

Waynesboro Advocacy Committee meeting
June 2, 2025, 1 to 2 p.m.
Waynesboro Office of Economic Development



Attending In-person: Mr. Len Poulin
Dr. Maggie VanHuss
Mr. Greg Hitchin
Mr. Urbie Nash (former CCR)
Dr. Carol Nash
Ms. Faye Cooper
Dr. Joe Keiper (ex officio)

Attending Remotely: Dr. Tom Benzing (Chair)
Mr. Bill Alexander (former CCR)
Mr. Ryan Barber (staff)

WELCOME

- Dr. Benzing welcomed the committee.

APPROVAL OF MAY 2025 MINUTES

- Maggie asked that the minutes be corrected to include her title of “Dr.”.
- Dr. Nash motioned to approve, and Mr. Poulin seconded, with a unanimous vote.

OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE

- Dr. Keiper provided an overview of the new ad hoc committee to compliment and eventually replace the existing Waynesboro Advocacy Committee.
- Capital fundraising activities will begin after state capital funds are secured. Ms. Cooper asked if outside help would be enlisted, and Dr. Keiper responded yes, it is a likely option.
- Dr. Keiper and Dr. Benzing welcomed the former board members of the Center for Coldwaters Restoration (CCR), who will work to form the future ad hoc fundraising committee for capital fundraising.

DETAILED DESIGN

- Final funding secured to complete the Detailed Design phase, with this design phase to be completed in fall 2025.
- Dr. Keiper noted the goal of aiming to have the project included in the Governor’s 2026-2028 biennial budget to be released in December 2025.
- With passage in the 2026 GA session, the capital funding would be made available beginning in July 2026, at which point a groundbreaking would be held.
- The final project cost is \$33.5 million, which includes \$20 million for construction, \$7 million for exhibits, and additional funds for planning, design, and state review.
- Members of the committee highlighted the need for publicity in support of major milestones. Upcoming newsworthy activities include:

- Potential Watershed Wellness Grant – press release if approved (Summer 2025)
- Ribbon cutting for South River Preserve – New trail signs, funded by the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation, will be unveiled (August 21, 2025)
- Press release highlighting the completion of the Detailed Design phase (fall 2025)
- Potential inclusion in Governor’s budget – coordinate media outreach with Governor’s office (December 2025)
- General Assembly capital funding approval (2026 session January 14 to March 14)

ADVOCACY

- Board members, committee members, and community supporters are actively sending letters to the Secretary of Education in support of the project. The secretary’s office noted that the letters are being received.
- Mr. Poulin provided an overview of the Central Shenandoah Watershed Wellness Grant opportunity, which could provide up to \$100,000 in planning funding.
- Mr. Barber provided further details, and noted his positive discussions with Zach Beard, program officer.

PROJECTS

- Mobile Science Outreach Trailer rehab to begin soon, with completion date TBD.
- Trail signs, funded by the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation, to be installed in summer 2025, with an unveiling August 21 as part of the South River Preserve ribbon cutting.

OLD BUSINESS

- Mr. Barber highlighted the VMNH Foundation’s planned giving and estate giving options, with several past, current, and pending estate gifts. Required Minimum Distributions have been utilized by donors for support of new endowment funds, new exhibits, and annual support of summer camps and other programming.
- Dr. Keiper provided an overview of early naming options, with the final list to be developed as the new exhibits are finalized.

ADJOURN

- Dr. Benzing adjourned the meeting at 2:00PM.