes in September 2025.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OPEN DISCUSSION**

Dr. Keiper thanked Dr. Clark and Dr. Evans for their participation at Dino Festival. Thanked Dr. Clark and Ms. Hall for attending the Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion Ribbon cutting event.

Ms. Whitlow will follow up with the Board to select a time to conduct a special called Zoom meeting to finish the action items from this agenda.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Dr. Clark thanked everyone who attended and adjourned the meeting at 11:38 AM.

Next Quarterly Meeting

Saturday, November 15, 2025, 10 AM

Virginia Museum of Natural History