**Executive Director’s Board Report**



**13 August 2022**

**J. B. Keiper**

* VMNH finished FY 2021-2022 in the black, and the carryover was used to get payroll started for the current FY.
* We see a trend of increased visitation occurring, with a sustained increase in spending per visitor compared to historic numbers.
* The VMNH-Foundation excelled, with an increase in the Discovery fund of ~35%, memberships/corporate partnerships doubled in revenue, and two new grants have recently been obtained (Dinosaur Dig and upgrades to our STEM lab).
* The Endowment grew by 6% over last year, and the VMNH-Foundation plans to celebrate a $1 million milestone in the near future.
* The Museum’s for All program, sponsored by Hooker Furnishings, has been successful. EBT card holders can visit the museum or attend festivals free of charge, and over 1,000 people were served this way during the recent Dinosaur Festival alone.

Report on *Museum Without Walls 2020-2025*, and other initiatives of the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

***Enhancing our impact as Virginia’s only state institution mandated to investigate, preserve, and exhibit elements of natural history, as well as educate all citizens***

1. Establish three VMNH Research Centers

OVERVIEW: Combine labs to conceptually develop research centers to help market the high impact science conducted by VMNH curatorial staff.

* The new Assistant Curator of Herpetology, Dr. Arianna Kuhn, will start at VMNH this current quarter (October 1st).
* Bill Walsh of the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab was placed on full time permanent status with VMNH through a budget adjustment within our 2022-2023 appropriation.
* Staff have begun a search for a new research technician. The responsibilities will be 50% work in the new herpetology lab, and 50% work assisting Invertebrates and Mammals.

1. Rehab the Douglas Avenue building to support collections growth

OVERVIEW: The original museum building will receive a new roof and upgrades to electric, plumbing, and HVAC through Maintenance Reserve funds. The internal environment will be suitable for long-term storage needs of the curatorial staff.

* The new roof installation on Douglas Avenue, including new drainage spouts, was completed in July. A final inspection will occur.
* Staff will begin assessing other needs to assure a collections-quality environment, such as HVAC upgrades and plumbing upgrades. All projects will be paid for through maintenance reserve funds.

1. Obtain reaccreditation from the American Alliance of Museums

OVERVIEW: VMNH is due to apply for reaccreditation with AAM, which is the gold standard for best practices in collections care, service, and financial responsibility in 2025.

* The Board of Trustees has been informed, and an *ad hoc* Reaccreditation Committee will be formed in early 2023. Staff preparing initial work.
* Staff have worked for the past decade to counter the concerns of the last re-accreditation. In 2010, it was noted that only a small portion of the building accessible to public – since then we’ve added *Hahn Hall of Biodiversity*, *Hooker Furniture Discovery Reef*, *Wild Watersheds*, *Fossil Overlook*, *Ants: Farmers, Warriors, and Builders*. In addition, many more specimens and artifacts on display.
* The 2010 report by the visiting committee noted a major challenge for VMNH being its relatively small square footage available to the paying visitor. In addition to the exhibit galleries listed above, staff have:
  + Increased the density of items on exhibit throughout the museum
  + Added online content
  + Opened the behind-the-scenes areas during key festivals
  + Began work to install a pavilion at the rear of the building
* The visiting committee also noted that a diversity of revenues will be needed to reduce reliance on the annual appropriation for operations.

***Sustaining VMNH by enhancing draw and impact through expanded facilities that will impart high quality scientific information and nature-based experiences for all***

1. Create an early childhood activity and learning center

OVERVIEW: The Library space is an underutilized facility at VMNH, and with upgrades to Douglas Avenue it will be suitable for long-term storage of the library materials. An exhibit and activity space will be created that focuses on pre-K through 5th grade to support our youngest visitors.

* The museum’s funding request passed the Senate but not the House. Staff is resubmitting our request to fund this space.
* Staff are prepping the space to become a new exhibit area.

1. Build the Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion

OVERVIEW: A pavilion will be established behind the museum to connect visitors to the nearby J. Frank Wilson Park, and will support durable outdoor exhibits featuring lessons in forest ecology.

* We received and submitted all documents from the architect. DGS has greenlighted the hiring of a test lab which will assure quality of materials, soil compaction, and other considerations.
* The current stairs do not meet VA code requirements, and will be replaced through Maintenance Reserve Funds.

1. Explore the Treetop Canopy Walk concept

OVERVIEW: The concept of connecting the future Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion to J. Frank Wilson Park via a treetop canopy trail is being explored.

* Staff and trustees have communicated with two separate architects to learn about the process and challenges of building a Canopy Walkway.

1. Establish the first permanent branch campus of VMNH near the confluence of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Skyline Drive, and the Appalachian Trail

OVERVIEW: A Feasibility Study, Master Plan, and Capital Campaign Plan were all completed in 2015 to explore the concept of building a dedicated museum building next to Constitution Park in Waynesboro, VA. The City has committed $1 million in support of the project. This branch campus will draw from Shenandoah National Park and surrounding cities, giving VMNH access to new audiences and new revenue sources.

* The state’s Pre-Planning process for VMNH-Waynesboro was completed in 2019. VMNH has received funds for Detailed Design, and currently a Request for Proposals is active. Review of proposals will start 3 March 2022. James Madison University will serve as Construction Manager (MOU signed) through Detailed Design and the eventual build of the museum building.

Interviews were completed March 2022, and we developed a contract for Detailed Design and negotiated the pricing. DGS has the contract and once approved, we’ll sign and the work will begin.

The VMNH-Foundation currently has two members who live in the area of Waynesboro/Augusta County. They will form the core of a future *ad hoc* committee dedicated to drawing community support for the VMNH-W campus.

Other Opportunities

1. Updating our Starling Avenue facility using a federal grant offered through the VA Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy to enhance our energy use efficiency, and install renewable energy sources.
   * 1. Siemens began upgrades November 2021
     2. Upgrades will include:
        + A solar array to generate 30% of the museum’s electric needs
        + Replace about 1000 bulbs to ensure all lighting is LED
        + Upgrade the HVAC and chiller system to enhance efficiency
        + Installation of two EV chargers
        + ~$100,000 annual savings
        + 15 year pay back, but our electric costs will be fixed for that time period.
        + Through July 2022, the following work has been done:
          1. Replaced most lights with LEDs. Final switch outs will occur shortly.
          2. Insulation upgrades were added to the building.
          3. Upgrades in our HVAC were made and are ongoing.
          4. All solar panels are installed, and we await final inspections.
          5. The conduit for the EV chargers has been laid.
2. VMNH hosted its first ever *Wildlife Festival* which saw 750 guests in June 2022. The *Dinosaur Festival* in July 2022 ran over two days, and saw over 4,600 visitors. Revenues were well above expectations.
3. VMNH continues to be a community cornerstone. In addition to its normal operations:
   * 1. Supporting the *Move to Martinsville* initiative.
     2. Aided in the installation of a *Martinsville Seven* exhibit at the Fayette Area History Initiative.
     3. Supporting Martinsville’s Bee City USA status.
     4. Supporting the Uptown *Third Thursdays* arts and culture initiative.
4. VMNH Research and Collections successes
   * 1. The Great Wyoming Dinosaur Dig occurred in July 2022. More material of the sauropod at the dig site has been removed. Joe Keiper found a theropod tooth (while extracting rock around a fossil layer, he got a splinter in his finger. When we removed it, it was a small predatory dinosaur tooth).
     2. VMNH in partnership with Lynchburg University received a grant from NSF that will fund the Dinosaur Dig for 3 years and facilitate mentorships at VMNH.
     3. VMNH was approved for a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Studies to upgrade our STEM training lab.
     4. The Smith River Survey of Indian Sites has gone well, and yielded new information about dates of activity in this watershed.