

Joint Meeting of Research & Collections and Facilities Committees
Monday, August 25, 2025
Virginia Museum of Natural History
All-Virtual

Present: Dr. Tom Benzing (Facilities Chair) Dr. Art Evans (R&C Chair)
Dr. Melany Clark Ms. Lisa Carter
Mr. Ben Williams (Staff)

Absent: Dr. Carol Nash
Dr. David Furth
Ms. Lauren Hall

Others Present: Dr. Joe Keiper Ms. Jennifer Whitlow (minutes)
Mr. Jonathan Martin Mr. Marshall Boyd

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Tom Benzing called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. It was determined that a quorum of the Research and Collections committee was in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On behalf of the Research and Collection Committee, Dr. Benzing made a motion to approve the 5.5.25 joint committee (R&C and Facilities) minutes as presented with a second by Dr. Melany Clark. The minutes were unanimously approved by voice vote.

MEETING OUTCOMES

The first item on the agenda was the topic of asbestos remediation at the Virginia Museum of Natural History's Douglas Avenue site. Dr. Art Evans and Dr. Tom Benzing asked Jonathan Martin for clarification on the process and timeframe. Martin said that VMNH is working with a contractor on a cost estimate and that 11 different companies could potentially perform the asbestos remediation. Martin said that all of the asbestos is in the building's floor tiles, adding that Research and Collections will need to shuffle some items around the building to allow the asbestos remediation to take place.

After that work has been done, Martin said, phase one of the Douglas Avenue rehabilitation project will encompass the first floor, and the basement rehabilitation will be phase two. The majority of the specimens in collections will be housed in the basement, while the first floor will be used for other storage needs (for example, the old auditorium can be used as a staging area for museum exhibits).

The entire project including abatement will be funded exclusively by Maintenance Reserve Funds which have already been appropriated to the museum.

REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS

Additionally, Mr. Marshall Boyd told the board members that two rooms on the first floor are currently stabilized — one is currently housing taxidermy that was previously housed in a different room on the first floor, while the other will soon be used for additional taxidermy and skeletal material of which the museum possesses duplicates. Some stable collections are already being housed in the basement, Boyd continued, such as Dr. Lauck Ward's shell collection.

Dr. Tom Benzing asked if Research and Collections was curating a map of where collections items would go. Mr. Boyd said that a color-coded map has been prepared based on feedback from different departments, although it is open to edits as needed.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Mr. Martin outlined the projected completion timeline for the committees as:

Present – May 2026 – Gathering bids from contractors for asbestos removal. Finalizing schematic, detail design, DEB approvals, and working drawings.

May 2026 – Complete the design phase and initiate the procurement process.

June 2026 – Award construction contract. Asbestos remediation will be the first phase and then the renovation work will begin in two subsequent phases.

November 2026 – Achieve substantial completion of construction.

Dr. Benzing suggested having another joint committee in mid-December 2025 as progress on the project continues.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion or business Dr. Benzing adjourned the meeting at 3:31 PM.