

**VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH AND COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**  
May 20, 2022

Present at the meeting were Dr. Art Evans, Dr. Tom Benzing, Mark Buss, Lisa Carter, Melany Stowe, Dr. Carole Nash, Dr. Hayden Bassett, and Mary Zell Galen.

Committee Chairman Dr. Art Evans called the meeting to order. The minutes were unanimously approved. The full committee signed off on the museum's recent acquisitions.

Dr. Art Evans asked Dr. Hayden Bassett if he could discuss recent activities in his department. Dr. Bassett said that due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, much of his department's focus has revolved around the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab (CHML). Dr. Bassett said that the CHML has grown significantly in the last several months and it is now working directly with several stakeholders and partners to monitor damage to Ukraine in real-time. These stakeholders include the Department of State, which the CHML will be working with to document human rights violations abroad. Another stakeholder is the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture, and over the past few weeks, Dr. Bassett said the CHML has been meeting virtually with Ukraine's Minister of Culture as well as his staff. Dr. Bassett said that even if the war in Ukraine were to end next month, the work his team is doing with the CHML in Ukraine will continue for years to come.

Melany Stowe asked Dr. Bassett if anyone else was doing the sort of work that the CHML is doing. Dr. Bassett said other entities were doing parallel activities, but the types of work CHML is doing by working directly with Ukraine and other government agencies is unique.

Lisa Carter asked if it was possible that Russia was monitoring the work that the CHML is doing in Ukraine. Dr. Bassett said he has no evidence that they are but feels as though it's extremely likely. Dr. Bassett added that the CHML strives to be completely objective, simply reporting on impacts rather than attributing those impacts to anyone. Dr. Bassett added that the CHML has attracted the attention of such news agencies as New York Times, Washington Post, Washington Journal, PBS Newshour, BBC, The Guardian, The Telegraph, and others.

Dr. Carole Nash said she appreciated the fact that the CHML's efforts are expanding the concept of what a museum is and what it does. Dr. Bassett said that in the future, it may be possible to use the groundwork of the CHML to establish a biological equivalent that would monitor habitat loss.

The committee supported the nominations of Dr. Derek Hennen and Dr. Julian J. Lewis as Research Associates. The committee also supported the renewals of the following

Research Associates: Dr. Robert Bodnar, Dr. Art Evans, Dr. Carole Nash, Dr. Tom Benzing, William Henika, Dr. Cynthia Liutkus-Pierce, Dr. Sterling Nesbitt, Dr. John Pagels, Dr. DB Poli, and Dr. William Schmachtenberg.

Dr. Tom Benzing mentioned that a herpetologist named Michael Hayslett had expressed interest in becoming a Research Associate. Dr. Art Evans suggested that Hayslett reach out to Dr. Arianna Kuhn once she starts her new position as VMNH Assistant Curator of Herpetology in the fall.

Dr. Hayden Bassett said that he's excited about the VMNHcast, the new podcast hosted by Administrator of Science Ben Williams, and encouraged the board to listen to it.

Dr. Carole Nash said that several archaeologists, some of them quite significant, have asked to donate their collections to VMNH. This is not always possible due to space limitations. Dr. Nash said that until more collections space is available at the museum, she has offered to take these donations to Mountain Valley Archaeology. Dr. Hayden Bassett said that he's on board with the plan, although he would like direction from the board as to how many of these requests the museum should take on, adding that we're probably 3-5 years from the Douglas Avenue collections storage being ready. Bassett also added that the collection of Guatemalan artifacts the museum possesses will soon be returned to Guatemala.

Dr. Art Evans adjourned the meeting.