

MINUTES
VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
August 15th, 2020

The one hundred twenty-sixth meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Natural History was held at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, August 15th, 2020, and hosted by the museum via a *Zoom Conference* during the Governor’s Emergency Declaration related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Trustees Present: Tom Benzing, Chairman Art Evans, Vice-Chairman
 Nathan Sanford, Secretary Makunda Abdul-Mbacke
 Faye Cooper Cord Cothren
 Barry Dorsey Lisa Moerner
Carole Nash Michael Phillips
Roberto Quinones Siri Russell

Trustees Absent: Jennifer Burnett, Treasurer
 Melany Stowe

Staff Present: Joe Keiper Jonathan Martin
 Christy Deatherage Ryan Barber
 Zach Ryder Hayden Bassett
 Adam Pritchard Kal Ivanov

Others Present: Audrey Burgess – Attorney General’s Office

With twelve (12) members of the Board of Trustees present, a quorum was established.

Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by the Chairman. With no changes to be made to the June 20, 2020 Minutes, the Minutes were approved.

Chairman’s Report

Tom Benzing presented the Chairman’s Report.

- Dr. Benzing specifically noted the staff efforts to create creative content for our audiences to engage them during the pandemic. He encouraged that the museum continues this line of effort following the current pandemic.

- Dr. Benzing urged VMNH BOT committee chairs to keep their committees active in between full board meetings. This will help engage newer members. He reminded all to follow all Freedom of Information Act guidelines.

Treasurer's Report

Jennifer Burnett was absent, but appointed Secretary Nathan Sanford to present the Treasurer's Report.

- FY 2019-2020 ended well despite having lost over a quarter of the year due to the emergency declaration.
- Attendance revenue was at 102% of goal.
- Restricted gifts were only at 19% as there is still a substantial amount of funds in VMNH-Foundation slated for the Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion.
- Clarification was made on the federal funds, which involves full reimbursement for project expenditures for the rock core collection move, rehousing, and cataloging.
- Total operating expenses concluded with a \$400,000 surplus, mainly due to supplies, maintenance, utilities, and travel.
- Dr. Benzing encouraged that staff still attempt to gain access to professional development activities during a period when gatherings and travel are limited.

Executive Director's Report

Joe Keiper presented the Executive Director's Report.

- Keiper informed the board of the full response of VMNH to the pandemic and Emergency Declaration. This included virtual resource development, limited opening days, and an upcoming membership drive. He noted that the General Assembly reconvenes 18 August 2020, after which we may have a clearer picture of Virginia's revenue projections.
- Keiper reminded the board that last FY was not lost as much was accomplished. This included successful family science festivals, the hiring of Dr. Hayden Bassett, the opening of *Wild About Cats*, completion of VMNH-Waynesboro Campus preplanning and successful addition to the state budget for detailed planning, and the completion of an ambitious strategic plan for 2020-2025.
- Ryan Barber presented the Advancement Report, which indicates we finished the year in good shape, although the Thomas Jefferson Awards Ceremony and Grapes and Grains gala have been postponed. Demographics indicate we are getting strong visitation from outside of Henry County.
- Dr. Barry Dorsey inquired about the availability of the updated marketing and advancement plan, and Barber indicated it will be available for the full board later this summer.

Nominating Committee Report

No action was required by this committee.

Strategic Planning Committee Report

No action was required by this committee.

Waynesboro Advocacy Committee

Faye Cooper presented the Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Report.

- The WAC has worked towards convening stakeholder groups to develop input on the VMNH-W exhibit narrative.
- Using the remainder of the preplanning funding, staff is pursuing the production of short promotional videos of where we stand and future work.
- Ms. Cooper gave an overview of the Wayne Theatre Lecture Series starting in September.
- Staff and the WAC are in the initial plans of bringing the VMNH drive-through dinosaur show to Downtown Waynesboro.

Research and Collections Committee Report

Art Evans presented the Research and Collections Committee Report.

- Dr. Evans gave an overview of the publications and other products produced by the curatorial staff.
- Dr. Evans reported that the first nine-banded armadillo specimens have been recovered in Virginia.
- *Ben in Nature* and other online media produced by staff scientists was described.
- Dr. Evans introduced Dr. Hayden Bassett, who will begin work at VMNH later this month. Dr. Bassett described his initial work that will begin after he arrives.

Education Committee Report

Cord Cothren presented the Education Committee Report.

- Cord Cothren noted that a \$20,000 Patterson Foundation grant will in part help the education team develop virtual resources.
- The educators all participated recently in a Smithsonian Affiliates professional development program.
- The efficacy and numbers served by the drive-through shows was discussed.

- The new trout tank is being installed in *Wild Watersheds* and will be accompanied by interpretive materials.

New Business

- No new business was discussed

Announcements

- The next board meeting will be held on November 21st, 2020, with the venue and/or format to be determined.
- With no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m., with a motion from Art Evans and a second from Lisa Moerner. The vote in favor to adjourn was unanimous and overwhelmingly enthusiastic.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan Sanford
Secretary

Thomas R. Benzing, Ph.D.
Chairman