WAYNESBORO ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING

2 March 2021

1:00PM via Zoom

AGENDA WITH MINUTES

Attending: Faye Cooper (chair), Tom Benzing, Carole Nash, Siri Russell, Len Poulin, Gene Smith, Greg Hitchin, Maggie VanHuss; *ex officio* Joe Keiper, Ryan Barber, Jonathan Martin.

I. Welcome

I. Review of progress to date (from last BOT meeting)

* Keiper reviewed 3 points from the February report in support of the meeting of the Board of Trustees:
  + A roundtable of experts to discuss potential themes of the geological and hydrological exhibits at VMNH-W is being planned. Tom Benzing has made contact with the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy and we will meet with them as they have some outreach desires.
  + The Wayne Theatre lecture series is progressing, with the next talk 16 March 2021.
  + Ryan Barber noted that a 1 May 2021 drive through show “Treasures from the Vault” will take place in Waynesboro. Greg Hitchin will make the connection with Parks and Recreation.

II. Legislative overview - where do we stand?

* Jonathan Martin noted we are in the budget still for VMNH-W, and the legislature has moved more funding into the detailed design efforts. The Governor will review the proposed budget 7 April 2021.
* Tom Benzing said that the WAC will serve an advisory role to the staff during selection of the detailed planning firm (pending release of funds on July 1) and represent the interests of the full board in that capacity. This will be included in the Committee report to the full board in May 2021.
* The approximate timeline, if funding approved, is July 2021-December 2022 detailed planning. If VMNH moved to the Capitol Pool, then funding to create construction documents may be available 1 July 2023. Construction is estimated at about 2 years.
* Dr. Benzing also noted that he is sharing an article that talks about future museum design in light of the pandemic.

III. Proposed roundtable on diversity, with application to VMNH-W exhibits

* A thorough discussion ensued as to how to ensure proper representation of input into VMNH-W exhibits, as well as inclusivity of all citizens who will benefit from the establishment of the campus:
  + Exhibits
    - Siri Russell and Len Poulin discussed that connections with the Monacan Nation can be helpful. Carole Nash noted that due to their recent status as a nationally recognized tribe, their time may be limited, but they are normally willing to help efforts such as this.
    - Carole Nash noted she can help with connecting with Vicky Ferguson, an interpreter at Natural Bridge State Park. She noted their sense of place is not the Shenandoah Valley, but the Blue Ridge and Piedmont VA. She will provide a document to help.
  + Inclusivity
    - A discussion of inclusivity was suggested by Siri Russell to be a separate conversation from exhibit content. There was broad agreement with this.
    - Len Poulin noted past conversations within the community that leads to the question “how do we reach the community of color representing 30% of the Waynesboro population?”
    - Faye Cooper and Len Poulin noted we need to be careful not to be tone-deaf in our messaging, and that community engagement conversations can be helpful.
    - Tom Benzing noted these topics were a recent charge of the Board of Trustees’ Strategic Planning Committee, and they should discuss this and bring recommendations to the Waynesboro Advocacy Committee.
    - Greg Hitchin asked if our perception was that we have not reached the full potential of our audience yet, and have we heard from everyone. Faye Cooper asked how we can raise more broad public awareness, and Len Poulin suggested doing this with small conversations.
    - Faye Cooper noted that further work on inclusivity will be in the best interest of our work.

IV. Old business

* Faye Cooper asked Joe Keiper to give an update on the VMNH-Foundation board, and how we might proceed to engage more supporters on a proposed ‘advisory board’ for the VMNH-W Campus. Keiper noted that the initial suggestion of perhaps a 9-person advisory board, chaired by an active VMNH-Foundation Director, can act in the capacity to make connections and otherwise help with philanthropy when a capital campaign is launched. The conversation will be revisited with the Foundation Board.

Faye Cooper adjourned the meeting at 2:25PM.