**MINUTES**

**VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**Saturday, May 20th, 2023**

The one hundred thirty sixth meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Natural History was held at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, May 20, 2023, at the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

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| Trustees Present: | Ms. Lisa Carter, Chair  Mr. Cord Cothren, Treasurer  Dr. Art Evans  Ms. Sherri Jordan | Mr. Nathan Sanford, Secretary  Dr. Tom Benzing  Ms. Jennifer Burnett  Mr. Mark Buss | |
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| Trustees Participating Virtually, via Zoom: | Ms. Melany Stowe (Family)  Mr. Roberto Quinones, Vice-Chair (Distance Waver) | Dr. Carole Nash (Work)  Ms. Lauren Woodson (Work) |
| Trustees Absent: | Ms. Emma Ito  Dr. Makunda Abdul-Mbacke | Ms. Anne Axton Burnett | |
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| Staff Present: | Dr. Joe Keiper | Mr. Ryan Barber | |
|  | Mr. Jonathan Martin | Ms. Christy Deatherage | |
|  | Mr. Ben Williams  Ms. Mary Zell Galen  Dr. Arianna Kuhn | Mr. Zach Ryder (virtual)  Dr. Hayden Bassett  Mr. Marshall Boyd | |
|  |  |  | |
| Others Present: | Dr. DB Poli– VMNH Foundation Board of Directors  Ms. Cynthia Marquez- Office of the Attorney General (virtual) | | |

**Welcome and Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Lisa Carter, Chair. A roll call vote of trustees was held, and it was determined that there were eight members present, four virtual observers, and three absent, which did not establish a quorum; virtual attendees were informed they were only able to observe the meeting.

Ms. Cynthia Marquez, from the Office of the Attorney General, introduced herself. Additionally, Ms. Carter welcomed Dr. DB Poli, Dr. Arianna Kuhn, and Mr. Marshall Boyd to the meeting.

**Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Mark Buss moved that the minutes of the January 2023 Board meeting be approved, and Ms. Sherri Jordan seconded the motion. A voice call vote was held, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Chair’s Report**

Ms. Lisa Carter, Chair, presented a brief report:

She updated the Board on recent museum activities, including:

* VMNH selected a contractor for the Jean S. Adams Pavilion and construction will finish this year.
* VMNH hired their first Diversity Intern from Roanoke College, Savannah Brown.
* She cautioned the Board about attendance and reminded that the group has struggled to have a quorum.

**Staff Profile**

Ms. Carter introduced Dr. Arianna Kuhn, Assistant Curator of Herpetology, to highlight her experience working for VMNH:

* Dr. Kuhn comes from the American Museum of Natural History, and she highlighted her lab’s work in education and outreach programs.
* She is prioritizing expanding VMNH’s professional network, as well as growing and increasing visibility of the museum’s collections. She is also Expanding scientific research, both globally and in Virginia.

**Deep Dive**

Mr. Ryan Barber, Deputy Director, presented a deep dive on history of the VMNH Foundation endowment:

* While total amount of the endowment is not at the level as universities, VMNH has continued to make strong progress since FY15.
* All money managed by Stifel, and in April, the endowment had approximately $859,000.
* He explored the history of individual major donors to the fund.
* Ms. Lisa Carter: Asked question about investment principles, to protect endowment from stock market crashes. Ms. Carter requested to learn more about investment principles at future meetings.
  + Mr. Ryan Barber: Explained the VMNH-Foundation’s conservative approach. Dr. Joe Keiper: Spoke about the relationship with Stifel, and Joe explained that Foundation board requested making less aggressive investments.
* Ms. Lisa Carter requested to receive the VMNH-Foundation’s Investment Policy.

**Chair’s Report, Continued**

Dr. Joe Keiper updated the Board on the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab policy:

* Because of growing lab, VMNH needs this policy. VMNH’s founding documents of the museum support a research and collections global mission, and work beyond Virginia happens in many departments.
* Dr. Hayden Bassett: The policy creates a clear separation of work completed by state employees who are also members of the military reserves, as well as other policies on employing reservists.
* Dr. Carole Nash: Reminded the Board that, besides logistics, this policy is important because it is the future of the archaeological field. CHML is a model for organizations doing this type of archaeological work.
* Ms. Lisa Carter: Alerted of minor changes: Paragraph G needs an additional period. Paragraph F needs to change “they” to “VMNH.”

Dr. Art Evans moved to approve the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab policy, and Ms. Jennifer Burnett seconded the motion. A voice call vote was held, and the policy was approved unanimously with revisions.

Ms. Lisa Carter provided updates on the museum’s Annual Report:

* While museum has always completed an Annual Report, staff will be turning it into a more polished document this year.
* The report will be sent to governor, with cover letter, to governor sharing important updates.
* Mr. Mark Buss: BOT will receive the report before the August meeting and will vote on it by next meeting.
* Dr. Joe Keiper: The state deadline for submission of the report is in October.

**Nominating Committee Report**

Ms. Melany Stowe, Nominating Committee Chair, presented the report:

* The committee recommends the following Executive Committee leadership positions: Lisa Carter as Chair, Mark Buss as Vice Chair, Cord Cothren as Treasurer, Nathan Sanford as Secretary, and Jennifer Burnett as Past Chair.

Ms. Jennifer Burnett moved to approve the slate of officers, and Ms. Sherri Jordan seconded the motion. A voice call vote was held, and the slate was approved unanimously.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Mr. Cord Cothren, Finance Committee Chair, presented the report and information from the Profit and Loss Statement:

* Utility costs are higher because of installation work in the building, but earned revenue remains strong.
* Several research and education grants are in progress.
  + Mr. Ryan Barber: There is a large increase in grants, and Foundation works closely with staff to administer grants and provide grant framework.
* Thanked Mr. Ryan Barber for the presentation on the endowment.
* Wi-Fi upgrades are complete, and he recognized Dr. Art Evans and Mr. Ryan Barber for their advocacy.
* Ms. Lisa Carter asked why federal dollars were lower than expected. Mr. Jonathan Martin: Explained that the funds come from the Department of State, instead of being received by the VMNH-Foundation first.

Mr. Cord Cothren presented the budget for FY 2024:

* Ms. Lisa Carter: Asked, with new employees, how are the salaries are lower than for the 2023 year. Mr. Jonathan Martin: Explained that new employees are hired at base salary and have not received the annual 3% and 5% raises.
* Dr. Tom Benzing: Does the BOT vote to approve the budget, or do they just move to accept the budget? Dr. Joe Keiper: Explains that Board has right to change and vote to accept the budget.
* Mr. Nathan Sanford: Asked why budget numbers seem very closely matched up to actual expenses for prior year. Dr. Joe Keiper: VMNH tries to keep projections close to actual expenses. When he first came to the museum, the museum had a habit to change the lefthand column of the budget. Now, VMNH works off the current budget. Last year, VMNH overshot revenues. Additionally, it is disadvantageous from state’s perspective to lowball the budget.

Ms. Jennifer Burnett moved to accept the budget, and Mr. Mark Buss seconded the motion. A voice call vote was held, and the slate was approved with one abstention.

**Executive Director’s Report**

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

Most information will be provided in committee reports, but he presented several highlights:

* New Customer Relations Management (CRM) system for Foundation and box office. The system will now be able to offer recurring donations and will be launched at the next meeting. He introduced the Discovery Champion program and hopes for 100% participation in the next meeting.
  + Ms. Sherri Jordan: Asked who else program will go to? Mr. Jonathan Martin: It will be sent to 2000+ on mailing list and museum membership.
* VMNH is three years into the Museum Without Walls, 2020-2025 strategic plan. VMNH is much farther ahead on VMNH-Waynesboro and have made great progress on all accounts. The Board needs to start thinking about what next strategic plan looks like.
* AAM reaccreditation is one of the other points of strategic plan and will be submitting reaccreditation package in 2024. Staff is now working to update policies.
  + The committee will be chaired by Mr. Roberto Quinones, and Ms. Sherri Jordan, Dr. Phyllis Newbill, and Ms. Jennifer Thomas will serve on the committee. Every board member will have the opportunity to review.
* Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab: Had a security discussion at the January Board Meeting. Following the internet upgrades, CMHL now has their own private internet access. Dr. Hayden Bassett: following the audit, CHML increased levels of encryption and security.
  + Ms. Lisa Carter: Dominion Energy has a robust cyber security program. Offered any IT staff to help with any recommendations.
* Early Childhood Learning Center has been renamed the Young Explorers Center. Following completion of the Douglas Ave.’s building envelope, the library space will be emptied.
  + Mr. Ryan Barber: Working on grant opportunities and funding from state. Ms. Lisa Carter asked cost of center, and Mr. Jonathan Martin provided history of the budget.
  + Ms. Christy Deatherage: Looking at components to add showing the science in family-friendly way.
* Local historical society has broken ground on expansion project. VMNH will entering contract with them to complete the exhibition development and will use the funds earned from this project into the upgrades of the permanent exhibits. VMNH intends add bilingual labels to exhibits.
* Staff has done significant work to rebuild programs and visitation post-covid.
  + Dr. Tom Benzing: The Board has a history of having an exhibits committee, and asked to invite Ms. Bethany Fischer to the committee. Dr. Joe Keiper agreed to invite her to the education committee. Dr. Tom Benzing offered to serve on education sub-committee.
* Ms. Lisa Carter: Asked about Douglas Ave. upgrades, as VMNH is using maintenance reserve funds to cover costs. Is there any need to speed up process with additional funds? Mr. Jonathan Martin: Working to get money as quickly as possible, and it is approved in stages. Ms. Lisa Carters: Wants to discuss bringing in more money to this project and requested Board to consider finding additional funds.
  + Dr. Joe Keiper: It will take a large portion of next fiscal year to finish the building envelope. After that finishes, will use window units, and create a desirable collections storage for books. HVAC will be completed in Fiscal year 2025-2026. If VMNH can receive funds for capital funds improvement, the project will finish faster.
  + Dr. Art Evans: Asked about the current and future mission of Douglas Ave., and other possible goals. Dr. Joe Keiper offered to speak off-line about other usage. Ms. Lisa Carter requested the Board think strategically about opportunities.

**Development/Marketing Committee Report**

Mr. Ryan Barber, Deputy Director, presented the advancement report:

* Overall visitation and revenue are approaching pre-pandemic levels with a steady rise.
* Including Reptile Festival, VMNH is 33% over past revenue record and 21% over visitation records.
* New donor database, DonorSnap, will provide higher standards for donations,
* Increased partnerships supporting researchers and education programs with support from the Thurman Charitable Foundation and the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge.
* Science festivals has shown significant growth since identified as priority in 2017.
* Dino Festival in July and Bonez and Booz in October, and a lot of events in between.
* Will be publishing new edition of Experts in the Field and Annual Report, both can be used as a leave behind for future advocacy.
* Ms. Lisa Carter: Asked about festival revenues compared to galas/ golf tournament. Mr. Ryan Barber: VMNH receives higher donations to support festivals access for underserved audiences.
* The *Museums for All* program has increasing numbers. Will be looking for more grants this summer. Dr. Joe Keiper: High increase in attendance in Martinsville/ Henry County, which is allowing the museum to reach community.
* Mr. Roberto Quinones: Can VMNH Foundation be listed as a Facebook birthday fundraiser? Mr. Ryan Barber: Will follow up.

**Research and Collections Committee Report**

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

* Encouraged everyone to read report, including recent acquisitions and curatorial staff reports.
* Thanked Dr. Arianna Kuhn for the tour of her lab.
* Presented on report on the taxidermy collection.
  + Mr. Mark Buss and Ms. Lisa Carter: Complimented on the significant progress made.
  + Dr. Art Evans: thanked staff, especially Dr. Nancy Moncrief, for all work to complete the process.
* Updated Board on reaccreditation process, collections policy, and live animal policy. Staff has made many updates to the policy and had it vetted by state’s legal team. Requests Board members review policies and return to Mr. Ben Williams no later than July 13th. Dr. Art Evans and Dr. Nancy Moncrief will reconcile all comments and will present to Research and Collections Committee for approval at the August BOT meeting.
  + Mr. Roberto Quinones: Requested that for non-scientists, are there sections to focus on? Dr. Art Evans: Collections Policy is primarily ready, just needing proofreading. The Live Animal Policy is more open for reinterpretation and outside perspectives.
  + Mr. Roberto Quinones: Asked if Guatemalan artifacts finally were rehomed. Dr. Joe Keiper: Explained Dr. Bassett will transport them.
* Dr. Carole Nash: Spoke about building relationships with sovereign tribes in Virginia and encouraged VMNH to build a consultation policy with sovereign tribes. Dr. Joe Keiper: Requested example policy and will task archaeology team with creating one.

**Education and Public Programs Committee Report**

Ms. Christy Deatherage, Education Manager, presented the report in place of Mr. Nathan Sanford, Committee Chair:

* There has been decreased demand for virtual programs and increase demand for on-site programs.
* Additional scholarship opportunities are offered for fee-based programs.
* Have increased programs offered in Waynesboro area.
* Microscopy Lab is being used by Education Department with visiting school groups and has served over 800 students since the lab opened. Looking forward to developing more programming that corresponds with research happening on-site as the program is part of an IMLS grant.

**Facilities (Operations) Committee Report**

Dr. Tom Benzing, Facilities (Operations) Committee Chair, presented the report:

* Already heard about Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion
* Had not held a Facilities Committee meeting since last BOT meeting and have no additional updates.
* If the BOT wants to have a broader conversation about Douglas Ave., this committee can facilitate the conversation about additional funding for the project.

**Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Report**

Dr. Tom Benzing, Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Chair, presented the report:

* Committee has completed an extensive amount of work and will be providing list of names to fill committee vacancies. Staff has completed the work on Detailed Design phase.
* Significant outreach work, including Wayne Theatre Science Talks, has occurred. Recommends including Waynesboro work on Advancement report. All past science talks are on YouTube. Fall presentations will be on geology mapping, herpetology, and hawks.
* Strong turnout for Riverfest with over 3,500 attendees.
* Committee is watching state redistricting, as it can potentially impact the future of the project.
* Looking forward to hosting BOT in Staunton in November. It will provide an opportunity to visit the Waynesboro site.
* Thanked staff and thinks all museum work is reaping dividends. Good coverage and attendance for Office Hours.
* Dr. Joe Keiper: In addition to committee’s work, it has a growing mailing list of interested participants. He will be travelling with Mr. Jonathan Martin for a monthly management meeting in-person with governor’s team on Monday and will be sure to brief them on Waynesboro work.
* Dr. Carole Nash: Congratulated Dr. Tom Benzing on his retirement following a 30-year career in higher education.

**Strategic Planning Committee Report**

Mr. Roberto Quinones, Strategic Planning Committee chair, shared the report:

* The committee has struggled with attendance issues at meetings.
* Is working to identify what is next step museum needs to complete and areas of focus for the next strategic plan. The committee needs to determine what success looks like and how to measure it.
* Work to develop plan for the BOT to assess success, including using a SWOT analysis:
  + This plan will correspond with the Annual Report, which will also serve as a marketing piece for the museum.
  + Wants Board to consider the top three things doing well and the top three things that need improvement.
* Dr. Joe Keiper: Museum has outgrown its building, including creating offices in spaces not designed for offices and adding 3,000 sq ft of tent space for festivals. Would realistically need a minimum of 10,000 mission centric square feet (with additional space for HVAC). Would like for Board to spend some time thinking about it.
* Ms. Lisa Carter: asked if we have a BOT meeting focused on strategy. Dr. Joe Keiper offers to include at a future meeting.

**VMNH Foundation Report**

Dr. DB Poli, Foundation Representative, shared the report:

* Retired yesterday from Foundation Board and will need a replacement for next year.
* Strong numbers coming out of the pandemic and lot of energy coming into festivals. Hopefully new members of the Foundation will provide additional energy.
* Ms. Lisa Carter: Asked about the Foundation orientation, and Mr. Ryan Barber explained will occur June 13th.

**Announcements**

Dr. Art Evans: Welcomed Marshall and giving a shoutout to Dr. Joe Keiper for increasing support staff for curators. Limited support staff when Dr. Evans became a trustee and thanked VMNH for prioritizing support staff.

Dr. Joe Keiper: Came to this museum because of focus on collection. Also thanked Mr. Jonathan Martin for providing all fiscal support and building relationships with Richmond.

Ms. Mary Zell Galen: Requested that Board of Trustees submit all travel reimbursement forms and signed copies of the Collections Disclosure Policy. If need a new nametag or name plate, please contact VMNH. Additionally, please share thoughts with museum staff about interest in staying in an Airbnb instead of hotels for future meetings.

Ms. Jennifer Burnett: Asked about meeting date for August, and the meeting will be held virtually on Saturday, August 12th.

**Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Lisa Carter adjourned the meeting at 11:52 am.

Respectfully submitted,

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Nathan Sanford Lisa Carter

Secretary Chair