

Virginia Museum of Natural History
Waynesboro office of Economic Development
Monday, December 1, 2025, 1 PM
Minutes



Present in Person: Dr. Tom Benzing Dr. Maggie Van Huss
Mr. Greg Hitchin Mr. Len Poulin
Mr. Urbie Nash Ms. Ann Peltier

Present Remote: Mrs. Faye Cooper

Staff Present: Dr. Joe Keiper

Staff Present Remote: Mr. Ryan Barber Mr. Zach Ryder
Mr. Jonathan Martin Ms. Jennifer Whitlow

Welcome

Dr. Benzing opened the meeting with a welcome to all in attendance both in person and online at 1:01 PM.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Poulin made a motion to approve the November minutes and Dr. Van Huss seconded. Motion carried.

Community Connections

Lecture Series – Dr. Benzing thanked everyone who participated during the fall and reminded the committee that the series will resume in January 2026.

Trailer Renovation – Dr. Keiper reported that the trailer was evaluated and has been found to need significant work. The cost of the repair work plus rewapping will be more than \$60,000.00. Once work is completed the trailer will be moved back to Waynesboro but will no longer be mobile, meaning the trailer will be in a fixed location. Dr. Keiper will work with the City of Waynesboro to allow for an electric hookup. Dr. Benzing suggested purchasing a skirt to be added around the bottom of the trailer since it will be immobile. There was also brief discussion about a new name for the trailer, reorientating the location for greater visibility, and possible wrap concepts.

Events – Upcoming events include Riverfest and Museum Rodeo both of which will be in May 2026.

Interpretive Signage – The Exhibits Manager is newly employed and is aware of the signage project. Additional interpretive signage is expected in Sunset Park and along the South River closer to the museum site.

General Assembly and Advocacy

The Governor's budget will be released mid-December. Dr. Keiper provided a draft work plan to the committee from McGuire Woods Consulting regarding their proposed work in the 2026 General Assembly. The committee should be aware that the budget is very dynamic due to the administration change and new legislative representation. The McGuire Woods representative will work through the Appropriations Committee and other avenues as he advocates for the project.

Dr. Benzing suggested all interested community members attend legislator's open house events as an additional way to boost support. The next meeting of WAC will be held on January 5 at which time a legislative strategy can be developed.

Members of the committee underscored the importance of adjacent community's support as this is a project that benefits the region as well as all the residents of Virginia. The committee engaged in general discussion about recruiting supporters, generating gifts, and boosting engagement from existing regional groups.

Open Discussion

Dr. Keiper reported the VA250 celebration exhibit work is well underway. In addition to exhibiting a first English edition of, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, the museum will exhibit artifacts that highlight the contributions of Thomas Jefferson to the science of natural history. The museum is also planning two evening events to promote further engagement of the community.

A suggestion was made to explore a collaboration with the Waynesboro library for expansion of VA250 exhibits and to consider VA250 exhibits for trailer when it is ready for visitors. There was general discussion about loaning a temporary exhibit to the Heritage Museum in Waynesboro.

Committee members mentioned Monticello sells seed packets that may be an interesting addition to the museum store since our exhibits prominently feature Thomas Jefferson's work in the natural sciences.

With no further business, Dr. Benzing adjourned the meeting at 1:53 PM.

The next meeting of the Waynesboro Advocacy Committee will be held:

Monday, January 5, 2026, 1 PM
Waynesboro Office of Economic Development