

Virginia Museum of Natural History
Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Meeting
Monday, November 3, 2025, 1 PM
Remote Meeting
Minutes



Present:	Dr. Tom Benzing (Chair)	Ms. Faye Cooper
	Mr. Rick Kane	Ms. Anne Peltier
	Mr. Len Poulin	Mr. Greg Hitchin
	Dr. Carole Nash (BOT)	Dr. Maggie VanHuss
	Ms. Stephanie Duffy	
	Dr. Joe Keiper (Executive Director)	Mr. Ryan Barber (Staff)
	Mr. Jonathan Martin (Staff)	Mr. Zach Ryder (Staff)
	Jennifer Whitlow (Staff - Minutes)	

Welcome

Dr. Benzing opened the meeting at 1:01 PM with a welcome to everyone in attendance and determined a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

October 2025 minutes were approved with no corrections.

Detailed Design

- Mr. Martin reported that value engineering was completed and submitted to the state in a timely manner. Mr. Martin conveyed positive remarks about the work Steven Basham at Glave Holmes and our project manager Scott Wachtler provided as the project moved through the value engineering stage.

Advocacy

- There was a short discussion about matching funds that may be necessary if the Governor doesn't fully fund the project in his upcoming budget. Dr. Benzing reminded the group that a 10% match in private funds is a good goal in which to aspire in the event it is necessary to lobby the General Assembly. Currently, 3 million dollars is pledged from various funding sources in support of the project. The Governor's budget will be released around December 15th after which plans will need to be put quickly in place to either solicit additional private funding, and/or work with local delegates for a budget amendment.
- Dr. Benzing asked Mr. Poulin, Mr. Kane, and Dr. Keiper to craft and present to the foundation, at the appropriate time, a foundation commitment resolution to strategically align any necessary additional fundraising to meet at minimum a 10% project match goal. Mr. Barber will also provide language from the 2019 resolution to assist.
- Dr. Benzing along with assistance from Mr. Ryder published an article in the local magazine, *Waynesboro Living*, highlighting the basic timeline and history of the project.
- Dr. Benzing encouraged everyone to continue to write letters of advocacy to Governor's office.

Community Connections

- The lecture series for the fall will conclude with a presentation from John Ross on Veteran's Day in November. Dr. Benzing will kick off the spring lecture series in January with the premier of a movie short featuring a rubber duck which travels from the South River Watershed to Hampton Roads.
- The mobile trailer continues to be evaluated by a professional contractor who will provide more information and a cost estimate of repair work. Mr. Martin confirmed that maintenance reserve funds are still available for this project.
- Dr. Keiper reported that the Fall Foliage event was busy, and museum staff interacted with many adults and children at the festival.
- Dr. Keiper mentioned the Natural History of Chocolate event which was held in Martinsville in October and asked if anyone knew of a chef who may be interested in doing something similar in the Waynesboro area.
- The addition of signage at the South River Preserve is on hold until the new Exhibits Manager is hired.
- Dr. Keiper mentioned staff is in the beginning phases of partnering with the City of Waynesboro to create an augmented reality game. The game will utilize the existing City app and consist of individuals collecting animals throughout the city. The game will include a short description and a few fun facts about each animal. The experience can change periodically to include different locations and animals. At the new museum site, we hope to have an augmented museum rendering and include a link to our donation page.

Open Discussion

- Mr. Poulin noted the importance of continued participation and collaboration between the Waynesboro Advocacy Committee and foundation subcommittee.
- There was consensus of the group to meet in December.

Adjournment

With no further business, Dr. Benzing adjourned the meeting at 1:38.

The next meeting of the Waynesboro Advocacy Committee will be held on:
Monday, December 1, 2025, 1 PM
Waynesboro Office of Economic Development.