**MINUTES**

**VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**November 20, 2021**

The one hundred thirtieth meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Natural History was held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, November 20, 2021, at the Virginia Museum of Natural History

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| Trustees Present: | Ms. Jennifer Burnett, Chair | Ms. Anne Burnett |
|  | Ms. Lisa Carter, Vice Chair | Dr. Art Evans |
|  | Dr. Carole Nash | Mr. Mark Buss |
|  | Mr. Cord Cothren |  |
|  |  |  |
| Trustees By Zoom & | Mr. Nathan Sanford, Secretary – COVID exposure | |
| Reasons: | Mr. Roberto Quinones, Treasurer – family/ caregiving | |
|  | Dr. Makunda Abdul-Mbacke – professional obligation | |
|  | Ms. Melany Stowe – family commitment | |
|  |  |  |
| Trustees Absent: | Dr. Tom Benzing |  |
|  | Mr. Michael Phillips |  |
| Staff Present: | Dr. Joe Keiper | Mr. Ryan Barber |
|  | Dr. Nancy Moncrief | Ms. Christy Deatherage |
|  | Ms. Mary Zell Galen | Mr. Jonathan Martin |
|  | Dr. Kal Ivanov  Mr. Zach Ryder, via Zoom | Mr. Ben Williams |
| Others Present: | Ms. Audrey Burges – Attorney General’s Office | |
|  | Ms. Joan Montgomery – VMNH Foundation Board of Directors | |

**Welcome and Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Jennifer Burnett, Chair. A roll call vote of trustees was held, and it was determined that there were seven members present which established a quorum. Additionally, Ryan Barber provided basic housekeeping information about the meeting’s hybrid setup.

**Approval of Minutes**

Lisa Carter moved that the minutes of the August 2021 Board meeting be approved, and Mark Buss seconded the motion. With no discussion, a roll call vote was held, and the motion unanimously passed.

**Chairman’s Report**

Jennifer Burnett presented a brief report and presented resolutions honoring two former board members. She offered a resolution to honor Siri Russell. Lisa Carter made a motion to approve the resolution. Carole Nash seconded the motion. With no discussion, a roll call was vote was held and the motion unanimously passed. She offered a second resolution to honor Faye Cooper. Carole Nash made a motion to approve the resolution. Cord Cothren seconded the motion. With no discussion, a roll call was vote was held and the motion unanimously passed.

Jennifer Burnett also thanked Joan Montgomery, of the VMNH Foundation Board of Directors, and Audrey Burges, of the Attorney General’s office, for attending the meeting.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Roberto Quinones, Treasurer, presented the report.

* Profit and Loss statement (information)

Roberto Quinones reported that the finance committee met in September, followed by a meeting with staff shortly before the board meeting. Many of VMNH’s upfront costs were paid at the beginning of the year, with several contractor deadlines coming soon. Additionally, funding was received for solar and energy improvements.

Joe Keiper provided further updates.

* VMNH continues to earn positive revenue numbers. The museum has received revenue from both the City of Martinsville and Henry County, but that funding will potentially change following the reversion of the city in 2023.

Jonathan Martin provided further updates.

* VMNH received a capital allocation to cover staff wage increase. VMNH also set a publication sales record from strategic statewide partnerships. The museum has also increased staff training and progressed on several capital projects.

Lisa Carter moved that the financial report be accepted; Anne Burnett seconded the motion. With no discussion, a roll call vote was held, and the motion unanimously passed.

**Executive Director’s Report**

Joe Keiper, Executive Director, noted that most information would be covered in the committee reports. He highlighted one area:

* While Martinsville’s reversion process timeline unclear, but the city is on the cusp of a renaissance with new businesses in Uptown and the industrial park. The Tad Space has provided a co-working space and population has increased with an influx of new residents. The Martinsville- Henry County Historical Society’s Cultural Heritage Center about the begin an expansion. These many changes provide opportunities for new corporate partners.

**Advancement Report**

Ryan Barber presented on VMNH’s visitation and revenue, showing a steady rise. Membership and Discovery Fund donations are up as the year ends. An ongoing membership campaign occurred this fall. A survey will be released in January to learn what benefits members’ value and new benefits that we can improve. He highlighted several other areas:

* Exhibition rentals will provide additional museum revenue.
  + Greenwood Museum in South Carolina has verbally committed to renting the Dinosaur Maze next summer.
* The Foundation has seen strong endowment growth, at 11%. The Foundation will also receive a pending estate gift will soon.
* Grants and corporate partnerships have benefited all areas of operation, from small education initiative to large scale capital projects.
  + The Science Outreach Initiative received $20,000 from the Patterson foundation.
  + Dragon Festival received grant funding and was a very successful, 2 day event.
  + Flight Festival coming to celebrate opening day for the Science of Flight exhibition in January.
    - Museum aims for a sweet spot 750 people, with a mask requirement .
    - In further discussion, Mr. Joe Keiper and Ms. Audrey Burgess provided further feedback about pandemic regulations.
* Historically, Groupon sales have served precursor to visitation. Sales are now strong and reaching pre-pandemic levels.
* The Museums-for-All program has continued to receive support from Hooker Furniture.
* VMNH’s Zip code data continues to remain strong, with visitors from 31 states and Mexico counted in first quarter of FY 2022.

**Facilities (Operations) Committee Report**

Jennifer Burnett, Facilities (Operations) Committee Chair, presented the report. She highlighted a few items on the report.

* She advertised for a chair for the committee and encouraged anyone interested to reach out to her.
* Jennifer Burnett and museums staff provided updates on major projects, including: ESCO, VMNH-W, Jean S. Adams Pavalion, and Douglas Ave.
  + Douglas Ave. Facility— Building will soon get a new roof, but progress is slow because of wait for roofing material (because of supply chain delays).
  + The Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion— Bids have come in. As there is a discrepancy between architect’s estimate and bids, VMNH has asked the architect to rectify that difference.
  + Energy Saving Project (ESCO)— VMNH has a preparatory meeting with Siemens. The work has begun and will finish in 8 months. The project will include solar panels, HVAC updates, and electric vehicle chargers.
  + VMNH-Waynesboro— Preparations have begun for future capital campaign. The museum will contract with James Madison University as the construction manager for the project.
* Joe Keiper added that Starling Ave. facility is 15 years old, but strategic uses of maintenance reserve funds has kept the building operational.

**Research and Collections Committee Report**

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

* The committee held a discussion about materials collected on federal agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management properties. These items, including the Petra fossil, are maintained as permanent loans, and not accessioned to the collection.
* The search for herpetologist going well. The position has received over 20 applicants, with hiring meetings beginning next week. An offer will be made by May.
* Updates to the DNA and Imaging Lab are going well.

Additionally, the Board vote appointment Dr. Bill Welsh as affiliated researcher. Carole Nash spoke firmly about his experiences. Art Evans introduced the motion; the motion did not require a second. With no further discussion, a roll call was vote was held and the motion unanimously passed.

**Development/Marketing Committee Report**

Roberto Quinones, Development/Marketing Committee Chair, presented the report.

* He said that most had been covered in other reports. In addition to the ESCO project, Siemens also sponsored museum activities, showing strong corporate relationships.
* He encouraged interaction on social media to share museum updates with 1-2 individuals in each of the trustees’ network.

Joe Keiper also mentioned Grapes and Grains, the annual fund/friend-raiser will return on April 24th, which is sponsored by the VMNH Foundation. Tickets will be given to trustees to sell/ buy them. Trustees are encouraged to donate auction items, especially experiences and small items, which typically sell well.

* Roberto Quinones requested a save-the-date and request for auction items.

Ryan Barber is working with curators and educators on several large grants, including an IMLS grant.

Several questions were raised if VMNH is eligible for funding from infrastructure package.

* Staff will pose this question to Greg Hitchin, the Director of Economic Development for Waynesboro, as well as the equivalent offices in Martinsville.
* Carole Nash provided further information about funding for research and infrastructure needs.
* Roberto Quinones asked about funding the charging stations, however the Department of Environmental Quality donated them, and they will serve as revenue generators.

**Education and Public Programs Committee Report**

Cord Cothren, Education Committee Chair, presented the report.

* He highlighted program numbers at the museum between July through September. The museum had strong visitation from Bug Day event.
* VMNH received several new educational grants, as many old grants will end in September. They earned a new grant from Monogram Loves Kids Foundation to sponsor 112 programs. The Siemens Empower Grant for $7000 also provided funding for supplies for renewable energy programs

Christy Deatherage reported on hydroponic growing units. Home School Academy students are growing two varieties of lettuce and one variety of basil. The students will transplant them in December. The units came from Hyve out of Verona, VA, which were sold the VMNH at a beneficial rate.

**Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Report**

Carole Nash, Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Chair, presented the report.

* She explained the need new chair for Waynesboro Advocacy Committee, as Faye Cooper elected not to continue for a second term.

Joe Keiper shared further updates about the project’s progress and budget.

* The committee is on hiatus, and instead was divided into five different working groups (visitor services, building design, exhibits, science lab/ classroom/ green technology, and landscaping) to better understand needs for building to share with A&E firm.
* Staff recently had a meeting with the Department of Planning and Budgets (DPB). No detailed planning projects have currently moved forward. The VMNH-W is waiting on its last approval is from DPB director, should receive it soon. DBP provided staff roadmap to begin in construction pool in 2023.
* He answered questions about changes in administration in Richmond, with concern if the project will stay on track. He explained the most influential staff are on house and senate money committees, which operates with a high level of consistency.
* Joe Keiper answered further questions about landscape design meeting. He shared other updates, creating a geological timeline walkway with suggestions from the Department of Energy. Art Evans spoke for the need for coating of the building to prevent bird strike.
* Jonathan Martin provided further clarification about funding process and land transfer of the Waynesboro property to the state.

**University Partnerships Committee**

Joe Keiper provided a brief report.

* The committee has not met, but instead the museum has focused how they better integrate themselves into universities and their ability to absorb funds.
* VMNH has three strong partnerships:
  + Working with James Madison University construction managers for the Waynesboro project.
  + Partnering with University of Florida, University of Oregon, and Howard University for a National Science Foundation grant to develop outreach programs and a traveling exhibit about fossils.
  + Teaming together with Virginia Tech and Roanoke College about research on critical zones for a future exhibit at VMNH-W.

Joe Keiper then suggested to dissolve the committee at the pleasure of the board chair.

**Strategic Planning Committee Report**

Lisa Carter, Strategic Planning Committee Chair, presented a report.

* She spoke about the committee’s last meeting in September, and explained the need of new members for committee.
* She briefly discussed DEI initiatives. While it first falls under the Strategic Planning Committee, she reminder the group that it was the entire board’s mission.
* A Board Retreat is currently scheduled for May 21st to update and review the strategic plan. Locations considered include the Rice Center.
  + Carole Nash suggested James Madison University has completed renovations on the Hooke House.

**Executive Session**

No executive session occurred.

**Announcements**

Jennifer Burnett reminded the group that the next board meeting coincides when the General Assembly’s session. The group will meet at Dominion Energy for the full board meeting.

* Lisa Carter will ask Dominion’s lobbyist for suggested dates, and everyone was encouraged to research the best time to attend the assembly.
* The meeting will be scheduled by mid-December. Museum staff also need to determine a leave-behind for the General Assembly.

Mary Zell Galen reminded the board of several housekeeping updates, and encourages the board to reach out if they need an official ID card photo or vaccine forms.

**Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the Board, Jennifer Burnett adjourned the meeting at 11:49 am.

Respectfully submitted,

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Nathan Sanford Jennifer Burnett

Secretary Chair