

**Virginia Museum of Natural History
Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Meeting
Tuesday, February 3, 2026, 1 PM
All-virtual**



MINUTES

Present:

Dr. Tom Benzing, Chair	Dr. Carole Nash
Dr. Maggie Van Huss	Mr. Rick Kane
Mr. Dick Bratcher	Mr. Greg Hitchin
Ms. Ann Peltier	Ms. Faye Cooper
Mr. Urbie Nash	Ms. Jennifer Whitlow
Mr. Len Poulin	Mr. Zach Ryder
Mr. Ryan Barber	Mr. Jonathan Martin
Dr. Joe Keiper	

Not Present:

Dr. Steven Powers	Ms. Stephanie Duffy
Mr. Bill Alexander	

WELCOME

Dr. Tom Benzing opened the meeting with a welcome to all attending the all-virtual meeting at 1:00 PM. A quorum was declared present for the committee to conduct business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from January 5, 2026, were presented and approved with no corrections. Greg Hitchin made a motion to accept the minutes which was second by Maggie Van Huss. Motion carried by voice vote.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Benzing welcomed Richard (Dick) Bratcher to the committee. Mr. Bratcher gave a brief overview of his connection with Waynesboro and interest in the VMNH Waynesboro campus project.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Advocacy - The advocacy work continues through in-person efforts and community support letters. Dr. Benzing will be traveling to Richmond tomorrow to speak to capital outlay committee members. The committee was reminded that we will know if our budget request made it through committee on Sunday February 22nd.
- Trailer – Mr. Martin reported that the trailer contract has been signed and exhibits are being developed in-house for use after the trailer is operational.
- Events – Dr. Benzing encouraged attendance at the latest lecture series event planned for Tuesday, February 17th. This lecture will feature two accomplished Natural Heritage specialists

who will speak about the flora of Virginia. As always, this event is free and open to the public and can be livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube.

- Science Social - To engage a wider audience to the Waynesboro project, Dr. Nash suggested borrowing an idea from the Elizabeth River Conservation group. This would involve a monthly informal meeting ideally at a brewery or pub to speak about science topics relevant to Waynesboro. Faye Cooper volunteered to contact the Elizabeth River group for more information.
- Riverfest – The annual celebration in Waynesboro is planned for May 2, 2026. Representatives from the museum will be in attendance. Ideally the mobile museum structure will be used for the first time, during this event.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Dr. Benzing concluded the importance of garnering support from the community as both the General Assembly's House and Senate Finance subcommittees work through competing priorities. He reiterated February 22nd as the day preliminary decisions are made public.

The priorities of the newly appointed Secretary of Education are unclear, but the hope is that he will be supportive of the initiative.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further comment or discussion, Dr. Benzing adjourned the meeting at 1:30 PM.

The next meeting of the Waynesboro Advocacy Committee

March 2, 2026, 1:00 PM

Waynesboro Office of Economic Development