**Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Minutes**

**June 6, 2023 - 1:00 PM**

**Location: Waynesboro Economic Development Office**

**Attendance**

Present: Dr. Tom Benzing, Dr. Carole Nash, Maggie Van Huss, Jonathan Martin, Mary Zell Galen

Virtual: Mark Buss, Faye Cooper, Dr. Joe Keiper

Absent: Greg Hitchin, Len Poulin

I. Welcome Tom Benzing

Tom Benzing:

* Meeting does not have a quorum, so committee cannot vote take any action on the minutes, and virtual participants can only observe the meeting.

II. Detailed Design Update

1. Overview of next steps & funding Jonathan Martin

Jonathan Martin:

* All forms, drawings, and documents for Schematic Design were submitted to the state. This submission serves as the first major process and budget check of the project, and VMNH has about two more weeks of the design work in this phase.
* The second floor awning will count to 100% of square footage usage instead of 50%, because it’s not a form of egress. Several options to consider to resolve this issue.
* Capital Outlay-2 (CO2) review is underway and VMNH is working with Division of Engineering and Buildings (DEB) during this process. Currently, VMNH is correcting the official square footage with DEB.
* VMNH’s capital budget request is in process, as the deadline as moved from October to June. Additionally, the museum is requesting funding for the Young Explorers Center. Currently, VMNH is asking the budget analyst to approve the new budget total.
  + Carole Nash: Any concerns as the state budget not yet approved? Jonathan Martin: We are working on the next two year budget, and the current budget is approved, so there are no immediate concerns.
  + Tom Benzing: What year would VMNH receive the project funding? Jonathan Martin: Money will be received in phases throughout the upcoming fiscal year.
  + Carole Nash: When is the actual construction date? Jonathan Martin: As early as calendar year 2026.
  + Tom Benzing: Status on property transfer? Jonathan: The city/ state is agreeable to transfer it when VMNH requests it.
* Joe Keiper: VMNH has a plan with the parking situation going forward, as property isn’t large enough to include all the required parking spaces. Instead, we’ll be able to include local parking spaces in the total.
  + Carole Nash: Any need for the Board to support and promote the project? Jonathan Martin: Always, and could explore sending a letter in the fall of 2023 to the legislature, with a focus on the house and senate finance committee. This letter would ask for the continued support of the project.
  + Tom Benzing: Can we share current budget proposal? Jonathan Martin: Yes, once it’s submitted to the state.
  + Joe Keiper: VMNH has received questions about ongoing maintenance cost of property once it’s transferred over to the state. Once the project is transferred, VMNH will have increased maintenance reserve funds to care for the property. Jonathan Martin: Department of Real Estate Services will calculate the extra amount.
  + Carole Nash: Asked if City of Waynesboro has a stormwater tax. Maggie Van Huss: confirms the city does.
    - Carole Nash: How will that tax impact this facility? Tom Benzing: Believes Waynesboro’s donation includes utilities. Jonathan Martin: Will ask team about the specifics.

1. Continued work with Riggs Ward Joe Keiper

Joe Keiper:

* Mark Taliaferro proposed several dates to continue conversations about design, which will include staff and curatorial team. Wants to include both Tom Benzing and Carole Nash in all meetings, as they’re both content and project experts. Wants to also look at community partners for specific dates targeting their expertise.
* Mary Zell is also collecting the PowerPoint slides from past Wayne Theatre Speaker Series.
* Will send out the summer/ fall dates to the committee.

III. Lecture series prep 2023-2024 Tom Benzing

Tom Benzing:

* In prep for another lecture series season hosted by CCR and VMNH, along with the South River Science Coalition. Have committed to speakers for September (hawk watch), October (Arianna Kuhn on herpetology), and November (Matt Heller on geology). The series will take December off and resume in January.
* The committee talked about having a road show/ interactive lecture in the future, but still finalizing details.

1. Grant and other support Joe Keiper

Joe Keiper:

* VMNH received grant from the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge. VMNH did not get full amount requested and will use the money received for marketing the lecture series.
  + Tom Benzing: How will the museum use the money? Joe Keiper: The majority will go to Facebook ads and other online advertisements.

IV. Continuation of public open hours Tom Benzing

Tom Benzing:

* Will be holding hours on the third Friday of June. Having between 12-15 attendees each session.
* Created a survey about the project’s name and wants to discuss the survey with the group. Asked if they can change the name?
  + Jonathan Martin: The Architectural Review Board (ARB) and other entities will have to get it approved by the state.
  + Carole Nash: Asked if survey is a way to get response from visitors? Tom Benzing: Wants to have a name that people understand and concerned if word “history” misleads people.
    - Maggie Van Huss: Think the term “natural history” is alright.
  + Tom Benzing: Concerns with maintaining a regional focus with using the term “Waynesboro” in the name.
  + Carole Nash: Thinking about the logo, and how the traditional VMNH logo will factor into this facility. Wants to ensure that people are exposed to branding.
    - Joe Keiper: Cautioned group about limiting the geographic scope of the museum in the name. Additionally, the professional staff believes brand is strong and thinks team could continue to expand with tag line instead. Cautioned against following Science Museum of Virginia’s branding plan, and confusion with other museums.
  + Tom Benzing: Concerned if branding on Interstate would be confusing based on the name.
    - Joe Keiper: Suggested reaching out to marketing team to develop this plan further.

V. Open Discussion Tom Benzing

1. Continuation of advocacy
   * Newsletter
     + Tom Benzing: Asked number of subscribers. Mary Zell Galen: 742 individuals on mailing list.
2. Changing political landscape
   * Tom Benzing: While political landscape is shifting, everyone is still in office until January, so VMNH will still work with them.
3. Upcoming events
   * Tom Benzing/ Mary Zell Galen: Upcoming events include Grottos Cave Week event on 6/10, Blue Ridge Rising meeting on 6/13, Kline’s Ice Cream Event on 7/30, and Fall Foliage Fest on 10/14-15.
   * Tom Benzing: Attended Kate Collins Middle School event with the VMNH education team a few weeks ago.
   * Mary Zell Galen: Bus trip to VMNH from Waynesboro on Friday, June 30.
4. July 2023 WAC Meeting

* Joe Keiper: Proposed skipping July meeting since it occurs on July 4th, suggests instead providing WAC a written update.
* Tom Benzing: Next WAC meeting will be held virtually on August 1.

1. New committee members

* Joe Keiper: Currently working with several individuals to join the WAC but have not yet confirmed any new members.

VI. Old Business Tom Benzing

VII. Adjourn