**MINUTES**

**VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**Saturday, May 21st, 2022**

The one hundred thirty second meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Natural History was held at 9:12 a.m. Saturday, May 21, 2022, at the Hooke House on the James Madison University Farm.

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| Trustees Present: | Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Chair  Ms. Lisa Carter, Vice-Chair  Mr. Roberto Quinones, Treasurer  Mr. Nathan Sanford, Secretary | Ms. Anne Burnett  Dr. Art Evans  Mr. Michael Phillips  Ms. Melany Stowe |
|  | Mr. Cord Cothren | Ms. Sherri Jordan |
| Trustees Participating Virtually: | Mr. Mark Buss  Ms. Emma Ito, via Zoom (Reason: Covid-19 exposure) | Dr. Carole Nash |
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| Trustees Absent: | Dr. Makunda Abdul-Mbacke | Dr. Tom Benzing |
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| Staff Present: | Dr. Joe Keiper | Mr. Ryan Barber |
|  | Dr. Hayden Bassett | Ms. Christy Deatherage |
|  | Ms. Mary Zell Galen | Mr. Jonathan Martin, via Zoom |
|  |  |  |
| Others Present: | Ms. Audrey Burges – Attorney General’s Office, via Zoom | |
|  | Dr. DB Poli– VMNH Foundation Board of Directors | |

**Welcome and Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Chair. A roll call vote of trustees was held, and it was determined that there were twelve members present, one virtual, and two absent, which established a quorum.

**Approval of Minutes**

Because the prior meeting did not have a quorum, the November 2021 and February 2022 meetings were reviewed. Ms. Lisa Carter moved that the minutes of the November 2021 Board meeting be approved, and Mr. Michael Phillips seconded the motion. With no discussion, a roll call vote was held, and the motion unanimously passed. Mr. Roberto Quinones moved that the minutes of the February 2022 Board meeting be approved, and Mr. Mark Buss seconded the motion. With no discussion, a roll call vote was held, and the motion unanimously passed.

**Chair’s Report**

Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Chair, presented a brief report:

* She explained her report is fairly short, with lots more information coming from Dr. Joe Keiper and the committees. Everything is continuing well at VMNH.
* She wanted to thank the VMNH-Foundation board member, Dr. DB Poli, for attending. Additionally, she wanted to recognize Ms. Audrey Burges for all her service and guidance, as she is leaving the Attorney General’s Office and this is her last meeting.
* She remarked that everyone has been active on the board, and that the group will hear more about Waynesboro and facilities throughout the meeting.

Ms. Burnett also invited others to share updates:

* Dr. Art Evans attended the quarterly board meeting at the Science Museum of Virginia. He remarked that it was interesting to see how another museum runs their meetings. He explained they had a PowerPoint, with a slide for every agenda item. They have major capital project— building a new museum outside of Dulles, VA. The director invited the VMNH trustees to use their facilities in Richmond, or the possibility of having a joint meeting or activity at the Danville Science Center. Dr. Joe Keiper shared that the board met once at the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond. Ms. Emma Ito shared that Virginia Humanities has a facility Charlottesville that the board could also use.

Ms. Burnett then requested that someone who participated in General Assembly Day share updates:

* Ms. Lisa Carter shared that the event went well. They made contact with a lot of legislators and aides, shared flyers, and had several really good conversations. Mr. Mark Buss added that it helps that the group visited on a less busy day. They shared that there will work more on advocacy efforts in the future, and also work during strategic planning session.
* Mr. Mark Buss also shared an email of thoughts, and Ms. Burnett suggested it would be great for the strategic planning committee to consider.

Ms. Burnett continued her report:

* She reminded the Board that it was the last meeting before the end of the fiscal year. She encouraged the board to come in August with new ideas, and that staff will send new committees. Board members were encouraged to reach out if there were any committees they wanted to serve on.

Because a slate of officers was not voted on at the prior meeting, Ms. Burnett then made an amendment to the agenda, moving to add officer nominations and elections. Following her motion, Ms. Lisa Carter seconded it. In the following roll call vote, all present voted yes.

Ms. Burnett concluded her report by thanking Dr. Carole Nash for putting this event together, and also thanked Dr. Art Evans for leading the bug demonstration last night.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Mr. Roberto Quinones, Treasurer, presented the report.

* Profit and Loss Statement (information)

Net in terms of treasury, on schedule to finish the year in the black in great fastion. All incomes are on track. Obviously with pandemic and construction issues, there are some reveunes that haven’t moved over that are meant to cover certain costs. No state budget yet, so our budget is in the air until that. Was able to use next year’s expenses to pay for this year money, despire some concern from the state. Got everything approved, and it was normal expenses (like insurance, memberships, etc.). More about strategic plans to make sure the musuem’s supporters/ friends know who the museum is.

Mr. Jonathan Martin, CFO, added:

* The Board will have a finance committee meeting after the legislature approves the 2022-2023 budge, and VMNH will have a locked down budget by the next meeting.

Dr. Joe Keiper added:

* The revenue for classes, workshops, etc. at VMNH has increased more quickly than expected. These indicators also show that museum visitation increased.
* Additional updates to the museum store, led by the new visitor services manager, have further increased revenue. The store no longer serves food in the museum. The museum is also continually moving to become a single use plastic facility.

Mr. Ryan Barber added:

* Revenue per visitor at VMNH has also increased, and is now close to pre-pandemic spending, even with fewer overall museum visitors.

Ms. Anne Burnett asked about visitation compared to 2019 numbers.

* More information about visitor data will be provided in the advancement report.

The approval of the current and past financial report from the February meeting were combined. Ms. Lisa Carter moved to approve the minutes, and Mr. Cord Cothren seconded it.

**Executive Director’s Report**

Dr. Joe Keiper, Executive Director, presented his report:

* The majority of information will be provided in committee reports, but he presented several highlights. A new curator, Dr. Ariana Kuhn, will be joining the museum after she completes her post-doc in October. The VMNH-Foundation has approved $10,000 for her to help start her lab. VMNH has no current herpetology lab, so she needs these funds to get her program up and running. Additionally, curators have been taking advantage of newly revamped molecular lab, which Dr. Kuhn will also use.
* Operations at the museum continue to run smoothly. Mr. Jonathan Martin is remote because of covid, but will still provide updates. The museum has several cases, but there is no evidence of spread.

Mr. Jonathan Martin, CFO, also shared updates about capital projects:

* He provided an update on energy savings project. The ESCO project is going well, with 95% of the lighting installed. VMNH is waiting on approval for solar panels, which is anticipated soon. The museum is looking for significant savings in about three months. The treasury is on board, and the museum submitted the project to them at the perfect time to take advantage of the best interest rates.
* VMNH is still waiting on department of general services to approve the EV charging pad (as it has a similar set up gas stations). Once get conduits is in the ground, VMNH will get up and running. The museum plans to be offer the first EV charging station in the city.

Dr. Joe Keiper continued these operational updates:

* The new lights from the ESCO project improve the visitor experience at the museum.
* At Douglas Avenue, the roofing project is ongoing, as the museum is both replacing the roof and adding downspouts. It already feels like a more-sealed building. After VMNH finishes the upgrades, staff will complete an analysis of the space and complete environmental monitoring. Once the updates are complete, staff will bring durable items to the space. VMNH hopes to bring more improvements to the HVAC with maintenance reserve funds (as approved by the board).

**Development/Marketing Committee Report**

Mr. Ryan Barber, deputy director, presented the advancement report:

* At VMNH, visitation, revenue, museum store sales, corporate partnerships/ grants are all doing well. Visitation is still not pandemic levels, but consistent rise from last year. Staff will send out more visitor numbers once they are finalized.
* The museum has seen a rise in partnerships benefiting education, research, exhibits, and programming. The Edgar A. Thurman Foundation for Children has recently become a supporter. Additionally, VMNH recently received grant from both the Boxley Foundation and the Patterson Foundation for festivals.
* VMNH is hosting two upcoming events: Wildlife Festival on June 18 and Dino Festival on July 21-21.
* In last week, the VMNH Foundation received a major endowment gift. The museum received first $100,000, with approximately $50,000 more coming in soon. The endowment has made huge gains in the past 10 years, and soon will reach the one million dollar mark. The museum plans to hold an event following to celebrate that milestone in the future.

Dr. Joe Keiper also provided information:

* Answering prior questions from Ms. Anne Burnett about visitation, he explained that revenues are matching prior numbers, but attendance is still slow. Recovery from the pandemic has drastically varies by institutions, and VMNH is no exception. Additionally, 2019 is an outlier in terms of attendance, because of a larger festival in the first part of 2019, which makes attendance numbers seem higher than the past two years.

Mr. Ryan Barber and Dr. Joe Keiper also addressed further questions:

* Ms. Jennifer Burnett asked about Grapes and Grain. The event exceeded revenue and visitation goal, and ticket numbers will be provided in forthcoming reports. Dr. Keiper thanked everyone who bought tickets and gave to the museum, as it was nice to see a mix of new and old faces.
* Ms. Burnett also asked about the festival featuring the herpetologist. Mr. Barber explained that Reptile Festival will be hosted in April 2023.

**Research and Collections Committee Report**

Dr. Art Evans, Research and Collections Committee Chair, presented the report:

* He reminded the board about the new herpetologist and encouraged the group to read collections report.

Dr. Hayden Bassett, assistant curator of archaeology, provided a report on his lab’s recent activities:

* Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab
  + After starting the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab just over a year ago, it was well positioned to respond meaningfully to the conflict in Ukraine. Since that time, CHML can certainly see the nation’s impact. CHML relies on satellite monitoring and satellite sensors to monition 28,000 cultural heritage sites every 48 hours. Every week or so, the lab develops a general list of potential impacts.
  + VMNH of two museums with the ability to task satellites for this purpose. Because of this process, VMNH gained a lot of attention and new stakeholders in the project. The US State Department was very interested, because they have the resources to meaningfully respond. Additionally, the Education and Cultural Affairs Bureau is sending over supplies to help save these sites. The lab has lots of opportunities with public and private partnerships, and has received $60,000 in in-kind capabilities with various satellite technologies. CHML is now working directly of the Ministry of Culture in Ukraine, the US Assistant Secretary of State, and Ukraine ambassador to help provide them with a road map for recovery. CHML can also help recover collections and better understand the full scope of impacts. Following the resolution of the conflict, recovery is estimated to last over the next five years, but a lot of work will not be fully realized until the recovery phase.
* Lab Funding
  + Year one served as the proof of concept phase for CHML, and year two is serving as the sustainability phase. Now, sustainability phase has been fully insured. The lab has received $340,000 in funding this quarter. Funds will be distributed over a two year period, but announced all this quarter. The lab will provide new opportunities for students and new staff, and sees no sign of it slowing down anytime soon.
* Guatemalan Artifacts (Hooper Collection)
  + The Hooper Collection is made up of classical artifacts from Guatemala, and was previously donated to VMNH. VMNH plans to repatriate the collection and provided information to Ministry of Culture in Guatemala, who has major interest in receiving the collection back. VMNH is sending all artifacts back with the US Army’s Monuments Men and Women based out of the museum. To take all the artifacts back to Guatemala, they will fly down to Honduras on military transport, and then drive them to Guatemala. While moving artifacts across borders is always risky, this process will happen as no cost to the VMNH. While the US Army is facilitating it, this is still VMNH’s repatriation process.

Ms. Anne Burnett asked question about Mariupol, following Russia’s announcement to take arts and culture sites:

* Dr. Bassett explained that archaeology can help prevent cultural eraser. Even if material goes missing or is destroyed, having the records can help perpetuate cultural narratives. Additionally, Interpol can track when and where items are going using these lists if they are removed from the country.

Dr. Hayden Bassett concluded his report:

* He reminded the Board that there are museum directors on the front line in the Russian side, telling soldiers which to take or destroy from Ukraine. Additionally, when on the call with the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture, half the participants were in uniform in their cars fighting on the front line.

Following the report, Dr. Art Evans, committee chair, led the election for VMNH’s new research associates:

Dr. Evans explained that these research associates were highly recommended by Dr. Kal Ivanov. The board then voted to confirm the following new research associates:

* Dr. Derek Hennen
  + Votes in favor: Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Ms. Lisa Carter, Mr. Roberto Quinones, Mr. Nathan Sanford, Mr. Cord Cothren, Mr. Mark Buss, Ms. Anne Burnett, Dr. Art Evans, Mr. Michael Phillips, Ms. Sherri Jordan, Dr. Carole Nash, Ms. Emma Ito
  + Abstentions: Ms. Melany Stowe
* Dr. Julian J. Lewis
  + Votes in favor: Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Ms. Lisa Carter, Mr. Roberto Quinones, Mr. Nathan Sanford, Mr. Cord Cothren, Mr. Mark Buss, Ms. Anne Burnett, Dr. Art Evans, Mr. Michael Phillips, Ms. Sherri Jordan, Dr. Carole Nash, Ms. Emma Ito
  + Abstentions: Ms. Melany Stowe

Dr. Evans then presented to the board the current research associated that were up for term renewals. Several questions were raised about other members up for renewal, and VMNH staff will follow up with Dr. Tom Benzing and Dr. Carole Nash about their renewal status before the next meeting.

The board then voted to confirm the following research associates:

* Dr. Robert Bodnar, Dr. Art Evans, William Henika, Dr. Cynthia Liukus-Pierce, Dr. Sterling Nesbitt, Dr. John Pagels, Dr. DB Poli, and Dr. William Schmachtenberg
  + Votes in favor: Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Ms. Lisa Carter, Mr. Roberto Quinones, Mr. Nathan Sanford, Mr. Cord Cothren, Mr. Mark Buss, Ms. Anne Burnett, Dr. Art Evans, Mr. Michael Phillips, Ms. Sherri Jordan, Ms. Melany Stowe, Ms. Emma Ito
  + Abstentions: Dr. Carole Nash

**Education and Public Programs Committee Report**

Mr. Cord Cothren, Education Committee Chair, presented the report:

* Participation and engagement in programs has seen high increases. Additionally, the museums has received several recent grants.
* VMNH is also hosting four week-long camps over the summer.
* VMNH also recently renewed their partnerships with Franklin County and the Martinsville/ Henry County school systems to offer support to their students.

Mr. Ryan Barber provided further information:

* VMNH recently received the Edgar Thurman grant, which in his estate gave all money to the museum (and other sources) instead of his family. This funding will be used to finance educational programs and initiatives at the museum.

Ms. Christy Deatherage, education manager, provided more information:

* VMNH is serving as a host site for the JMU Kidwind project, ran by the JMU Center for the Advancement of Sustainable Energy. Schools can use museum as a site for them to test their wind turbines, using a tunnel and fan system specifically designed for the students. Students can create them out of PVC piping and all sorts of materials. When testing, students can see energy output from each wind turbine. Schools can add the wind turbine kit materials to add to suite of programs with other areas schools.

**Facilities (Operations) Committee Report**

Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Facilities (Operations) Committee Chair, Mr. Jonathan Martin, and Dr. Joe Keiper presented the report:

* Most material was previously covered in prior reports, but ESCO funding was already received.
* Work continues the Canopy Walk, including trips to see other facilities. Mr. Mark Buss is leading many of these efforts.

**Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Report**

Dr. Joe Keiper, Executive Director, presented the report:

* Dr. Keiper provided updates on interview process for the project’s primary architecture and engineering firm. VMNH brought in four firms, which were all impressive and ultimately picked one. After five weeks of issues, VMNH cut ties with their first firm and switched to another firm. The museum is examining bids now, and will be meeting with JMU construction managers over Zoom on Monday. Several costs are high, and VMNH want very good justification of these costs. VMNH strives to be good stewards of Commonwealth’s money. Once this process is finalized, VMNH will need to make broad announcement.
* After contract is signed, VMNH will host a meet and greet event for the firm, project stakeholders, and museum supporters. The firm selected will work with the museum through construction.
  + Dr. Keiper then walked through stages of the construction process, and explained that it will be about four year process until doors of the museum are opened. The project will be discussed more in small group exercises.

**Strategic Planning Committee Report**

Ms. Lisa Carter, Strategic Planning Committee chair, shared the report:

* Ms. Carter reminded about the need for additional committee members, as the committee is currently just herself and Mr. Roberto Quinones. The committee did not meet since last meeting. The committee will do things including talking about Mr. Mark Buss’s recent email, work with General Assembly, and continue discussion about diversity.

Dr. Joe Keiper provided additional information:

* He explained Mr. Buss’s email, which asked how VMNH is getting bigger with more programming, reach, operations, and geography. He wondered what the Board can do to up our game to gather support? VMNH has an in for cultural heritage monitoring lab, but what about other projects gaining larger supporters?
* Dr. Keiper explained part of this growth from building relationships in every district and explaining how we help them. And then, figure out how the legislator and other large stakeholders can help VMNH. The museum can build relationships, and that helps ensure work on a bipartisan base.

**Nominating Committee Report**

Ms. Lisa Carter, Nominating Committee chair, updated that there was no committee report, and turned the report over to Ms. Jennifer Burnett for further updates:

* Ms. Jennifer Burnett reminded the Board that they did not have a quorum in February, so they were not able put together a slate of candidates for the upcoming 2022-2023 year. Instead of putting together a slate, the Board will hold an election from the floor. There will be no a ballot, and it will be in an open session. Board members can nominate themselves.
* She reminds board members that those who are up for reappointment should be mindful of speaking to elected officials to support their reappointment request.

Ms. Jennifer Burnett opens the floor for nominations and elections:

* Election for Board Chair
  + Ms. Lisa Carter was nominated by Ms. Jennifer Burnett, and the nomination was seconded by Ms. Anne Burnett.
  + A roll call vote was held:
    - Votes in favor: Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Ms. Lisa Carter, Mr. Roberto Quinones, Mr. Nathan Sanford, Mr. Cord Cothren, Mr. Mark Buss, Ms. Anne Burnett, Dr. Art Evans, Mr. Michael Phillips, Ms. Sherri Jordan, Ms. Melany Stowe, Ms. Emma Ito, and Dr. Carole Nash
* Election for Board Vice Chair
  + Mr. Roberto Quinones was nominated by Ms. Jennifer Burnett, and the nomination was seconded by Mr. Mark Buss.
  + A roll call vote was held:
    - Votes in favor: Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Ms. Lisa Carter, Mr. Roberto Quinones, Mr. Nathan Sanford, Mr. Cord Cothren, Mr. Mark Buss, Ms. Anne Burnett, Dr. Art Evans, Mr. Michael Phillips, Ms. Sherri Jordan, Ms. Melany Stowe, Ms. Emma Ito, and Dr. Carole Nash
* Election for Board Treasurer
  + Mr. Cord Cothren was nominated by himself, and the nomination was seconded by Ms. Jennifer Burnett.
  + A roll call vote was held:
    - Votes in favor: Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Ms. Lisa Carter, Mr. Roberto Quinones, Mr. Nathan Sanford, Mr. Cord Cothren, Mr. Mark Buss, Ms. Anne Burnett, Dr. Art Evans, Mr. Michael Phillips, Ms. Sherri Jordan, Ms. Melany Stowe, Ms. Emma Ito, and Dr. Carole Nash
* Election for Board Secretary
  + Mr. Nathan Sanford was nominated by Ms. Jennifer Burnett, and the nomination was seconded by Mr. Cord Cothren.
  + A roll call vote was held:
    - Votes in favor: Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Ms. Lisa Carter, Mr. Roberto Quinones, Mr. Nathan Sanford, Mr. Cord Cothren, Mr. Mark Buss, Ms. Anne Burnett, Dr. Art Evans, Mr. Michael Phillips, Ms. Sherri Jordan, Ms. Melany Stowe, Ms. Emma Ito, and Dr. Carole Nash

Ms. Jennifer Burnett then thanked everyone for running, and reminded that this will take effect at the next meeting.

**Executive Session**

No executive session occurred.

**Announcements**

Ms. Jennifer Burnett thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting, and their future participation in the afternoon’s strategic planning sessions.

**Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Jennifer Burnett adjourned the meeting at 10:36 am.

Respectfully submitted,

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Nathan Sanford Jennifer Burnett

Secretary Chair