**Waynesboro Advocacy Committee**

Virginia Museum of Natural History

1 November 2022, 1:00 PM at the Waynesboro Economic Development Office

Attendance:

In-Person: Len Poulin (VMNH Foundation), Ryan Barber (VMNH), Mary Zell Galen (VMNH), Jonathan Martin (VMNH)

Virtual: Mark Buss (BOT), Carole Nash (BOT), Tom Benzing (BOT), Maggie Van Huss (community), Greg Hitchin (City of Waynesboro), Faye Cooper (community)

I. Welcome

II. Update on activities

Tom Benzing shared multiple updates:

* Joe Keiper is absent this month, as he’s currently presenting to the Garden Club
* He reported on his recent Office Hours at the Waynesboro Library, where he spoke with Councilman Hostetter, Jenna Konizer, Mary Shoemaker, and more. Everyone was excited to see the draft of the design as this point, and Tom is looking forward to holding it again in the future with new progress in the design.

Jonathan Martin shared additional updates:

* He shared about the three general meetings hosted by the Waynesboro Advocacy Committee with Tom Benzing and Joe Keiper, which provided updates to the Board of Trustees about the concept design state. They were a strong success to update the board on the design progress for all the parties interested.

a. Detailed Design update

Jonathan Martin shared the progress on Detailed Design:

* He presented the recent work with Glave Holmes & Vernor Johnson, including the final concept design presentation. He invited comments, with the intent the share them with Jaclyn Miller and the Glave and Holmes team.
	+ Aerial Images
		- Tom Benzing reported on the parking spaces in the lot, following up on concerns about parking. The lot currently has 177 spots.
		- Tom Benzing also reported on the viewshed images he recently took from the Fire Department, which he sent to the team.
	+ First level blueprints
		- Len Poulin asked about handicap accessibility, and Jonathan Martin explained that it was still too early to address those concerns.
		- Carole Nash asked about how the building will be fireproof to ensure the protection of the collection, and Ryan Barber explained that collections storage will be minimal in the building, but specialized protection is planned. Jonathan Martin explained that nearly all items in the building will be on display, but he will ask the engineering firm for more information about this questions.
	+ Second level blueprints
		- Len Poulin suggested incorporating a multi-level display like at the Udzar-Hazy Center in Chantilly.
		- Tom Benzing suggested modeling the multilevel display components after the Harvard Museum of Natural History’s display of ancient whales. He also suggested that the Natural History Museum of New Mexico has comparable displays.
		- Carole Nash and Len Poulin both spoke about the North Carolina Aquarium, which displayed ecological change over time with a good visitor flow.
		- Tom Benzing asked about the early childhood learning area, and Jonathan Martin explained that it was too soon to include it in the blueprints, and specifics about it will be added in the spring. It will be covered by the exhibit design firm.
		- Tom Benzing asked why the lab space had shifted for the first floor, and Jonathan Martin explained that it was easier for all the building systems to fit. Glave and Holmes have been asked about it, and more information is to follow.
		- Tom Benzing asked about the decrease in restrooms from the first design, and Jonathan Martin explained they were consolidated to have fewer, larger restrooms.
		- Ryan Barber followed up explaining that the storage was moved to the other side of the building to maximize the viewshed, which Rom Benzing agreed with.
	+ Primary exterior renderings
		- Jonathan Martin explained the increase of windows and the steps moving forward.
		- Ryan Barber explained the reflexivity of the building’s exterior, and how it’s being assessed to assure it doesn’t impact drivers entering Waynesboro from the east.
	+ Renderings of four building sides
		- Jonathan Martin explained the living wall, and Tom Benzing emphasized the challenges of caring for living plants.
		- Ryan Barber explained that other solutions, including banners, could break up the wall.
		- Carole Nash asked about the building’s potential environmental certification. Jonathan Martin explained the building will be VEST certified, which is the state’ equivalent of LEED Silver.
	+ Top renderings of exterior
		- Tom Benzing explained that the outdoor areas on the roof could be nice for future events.
		- Len Poulin reminded the group that the South River Preserve has parking built into it, and encouraged the two organizations to partner on the parking issue.
		- Greg Hitchin shared information about parking, including that his office is working on identifying the amount of available parking in Waynesboro. The past parking study is out of date.
		- Tom Benzing encouraged the group to consider how visitors will approach the museum from different pathways, including the South River Preserve.
		- Jonathan Martin explained that the current plan is likely to change, including the ramp and potential parking spots.
	+ Exterior façade renderings
		- Ryan Barber explained that the building will be viewed from all sides, and that there’s no formal front and back.
		- Jonathan Martin explained that skylights have appeared in the design, which can potentially be costly. Len Poulin supported that the current design matched the architecture of the area.
		- Tom Benzing reminded the group that the increased windows also add to the risk of bird strikes on the building.
		- Carole Nash requested to know how the building would look in winter (and other seasons), to ensure the building will still match the area in fall and winter. She requested to see renderings in all four seasons. She reminded the group the area sees lots of change seasonally.
		- Faye Cooper asked about the building’s materials, and Jonathan Martin explained the various brick and colored aluminum panels.
		- Len Poulin asked about what the outdoor space could be used for on the second floor, and Jonathan Martin explained the area remained flexible, but would potentially be additional event space.
	+ Final remarks
		- Tom Benzing requested another poster board with the new designs before his next Office Hours session at the library.
		- Len Poulin asked about reaching out the newspaper with new designs, but Jonathan Martin encouraged waiting until after the upcoming meeting with the Department of Planning and Budgets.
* Jonathan Martin then explained the next steps of the process:
	+ Division of Engineering and Budgets (DEB) discussion
		- On Monday 11/7, Joe Keiper and Jonathan Martin will meet with DEB along with architecture group. This will provide the team with another feel for design of building, children’s area, parking rules, etc.
		- Len Poulin asked about meeting’s objective, and Jonathan Martin explained it to allow VMNH to progress into schematic design. Len Poulin asked what if DEB says it’s horrible, and Jonathan explained Martin it will just be to update DEB (including potentially removal of areas), but the building’s square footage and parking will remain the same.
	+ Jonathan Martin explain the next steps to receive a cost estimate:
		- Len Poulin asked follow up questions, and Jonathan Martin explained the cost estimate was presented in September. In January, VMNH will have number to take to the General Assembly (if budget office is ready for it). Several follow ups were asked about the budget process, and Jonathan Martin explained the building is already in budget and will not require any additional legislation.

b. Lecture Series

Len Poulin shared the upcoming information

* The next lecture will be on 15 November at 7:00pm at the Wayne Theatre.
* He requested to review the schedule, as this is the last lecture for this year, but the series will continue in 2023.

III. Carter Proposal

* Any follow-up discussion?

Tom Benzing reviewed the conversation about the Carter Proposal:

* He reviewed the proposal and he thinks it’s worth our money to invest in it, and he believes VMNH needs a team to take the lead on the project.
* He asked for any reservations about making a recommendation to the full Board to recommend it. He is perfectly happy, on behalf of the committee, to make the recommendation. Mark Buss supports the plan.
* He suggested that we have some assurances from the contract to ensure fundraising goal are met, and that VMNH is relying on the firm’s experiences. He also liked the second fundraiser added to the project, in addition to Ted Sudol.

Len Poulin provided additional comments about the proposal:

* He is very comfortable with it, and didn’t feel it was that different from the same firm’s proposal 6-7 years ago. He also reminded the group that funding for this initiative comes from private fundraising for this project, not the VMNH’s general budget.
* He wanted to know what happens if the project is not successful? What kind of assurance does VMNH have that the project will succeed? He feels like VMNH needs iterations to the contract to ensure funds are raised.

Carole Nash provided further feedback:

* She wants to ensure that the timeline still works for the project. Ryan Barber assured that the timeline’s flexible based on when we begin the process.

Mark Buss provided feedback

* He requested that the WAC look at the pitch from the firm, so ensure the final plan matches the committee’s needs and to put their spin on it.

Greg Hitchin also supports using the proposal.

IV. Other

* Fall Foliage Festival
	+ Len Poulin asked questions and received updates about attendance, participation, and other activities from the festival.
* Upcoming and recent presentations (Arts Club, Garden Club, AARP)
* Successful gathering of email address

V. Open discussion

Jonathan Martin reminded that more information will come after DEB meeting.

Mark Buss thanked staff for all their efforts on the project.

VI. Next meeting, 6 December 2022

VII. Adjourn