

**Virginia Museum of Natural History
Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Meeting
Tuesday, April 7, 2026, 1 PM
Waynesboro Office of Economic Development**



MINUTES

Present In-Person:	Dr. Tom Benzing (Chair) Mr. Len Poulin Ms. Ann Peltier	Mr. Dick Bratcher Mr. Urbie Nash Mr. Greg Hitchin
Present Remote:	Dr. Steve Powers Dr. Carole Nash	Dr. Maggie Van Huss
Others Present:	Dr. Joe Keiper	Mr. Jonathan Martin
Others Present Remote:	Mr. Ryan Barber Mr. Zach Ryder	Ms. Jennifer Whitlow
Absent:	Ms. Stephanie Duffy Ms. Faye Cooper	Mr. Rick Kane Mr. Bill Alexander

WELCOME

Dr. Tom Benzing called the meeting to order with a welcome to those attending online and remotely at 1:00 PM. It was determined that a quorum was present to conduct business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes from March 3, 2026, was received from Dr. Nash with Mr. Poulin seconding. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

INTRODUCTIONS

Dr. Steve Powers was introduced and welcomed to the group as the foundation liaison.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Advocacy –
 - Mr. Martin spoke about the uncertainty of the final state budget. The General Assembly target date for adoption is April 23, 2026. The committee engaged in general discussion about the importance of keeping the project in the minds of legislators now and into the fall. Mr. Martin will resubmit the funding request in August. Mr. Poulin emphasized the need for the committee and community to engage the new Secretary of Education and regional legislators to support the ongoing effort.

- The committee agreed to explore ways in which the project could be included in a future bond referendum.
- Press Release –
 - The museum will submit a press release following the state budget finalization on or near April 23rd.
- Library Displays –
 - The Waynesboro Library display has been refreshed.
 - A QR code will be added for additional engagement.
- Trailer –
 - The trailer restoration project is on track with delivery scheduled for April 17th and exhibit installation on April 22nd.
 - A short presentation detailing the trailer restoration progress and exhibit plan was given by Mr. Martin and Dr. Keiper.
 - A generator will be used to power the trailer for the Riverfest event. In the future, hardwiring to a power source should be considered to fully run the trailers monitors and HVAC system.
- Events -
 - Lecture Series – The final science talk for this season is “Forest Forensics” by Chris Bolgiano on Tuesday, April 21st. The lecture series continues to grow in popularity. The fall 2026 season of speakers is almost full.
 - Riverfest – May 2 - All plans, vendors, and exhibitors coming together for a great event.
 - The Waynesboro Street Arts Fair – May 16 -The VA 250 trailer and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts trailer will be onsite for this event.

OPEN DISCUSSION

- Dr. Keiper connected with Wintergreen Resort and floated the idea of a Natural History of Chocolate event to be held there. This event could be a good avenue to engage additional support from the broader regional audience. This would be a networking and publicity effort not necessarily a fundraising effort for the Waynesboro project.
- Dr. Keiper noted he was approached by the Director of the Wayne Theatre to support an event in March of 2027 called Dinosaur Dimensions. This is a children’s show using animatronics, puppets, and live actors. The theatre made a request of \$5,000 - \$8,000 from the museum to bring the show to town. After a brief discussion it was determined that the committee needs more information about the educational value of the show and possible grant funding before making a commitment. Dr. Benzing recommended the request be tabled while more information is gathered.
- Mr. Nash confirmed that there will be upcoming film screenings and potential documentary series scheduled at the Wayne Theatre.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Dr. Benzing adjourned the meeting at 2:06 PM.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, May 5, 2026, 1 PM

Waynesboro Office of Economic Development