

Education & Public Programs Committee

VMNH Board of Trustees

Thursday, October 30, 2025, 3 PM

Fully remote meeting

Present: Mr. Nathan Sanford (Chair)
Ms. Cathy Hincker (BOT)
Ms. Emma Ito (BOT)
Ms. Christy Deatherage (Education Manager)
Ms. Annabelle Sechrist (Educator)
Ms. Jordan Brim (Educator)
Dr. Joe Keiper (Executive Director)
Ms. Jennifer Whitlow (Staff)

Not Present: Ms. Lauren Hall (BOT)
Ms. Gail Vogler (Foundation)

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Christy Deatherage welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 3:00 PM. Museum educators Annabelle Sechrist and Jordan Brim introduced themselves to the committee. It was determined that a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Sanford made a motion to approve minutes from August 9, 2025, May 17, 2025, and November 16, 2024. Ms. Ito seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.

EDUCATION UPDATES

- Ms. Deatherage noted that the contact numbers look robust, and the education department is now fully staffed with programming in full swing. Ms. Deatherage showed pictures of Dino Festival featuring an interactive activity developed in collaboration with Dr. Adam Pritchard. This was a very well received activity.
- The team has recently completed STEM programming for all Danville City 5th graders who visited the museum within the span of two weeks.
- The staff is currently conducting a Virginia Master Naturalist Program which is a statewide program. VMNH is a host for a local chapter consisting of about 40 people. Christy is the chapter advisor, Ms. Brim is chapter basic training chair, and Ms. Sechrist

is enrolled in the class. Classes are held each Monday evening. Topics are presented by subject area specialists from the museum and around the commonwealth. Graduation is in December.

- The outreach educator providing programming in the Waynesboro area is working to make regional connections. She provided programming in a couple of elementary schools in the previous quarter.
- The museum has three small greenhouses on the property, two of which are utilized by other groups, and one of which is being used by our home school group to grow lettuce. Students planted seeds and each week are measuring growth. They will take the lettuce home in December. Additional soil experiments will begin in January.
- The Jean S Adams Education Pavilion has been used numerous times for programming, outdoor student lunch, and teaching area. Teachers have been very appreciative of the new space.
- Staff continue to take advantage of professional development opportunities with Ms. Sechrist earning the *Certificate of Interpretive Guiding*.
- Ms. Deatherage reminded the committee that the educators will be attending and presenting at the Virginia Association of Science Teachers in November. Their topic will be: The Power of Real, Utilizing Museum Specimens to Deliver Powerful Programming.
- Ms. Deatherage noted the recent upgrades to the technology in uncovering VA: Carmel Church Quarry which included installation of a large TV monitor and a looping slide show have been well received by teachers and repeat visitors.

In summary, Mr. Sandford, mentioned his appreciation of the healthy programming trends and noted it was great to see the new staff and level of engagement.

GRANT UPDATE

Ms. Deatherage stated that we have not heard from our \$10,000 Monogram Food Loves Kids grant renewal. This grant provides scholarships for classroom programming and aids with support for our science festivals.

With nothing further to report and no further business, Mr. Sanford adjourned the meeting at 3:32 PM.

The next meeting of the Education and Public Programming Committee will be on Saturday, February 7, 2026, at 9:00 AM.