**WAYNESBORO ADVOCACY COMMITTEE**

VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

October 3, 2023 at Waynesboro Economic Development Office

Present: Tom Benzing, Mark Buss, Maggie Van Huss, Faye Cooper, Greg Hitchin, Joe Keiper, Mary Zell Galen

Absent: LeAnn Binger, Carole Nash

Virtual: Len Poulin, Ryan Barber

1. Welcome
2. Approval of past meeting minutes

Tom Benzing:

* Requested an approval of the September meeting minutes.
  + Len Poulin made the motion, and Mark Buss seconded it.

1. Status of Detailed Design

Joe Keiper:

* 1. Exhibit meetings hosted by Riggs-Ward
     1. Previously held: Geology/hydrology, archaeology, and paleontology
     2. Upcoming meeting on October 13th: Organismal biology
     3. Fish working group: VMNH will host a separate meeting with John Ross and other community fish experts, as stories about fish will make up an important focus of the exhibit

1. Funding Update

Joe Keiper:

* 1. Status of current Commonwealth FY budget: budget was approved.
     + Faye Cooper: Asked if funding for project was in state budget. Joe Keiper: Money is in the legislation, but VMNH does not have money in hand. Negotiations and budget adjustments ongoing for next biennial budgets
     + Greg Hitchin: Where does money sit? Joe Keiper: Money is currently in the Department of Planning and Budgets, and they fund government operations as they receive funding.
     + Len Poulin: Asked if it’s a cash flow issue? Joe Keiper: From VMNH’s viewpoint, that’s what it looks like. Some projects are funded and not others as they receive funds. Budget analyst has assured VMNH not to worry.
     + Faye Cooper: Asked about contractors progress on museum design? Joe Keiper: In contract, VMNH will put clause to put pause on project if does not receive funding.
     + Tom Benzing: Asked about funding for design meetings. Joe Keiper: Riggs Ward is not currently charging for the design meetings, as they understand the state process.
     + Joe Keiper: The current museum budget is fine and there aren’t any issues that will interfere with regular work. The General Assembly will debate over this upcoming budget in January/ February.
  2. Detailed Design Dollars: Still up in the air when VMNH will receive funding,

1. Results of 7 September 2023 meetings

Tom Benzing:

* Occurred immediately after last WAC meeting, and thought the meeting went well. Had strong audience, even though Governor didn’t make it into the meeting. Several legislative assistants and deputies attended representing the Commonwealth, Delegate Campbell and her legislative assistant attended, and representatives from the City of Waynesboro.
* Delegate Campbell will be moving to Waynesboro, and was very enthusiastic about the project.
  + Greg Hitchin: Meeting went well, and the finance team really got VMNH’s message.
    - Joe Keiper: Finance team also attends the Monthly Management Review (MMR) and is familiar with the project
  + Greg Hitchin: Will focus on to complete the project now, as costs will go up over time.
  + Joe Keiper: Based on his experience with the state, he will not be surprised if the project gets up into the construction pool with no money attached. While that means the money will not be received immediately but will further continue the project.
  1. Chmura Report results and other updates

Tom Benzing:

* Closely reviewed the report, and provided statistics based on economic growth for both construction and long-term impact. These statistics are helpful to have when speaking about the project. Developed summary of Chmura report, and will share with the committee in the minutes.
  + Joe Keiper: Based on the 4.2 million economic impact, there is a 7-8 year return on investment.
  + Joe Keiper: Asked about visitation at Blue Ridge Tunnel and shared its averaging 80,000 visitors a year.
    - Faye Cooper: asked how data is collected? Greg Hitchin: Tunnel has a counter to calculate data.
  + Joe Keiper: Huge increase in area cultural resources since initial data analysis.
  + Len Poulin: Has there been any follow up since the meeting? Joe Keiper: No change, but wants to compliment this administration for their support. Government moves slowly and doesn’t think we’ll get a formal response.
  + Len Poulin: Any feel for upcoming capital budgets and what the priorities are for? Joe Keiper: Everyone in Detailed Design got partial funding and everyone is waiting for remaining funds. There are also some projects that are brand new and received funding.
  + Len Poulin: In June, governor put a moratorium on new buildings. Do you think governor will be able to make an exception? Joe Keiper: Don’t have any feel on that and doesn’t think we’ll hear a formal update. Does not think we’ll hear anything until December 5th.
    - Joe Keiper: The administration has pushed up many fiscal deadlines this year.
  + Joe Keiper: Spoke to a number of people in the community, who has reached out to their delegates.

1. Community Connections

Tom Benzing:

* There is an exhibit trailer from the VMFA, and Senator Hanger is proposing transferring it to VMNH. The trailer can be transferred to Waynesboro and serve as a temporary exhibit.
  + Joe Keiper: Have several simple, but effective exhibits. Will need to have access to power and will work that out with the city.

Other Upcoming Events:

* 1. Wayne Theatre Lecture Series: On 10/17, Arianna Kuhn will be giving the lecture. Joe will be giving the introduction and Jenna Konizer and the other team members will arrange a dinner.
     + Len Poulin: Can arrange a meeting with Steve Landis that day as well.
     + Tom Benzing: First talk of the year, about the hawk watch, had over 70 speakers and 100 online.
     + Tom Benzing: After this month, will have Matt Heller speak about geology and will be highlighting digital mapping project. Will take December off, and then will make plan for speakers for next year.
  2. Fall Foliage Fest: On 10/14-15, will have four members of the staff and have both educational materials and project promotion.
  3. Waynesboro Public Library : Revamped slides for September’s meeting, and one person showed up. Len will be hosting October talk, and Faye will host in November.
     + Tom Benzing: Requested updates on the posters for Waynesboro Public Library.
  4. Charlottesville Newcomers: Joe Keiper will be speaking at on 10/16
  5. Chamber of Commerce: Will provide group with project updates
  6. DAR: Presented at in 2018/ 2019 at the Library, and will be providing a refresh in 2024
  7. South River Coalition: As a revamped version of South River Science Team, and supported by Dupont, their focus is on education. Tom Benzing wants to involve them with the exhibit design for the museum and would like to help with it. Offered office space for future meetings, which is also used as field team site for storage of equipment.
  8. South River Preserve: Started on park development and removing pavement and will then be adding soil and planting trees. Will also be doing work on Rockfish Runs and Jones Hollow, as part as mercury recovery efforts.

1. Open Discussion
   * + Greg Hitchin: On October 11th, Economic Development will go to City Council to reaffirm million dollars and then will release press statement the next day. This will hopefully drum support for the project.
     + Greg Hitchin: City is redoing the VMNH sign, including the sign at the site and other smaller signs throughout the community.
     + Len Poulin: Asked if city is holding another community event/ media release. Greg Hitchin: Not on calendar, but will think about it.
     + Joe Keiper: When heard about closure of the Waynesboro Visitor Center, VMNH volunteered to take map back to Martinsville. However, map could also be displayed at one of the public libraries, accompanied by the sign.
       - Greg Hitchin: City library already refused it, as space is an issue.
       - Faye Cooper: Suggested displaying map in Natural Bridge.
       - Maggie Van Huss: Suggested YMCA, public schools, and Fishburne.
       - Greg Hitchin: Vision is to have projector over the map with interactives. Explored many spaces, but no one in community had room to accommodate the map.
       - Joe Keiper: VMNH will support the move of the map. Unless other space, will take back to Douglas Ave. until VMNH-W is finished.
     + Tom Benzing: Requested discussion at next meeting about BOT meeting. Next WAC is on Election Day (11/7) and will meet virtually.
2. Adjourn

**Materials Submitted by Tom Benzing for the minutes:**

Summary of economic impact of VMNH-Waynesboro campus (2023 Chmura study)

Construction impact on regional economy

* $25.2 M = *direct* construction spending in region
* $47.5 M = *cumulative* impact of construction spending (includes *indirect* and *induced*)
* 264 jobs in Waynesboro region = estimated *cumulative* support

Annual “sustained” economic impact – after construction

* SUM of “operation impacts” and “visitor spending impacts” (see details below)
* $4.2 M (2026 dollars) per year
* 36 jobs

Operation impacts

* $583,750 = annual revenue (*direct* spending)
* $1.0 M = *cumulative* annual spending
* 8 total jobs supported = 5 employees (*direct*) with an additional 3 jobs (*indirect* or *induced*)

Visitor spending impacts (estimate = 65,000 visitors annually)

* $3.2 M annually “in region” (used VTC estimate, 2026 dollars, not spending in museum)
* e.g. gasoline and parking; food and drink; lodging; shopping
* 28 jobs “in region” supported by *cumulative* impacts of visitor spending

Tax revenue to state and local governments

* Construction-related fiscal impact = $837,178 (95% to state)
* Annual “sustained” fiscal impact = $297,026 (56% state; 44% local) per year (2026 dollars)

Estimated return-on-investment

* Cost = $41.1 M (used Chmura study, 8/22/23)

= $41.2 M (“proposed, escalated” from DEB Cost Review, 8/31/23)

= $33.2 M (“recommended target, based on industry standards” from DEB)

* 6.0% annualized on 30-year period (2026-2055) using $41.1 M cost figure
* Assumed inflation rate = 4%
* Included annual impact only; excluded construction impact (and associated tax revenue)
* Removed indirect and induced impacts (i.e. operation + tax revenues only) 🡪 ROI = 2.0%/yr
* Used “recommended target” cost from DEB 🡪 ROI = 2.4%/yr

Crozet Tunnel Visitation, 2021-2023

Chart

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