**BOT American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Reaccreditation Committee Minutes**

**Virginia Museum of Natural History**

**All-Virtual Meeting**

**Wednesday, October 18th, 2023**

Attendance: Sherri Jordan, Roberto Quinones, Jennifer Thomas, Phyllis Newbill, Joe Keiper, Mary Zell Galen

1. Introduction and welcome

Joe Keiper:

* Introduced everyone to each other
* Explained previously-distributed materials, including document explaining accreditation process and VMNH’s past accreditation letter

1. Overview of the Reaccreditation process & why it is important

Joe Keiper:

* Set up committee to follow appropriate AAM reaccreditation process, with only two trustees to avoid FOIA complexities
* Requested for either Roberto Quinones or Sherri Jordan to serve as committee chair, which it will require no extra work.
  + Roberto Quinones: Volunteered to serve as chair
* Verbal walkthrough of accreditation process
  + Before 2010, museums were accredited every 10 years. The process includes a self-study, and less than 5% museums achieve accreditation
  + VMNH was reaccredited in 2010. Because AAM was revising reaccreditation process, VMNH received a 15-year accreditation. It’s been a while since the institution has completed the reaccreditation process, which shows the museum is following best practices in research, collections, finance, ethics, etc.
  + Important for VMNH to remain fully accredited

1. Key dates

Joe Keiper:

* VMNH has one year to do self-study, due in November 2024. Process is entirely online, and the committee is welcome to look at documents. Staff will write drafts and provide committee opportunity to review them.
* In March or April 2025, VMNH will have site visit with AAM reviewers. They will have full tour, meet with staff, members of the community, boards, etc.
* The visiting reviewers will write an extensive report based on checklist. (VMNH will prepare ahead of time with this document). They will have 6 weeks to complete their assessment.
* AAM will review the application and decide by Summer 2025. VMNH’s application will either be reaccredited or tabled for future decision.

Considerations about schedule:

Joe Keiper:

* VMNH’s current strategic plan ends in 2025, and VMNH will make sure they have a draft of the 2025-2030 strategic plan ready by the reaccreditation process.
* Jennifer Thomas: Coes VMNH get a say in who visits, and is it someone from a similar organization?
  + Joe Keiper: Never heard of any museum making a request. Yes, VMNH will likely get someone who’s familiar with small to mid-range science museums. At least one reviewer will likely have collections experience, and maybe both will.
* Roberto Quinones: Asked what the committee needs to do to make sure VMNH’s final document has the best practices look. Is there an example staff can share with the committee to base it on?
  + Joe Keiper: Will send out a password to the AAM website so the committee can access library of documents with best practices. (For past 2-3 years, staff has worked to update internal policies.)
    - Can also send out documents already produced by VMNH staff
    - When submitted materials for self-study, the checklists describe the best practices museums need to follow
* Sherri Jordan: For self-study, is it Joe and that staff that put the document together?
  + Joe Keiper: Yes, staff will put it all together and look to committee to provide critical eye to documents. Don’t have an electronic copy of 2010 full report, but Mary Zell sent out scan of the past decision letter.

1. Committee responsibilities

Joe Keiper:

* 1. Identify recommendations from 2010 accreditation
* Walk committee through 2010 letter’s areas for improvement. (Decision packet is much more extensive, but this boils it down to three areas to work on before next accreditation).
  1. Determine if VMNH has resolved and concerns or addressed all recommendations
* Need to improve strategic plan: Previously what VMNH submitted was state strategic plan, not a tradition plan for museums. The document was more statistical, and VMNH needed to develop a better document. (Used this statement to develop VMNH’s first traditional strategic plan, and is now on third rendition since then.)
* Leadership/ organizational structure: VMNH has rebuilt staff, and research and collections is now larger than ever. Have increased staff and compensation, while there’s areas VMNH is falling short, including for educators. In the middle of salary study for educators and would like to put an effort to increase pay for them.
* Diversify funding streams: VMNH was getting majority of funding from state appropriation. VMNH has gone from 7% to 16% of revenue generation separate from state allocation.
  + Jennifer Thomas: It helps that the economy has improved, and VMNH has now added several new projects.
    - Joe Keiper: Another thing brought up is isolation of the museum, which later became part of the justification for adding a branch.
  1. Review of newly created documents
* Documents will now be created for online submissions
  1. Meetings with site reviewers in 2024

1. Questions and open discussion

Roberto Quinones:

* Leveraging the last point, it seems odd that VMNH, as a state agency, is being compared to how a traditional nonprofit operates. If VMNH doesn’t get someone who’s spent time in government institution, the museum may be reviewed with a different perspective.
  + Joe Keiper: In every prior institution, there’s been unique situations for staffing structure and governance. Explored several examples of museums with differing situations, and how site reviewers are screened for each project. Need to be prepared to educate the reviewers about our governance structure.
  + Sherri Jordan: Need to make mission statement tight to better convey how the museum operates.
* Is there another state museum in Virginia that went through the process recently?
  + Jennifer Thomas: Easy to find out who went through reaccreditation, because AAM publishes the list. However, every state museum in Virginia has a different funding structure.

Joe Keiper:

* By February board meeting, VMNH will get everything online and share 2010 document and information and policies needed for 2025 process.

1. Adjournment