**WAYNESBORO ADVOCACY COMMITTEE  
April 4th, 2023 – 1:00PM**

**Waynesboro Office of Economic Development**

Attendance:

**Present:** Tom Benzing (BOT), Maggie Van Huss, Mark Buss (BOT), Len Poulin (VMNH-F), Joe Keiper (Staff), Jonathan Martin (Staff), Stephanie Duffy, Mary Zell Galen (Staff)

**Absent:** Greg Hitchin

**Virtual:** Ryan Barber (Staff), Carole Nash (BOT), Zach Ryder (Staff)

1. Welcome

Tom Benzing:

* Made a motion to accept virtual attendees to the meeting.

1. Chair’s Report

Tom Benzing:

* Lecture Series
  + Last lecture of series is next week- April 11th at 7 pm about brook trout
* Public hours
  + Held public office hours at the library last month, light crowd but news reporter attended
  + Len Poulin will be hosting on April 21st, Faye Cooper will host in May
* Committee composition discussion
  + Down to eight out of ten members. Looking for a successor for Gene Smith (Foundation representative) and Tami Radicke (community member).
  + Joe Keiper: Foundation also has an advisory board, and could invite an advisory board member to join this committee
    - Suggests inviting Mike Barber, and he’s around and interested in the museum
    - Asked Len’s opinion on inviting someone from the Advisory board instead of the Foundation board, which Len approved of.
  + Len Poulin: Suggests inviting a member of local government he met at the King Family Vineyard event. Previously was on the Board of Supervisors
  + Tom Benzing: Asked for process to appoint them. Joe suggests alerting Earl Armstrong first, then connecting with board members. Joe can complete before the next committee member.

1. Detailed Design progress and upcoming

Joe Keiper:

* Building: Value Engineering
  + Going well, but slow progress. Completed the value engineering of building and cut the price back to what the state wanted (roughly $680 per square foot). Future discussion will occur next Wednesday.
    - Next step is an intermittent meeting with the Department of Engineering and Buildings.
  + Jonathan Martin: Biggest change was moving an elevator, as well as shrinking the ceiling height and changing building materials
  + Joe Keiper: Still waiting on receiving all the remaining funding from the state.
  + Len Poulin: What does the delayed funding do to the timeline?
    - Joe: VMNH will still submit the package to the General Assembly in the fall, but will continue to work.
  + Len Poulin: asked if the money doesn’t show up until next fiscal year, will it impact funds?
    - Jonathan Martin: The state won’t take the funds back and all the money comes from the same bucket. All projects will eventually be funded, just waiting on funds being shuffled to this project.
    - Joe Keiper: General Assembly construction projects are a wildcard, but Jonathan explained that all agencies are experiencing delays.
* Exhibits
  + Tom Benzing: Asked if delays will slow down the exhibit design?
    - Joe Keiper: Explained that we’ll still be working with the various experts from the science talks and working with our local experts to develop the storyline for some of these exhibits.
    - Joe Keiper: Exhibit design lags behind the building design, but this will keep working throughout the delay.
  + Tom Benzing: Who on staff will be leading exhibit compilation? Joe: Will be overseeing and will be working as a team to complete the process. Provided examples of specimens that the museum has on staff. May talk with the Department of Wildlife Resources in Verona to set aside unusual finds for the museum.
    - Tom Benzing/ Joe Keiper: Work to use South River Science Team’s office in Waynesboro, and VMNH can purchase a chest freezer for collections to be temporarily stored.
      * Joe Keiper: Can put committee members on the museum’s salvage permits and Len offered the potential to donate the chest freezer.
    - Joe Keiper: Will need to work with taxidermist to create items. Tom: suggests working with the Wildlife Center of Virginia for animals that otherwise needed to be euthanized.
  + Tom Benzing: Wants someone to be in change of the exhibits?
    - Joe: Mary Zell will manage the mechanics of collecting materials and submitted items. Joe will start by creating lists of what VMNH has and needs. Will at least have an outline and shared document before the next committee meeting.
  + Joe Keiper: Conclusion of Schematic Design phase (cost est.)
    - Value engineering provided hard cost estimate and can meet what DEB needs us to meet.
  + Joe Keiper: Next steps
    - Tom Benzing: Requests a shared folder for presentations and outline for projects

1. Continued Community Connections

Tom Benzing:

* Lecture series
  + Last talk was on March 14th about nuisance and harmful algae
  + Next talk is April 11th about Southern Appalachian Brook Trout
  + Carole Nash: Suggests Native Americans and the Shenandoah River system as a topic, focusing on ties between the indigenous cites around the river.
* Waynesboro RiverFest, April 29
  + Joe Keiper: Mary Zell: Joe, Mary Zell, Zach, and potentially Jonathan will be coming. Carole also volunteered, and others are welcome to come.
  + Joe Keiper: will be using some activities from Reptile Festival for the event.
* Streamfest
  + Len Poulin: CCR is invited for Streamfest, and VMNH can participate in future years.
  + Maggie Van Huss: Streamfest was in early March, and had lots of kids.
* Grottoes Cave Day, June 10
  + Joe Keiper: Met with Grand Caverns team on the geology field trip and then they visited VMNH. Working with other museums to get cave samples for the museum. VMNH will participate in the event, similar to Riverfest.
* Proposal to Senator’s Kaine and Warner – federal funding
  + Joe Keiper: Talked with Congressman Griffith and offered to also assist. Might be also smart to rope in Congressman Ben Kline (for Waynesboro region).
  + Joe Keiper: CCR has previously gone to DC to meet with senators for funding. He sent proposal for federal funding and received positive feedback with both senators.
    - Along with proposal, provided a list of other major museum projects
  + Joe Keiper: May be helpful to visit home offices or in DC.
    - Len Poulin: Need to get Greg’s opinion on reaching out to them to. Joe will touch base with Greg.
    - Joe Keiper: will had federal staff to the bimonthly newsletter

1. Open Discussion

* Tom Benzing: Next BOT meeting is in May at VMNH, August is virtual, and November is at Frontier Culture.
* Joe Keiper: Mary Zell is coordinating a staff trip up to Waynesboro, and others are invited to participate. Len: Encouraged us to contact Urbie Nash and can include Urbie’s tour of local natural resources.
* Joe Keiper: Rotary/ OLLI/ AARP/ Kiwanis club bus trip has scheduling issues. Scheduled for May 12, but if can’t have buses, it’ll be a carpool trip or van rentals
  + Len Poulin: Asked what the problem with charging for participation.
  + Tom Benzing/ Maggie Van Huss: suggested Sunshine/ Shenandoah tours for a trip.
  + Len Poulin: strongly suggested a Saturday date.
* Joe Keiper: 3 pm meeting today about planning for Wayne Theater Science talk for next year at Basic City Brewing.