



**VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH AND COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE
Nov. 15, 2025, 9 A.M.
Virginia Museum of Natural History, Room 237 Conference Room A**

Present at the meeting were Dr. Art Evans, Dr. Carole Nash, Dr. Melany Clark, Dr. Tom Benzing, Dr. Hayden Bassett, Dr. Kal Ivanov, Dr. Collin Van Buren, Marshall Boyd, Jonathan Martin, Dr. Joe Keiper, Ambria Wood, Sarah Bowman, and Ben Williams. Dr. David Furth was absent and a quorum was provided.

Committee Chair Dr. Art Evans called the meeting to order. The committee unanimously approved the meetings from the August 9 meeting. The committee circulated the acquisitions sign-off sheet and approved it unanimously.

Dr. Joe Keiper introduced Ambria Wood, the museum's new representative from the Virginia Attorney General's Office, and Sarah Bowman, the museum's newest trustee.

Dr. Art Evans said that the committee was initially going to recommend to the full board that it approve the changes to the museum's live animals policy, but that it had been decided to table that recommendation until the following board meeting in February. Dr. Melany Clark said it was likely that the February board meeting would be a virtual meeting. Dr. Carole Nash asked how often the museum has to update its live animal certifications. Jonathan Martin said that the museum has a live animal permit that must be updated annually, and Dr. Collin Van Buren clarified that it's a permit rather than a certification since the museum's animals are ambassadors and not research subjects.

Dr. Art Evans extended the committee's congratulations to Dr. Maddy Bassett for receiving her Ph.D.

Dr. Kal Ivanov said that the previous Wednesday, the herpetology curator search committee completed its first round of virtual interviews with the second round taking place on Monday. Three candidates will be chosen from the nine total interviews for in-person interviews.

Marshall Boyd and Jonathan Martin provided an update on the museum's Douglas Avenue facility. Boyd said that the museum's library is in the process of being stabilized. Martin said that the museum received its first cost estimate for the total project. He's

looking through the estimate line-by-line and noticed that the costs for certain things (such as finishings) were high, so he's going to go room-by-room with the architect to get the cost down to a more reasonable level. Martin added that asbestos remediation will be taking place concurrently with renovations. Dr. Joe Keiper added that a decision was made the day prior to go with a larger HVAC unit for the new facility rather than two smaller HVAC units, which would have been both more expensive and less efficient. Dr. Tom Benzing said it was too early to schedule another joint meeting between the Facilities Committee and the Research and Collections Committee, but another meeting would likely be scheduled prior to the February 7 board meeting.

Dr. Carole Nash said that she sits on the science advisory committee for the Wintergreen Nature Foundation and the foundation's new executive director is planning to develop a field station north of Waynesboro. Nash said she was tasked with coming to the Research and Collections committee and asking if anyone had ideas for the field station. The committee agreed that it was an exciting prospect once a site has been chosen.

Dr. Art Evans said that given how much the museum's endowment has grown, he thinks the museum should consider purchasing a dedicated field vehicle for the research staff. Dr. Melany Clark asked if any staff are wanting for vehicles, and Dr. Kal Ivanov explained that the state motor pool vehicles are readily available but not suitable for field work. The one field vehicle — a Subaru Outback — is rapidly nearing the end of its life. Clark said that Frank Mariels, the late donor who substantially grew the VMNH endowment with his generous gift, was a frugal man, and the museum had also been frugal. However, she said, she thinks that it's possible to strike a balance between being frugal with the endowment and spending enough of it to make a substantial difference for the museum.

Dr. Art Evans said that he will be rotating off of the Board of Trustees in June 2026. As a result, he is going to begin stepping back from some of his board responsibilities. The February meeting will be the last Research and Collections Committee meeting that he chairs, he said. He added that he feels comfortable leaving the board as the museum is in an excellent position and the future looks bright.

Dr. Tom Benzing congratulated Marshall Boyd for being featured in an article produced by the Virginia Retirement System that focused on a state employee early in their career. He also thanked both Boyd and Dr. Joe Keiper for attending the most recent Waynesboro Science Talk.

Dr. Art Evans adjourned the meeting.