**MINUTES**

**VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**January 22, 2020**

The one hundred twenty-fourth meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Natural History was held at 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, January 22, 2020, at the Four Points by Sheraton, Richmond, Virginia.

Trustees Present: Tom Benzing, Chairman Art Evans, Vice-Chairman

Faye Cooper Nathan Sanford

Lisa Moerner Carole Nash (via conference call)

Michael Phillips Roberto Quinones (via conference call)

Trustees Absent: Cord Cothren Jennifer Burnett, Treasurer

Janet Scheid, Secretary Melany Stowe

Makunda Abdul-Mbacke Barry Dorsey

Staff Present: Joe Keiper Jonathan Martin

Christy Deatherage Debbi Bryant

Others Present: Len Poulin, VMNH – Foundation

Gene Smith, VMNH - Foundation

With eight (8) 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 6:00 p.m. by the Chairman. Carole Nash called in and is using a personal exemption due to missed days at JMU (holiday). Roberto Quinones called in and is using a personal exemption due to caring for a sick relative out of state. With no changes to be made to the August 17, 2019 Minutes, Art Evans made the motion to approve. Lisa Moerner seconded. Approved. With no changes being made to the November 16, 2019 Minutes, Nathan Sanford moved to approve. Lisa Moerner seconded. Approved.

**Chairman’s Report**

Tom Benzing presented the Chairman’s Report.

* Richmond – Opportunity to advocate for the museum. Tom Benzing, Art Evans, and Joe Keiper were in the Pocahontas building on 1/22/20 to visit several legislators on items in the budget (Governor’s proposed budget and House Bill which supports the Waynesboro project). They were well-received by the legislators. Not seeing any cuts in the Governor’s budget, seeing about a 4% increase. No positions were cut. The general fund amount is $2,878,776 for 2020. Same amount for 2021.
* Schedule of meetings – next meeting is May 16, 2020 in Martinsville, as well as other dates listed. Note that May 15, 2021, will be in Waynesboro. Will go over more details about the project. A brief discussion was held about whether to advocate at the General Assembly. It is a biennium year – this is the budget that the Governor is proposing for the next two years. Can work on a date as it gets closer.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Jennifer Burnett is absent. Jonathan Martin presented the Treasurer’s Report.

* Admission revenue is up. Had an increase in the admission rate and visitation has not been affected.
* City of Martinsville and Henry County’s yearly contribution has been received.
* Budget revenue – discrepancy due to the construction has not started on the Jean S. Adams Educational Pavilion. Funds from the Foundation will be transferred over.
* Contractual Services - expenses increase – architectural work for Waynesboro. VITA (Virginia Information Technologies) increased services by 11% - not budgeted for. They gave an allotment at the beginning of last year and the year before for this increase.
* Adjustment from the gas company – meter broke – estimates seem to be correct around what we should have spent. Waiting for an official statement by the gas company. We had an old analog meter, now waiting on report. We have a new digital meter.
* Insurance - charges are paid ahead – will do the same for this year.
* Exhibit & Equipment Rentals - bulk of the money spent on festivals at the beginning of the fiscal year.
* Agency Service Charges - Cardinal – time management project – chief accounting program – there will be charges for software coding.

Nathan Sanford asked about the “other” column. Jonathan Martin explained that it is for VITA, vehicles, agency service charges. Those earnings can be taken from Earned Revenue on our budget. He will report any changes in that. VITA charges will soon be moved over.

Len Poulin commented that for the first half of the year the revenues are almost 100% of budget (includes appropriation). With admission increase, on the way to beating the budget.

The Treasurer’s report was accepted.

**Executive Director’s Report**

Joe Keiper presented the Executive Director’s Report.

* Ryan Barber was called to a meeting with AEP (Appalachian Electric Power) was interested in a project at Smith Mountain Gap (where the dam makes Smith Mountain Lake). Dr. Moore did work collecting materials when the generation was reduced and had access to the land – got a lot of cool stuff. AEP asked about an exhibit and a budget. AEP called Ryan to meet with them concerning the exhibit project.
* Opening the “Wild About Cats” exhibit tomorrow.
* Ice Age Festival this Saturday – expecting around 1,000 – 1,200 to attend.
* Foundation is doing well. Might fall short on the Discovery Fund this year for two reasons: several people gave money for the Jean S. Adams Educational Pavilion and George Adams passed away (generous donor). Overall revenue at the museum is solid.
* Exciting time for the Foundation. In the near future, (1) done with the strategic planning; and (2) will not be paying Dr. Chesebrough ($8,000 a year) and will be paying off the Acrocanthosaurus ($14,000 year for several years). What can the funds go to? Drs. Moncrief and Ivanov would like a working molecular lab. We have one on the second floor called “Molecular Lab Systematics” but it lacks modern equipment. That would take the entire $20-25,000 that we have. One topic to talk about. Supposed to be doing DNA extraction but never set up properly. Want so set up some basic processing of specimens…….
* Archaeology candidates – dates scheduled.

**Nominating Committee Report**

Lisa Moerner presented the Nominating Committee Report.

* Janet Scheid rolls off the Board in May. We have a nomination of Nathan Sanford for Secretary. Tom Benzing for Chair, Art Evans for Vice-Chair, Jennifer Burnett for Treasurer. They are currently in their positions and will vote at the next meeting. Will also take nominations from the floor.

**Strategic Planning Committee Report**

Lisa Moerner presented the Strategic Planning Committee Report.

* Have not have a meeting since the last board meeting. Joe Keiper shared with the committee a public draft of the strategic plan and asked for comments. Joe Keiper mentioned that the five year strategic plan will launch in May. Working with the consultant is a four page document that will be made public to legislators and funders. Upcoming months will meet with the strategic planning committee and will add details, timelines, goals, objectives, etc. In-house working document. Staff can refer to. Joe Keiper would like to have done by March. Press conference on the same day as the board meeting in May. Tom Benzing mentioned that the strategic planning committee includes two members of the Foundation, as well as two Board of Trustee members. If you would like to serve on the strategic planning committee, please see Tom Benzing.

**Waynesboro Advocacy**

Faye Cooper presented the Waynesboro Advocacy Committee Report.

* Pre-planning study is complete.
* Next phase of funding. Have been included in the capital fund project budget line item for $16.9 million. We are looking at $20 – 21 million. Joe Keiper sent out talking points which will be very helpful to support the Waynesboro campus, as well as appropriations.
* Moving along on schedule with design work, positive is that the city remains supportive, renewed commitment of $1 million
* Ryan Barber was not present for the Operations Committee. Joe Keiper reported that there is nothing much to report. Had discussions with Department of Engineering and Buildings - Minor details on the building, height of the railing, etc. Everything on schedule.
* Discussions were held about having future legislative evening receptions, breakfasts, etc. in Richmond to promote VMNH.

**Talking Points for Meeting with the Legislators**:

Thank them for their time, personalize, have your IDs. Faye Cooper added that a talking point should be the impact to schools. Tom Benzing mentioned that the leave behinds are very affective. Michael Phillips gave some pointers on how to get your foot in the door. Joe Keiper referenced the Boxley Materials logo on some of the leave behinds. Boxley funded the museum’s education department to provide programming in Roanoke and Lynchburg schools, as well as a field trip to the quarry. Schools were not charged – giving tens of thousands of dollars every year into the school systems to give students opportunities.

**Research and Collections Committee Report**

Art Evans presented the Research and Collections Committee Report.

* Packet included will be addressed at the May meeting. By working with the Curators and Ben Williams the committee came up with talking points for promoting research that goes on at the museum. When meeting with the legislators, this is the last thing that comes up but yet this is our primary mission. We wanted to work from the bottom up – working with the curators - what is the essence of what they do at the museum. Discussed the document – starts with the mission which recognizes that the museum is the only state institution mandated to investigate, preserve, and exhibit elements of natural history, as well as educate its citizens (from the Code of Virginia). Important to realize that the primary goal is research. Create a series of points that non-scientists and the public could appreciate as to why the museum does what it does. Recognizes the three research centers. Hoping that the elements will go into the strategic plan for the next five years. Carole Nash commented that Preservation Virginia maintains a list of legislators who are interested in archaeology and historic preservation. Many are interested in collections and museums. Carole will put Art in touch with them. It’s a non-profit organization. Used to be APVA. Tremendous amount of interest in collections.
* Acquisitions were approved and signed.

**Education Committee Report**

Cord Cothren was absent. Education Manager, Christy Deatherage, presented the Education Committee Report.

* Numbers for the quarter show a decrease since 2018 had local scholarship funds available. Outside of the area funding available for 2019/2020 but local scholarships were not there in 2019 and we see the impact. Working on other scholarship opportunities.
* Our two educators attended the VAST Conference back in November, working with formal and informal educators, great opportunities for them.
* Professional Development workshop held in Danville for teachers back in November. Working on other professional development opportunities for the spring
* Recently had a large sleepover of over 100 participants (Charlotte, NC area). Boy Scouts participated in the “Mad Scientist” program. Very complimentary. We have other sleepovers on the calendar. Increase in sleepovers, as well as birthdays produce good revenue.
* Ice Age Festival Student Day is the Friday before the festival. Local schools invited to participate. 300 students rotate through stations. Each student receives a wrist band to return on Saturday for free with a paid adult.
* Had the winter break camp – two days – was very popular as parents were receptive to having an educational opportunity for their child during the winter break from school. We are now planning our spring break camp, as well as summer camps.

Tom Benzing asked a question that came up with a conversation with Delegate Runion (talking about distance learning and at the school programs) Do we differentiate between public schools and private schools, and homeschool groups, in what we charge for programs? Answer: Depending on the type of program, outreach would be a set fee (similar to going to a school), the in-house homeschool program is a set price per student. Tom Benzing then asked if there was a difference of private v. public… is it the same cost? Yes. Tom Benzing asked if the scholarships are available for private schools and homeschoolers. Christy Deatherage said that it depends on the funding source and how they would like it set up. Currently lining up distance learning programs in Waynesboro. To date, 15 programs delivered, with an additional four to be completed. Gene Smith asked if public TV can do a program on the museum. Art Evans mentioned that talks are underway.

**New Business**

There was nothing new to report.

**Announcements**

There was nothing new to report.

The next board meeting will be held in Martinsville on May 16, 2020.

With no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Janet Scheid Thomas R. Benzing, Ph.D.

Secretary Chairman