



Approved Minutes
Quarterly Board of Trustees Meeting
RF&P Forum, First Floor
2500 West Broad Street

October 21, 2021
3:00 pm

Present: Dr. Denise Walters, John Benton, David Mills, Dr. Richard Groover, Dr. Rodney Berry, Lauren Mathena, Eucharia Jackson, Cristina Ramirez, JoAnne Carter, David Mills

Present via Zoom: Amy Laufer, Glenn Davidson, Patricia Nicoson

Staff: Rich Conti, Elizabeth Voelkel, Jim Blow,

Other Attendees: Cynthia Norwood, Virginia Attorney General's Office
Robert Feeser, President, Science Museum of Virginia Foundation Board of Directors

Welcome

Dr. Walters welcomed everyone, verified that a quorum was present, and called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Walters asked the Trustees to review the June 17, 2021 and September 22, 2021 meeting minutes. Mr. Benton noted a small correction and moved to approve the June 17, 2021 and September 22, 2021 meeting minutes with corrections. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mills. Dr. Walters called for a vote which passed unanimously without objection.

Dr. Walters then handed the meeting over to Ms. Voelkel who delivered the Operations update.

Operations Update

Mrs. Voelkel shared the following points:

- Summer 2021 proved to be challenging and rewarding

- *Mental Health: Mind Matters* and *Tyrannosaurs: Meet the Family* were both vastly successful exhibits
- The Education team led thoughtful and well planned programming throughout the Science Museum, including content tie-ins for Summer Camp, Lunch Break Science and Forge activities
- The elimination of COVID restrictions on May 28th, 2021 coincided with the opening of the Science Museums feature summer exhibit *Tyrannosaurs: Meet the Family*
- Return to full capacity without restrictions allowed for great turnout for the summer exhibits
- The gift shop sold \$104,497.98 worth of merchandise in the in the month of July, breaking the previous record of \$66,000
- Special events and rentals have started to increase
- Construction associated with the parking deck created logistical challenges for operations
- A record-breaking rainfall on September 15th, 2021 created a unique set of challenges, due to flooding on Level 0
- Staff members are readjusting to returning from telework, new operating schedules, and changes to COVID restrictions
- The Science Museum created a cross-departmental team called Magic Makers to focus on supporting museum culture and engagement
- The Magic Makers hosted food trucks for free meals for staff, created a new online visual staff directory, and encouraged cross departmental interaction for staff

Director's Report

Mr. Conti discussed current projects:

- The parking deck is almost complete, and is projected to come under its \$14M budget.
- S.B. Ballard is the construction company for the project
- Details on the drainage for the deck and ADA compliant spaces are still being fine-tuned
- The deck is “one way in, one way out” to simplify traffic flow
- The potential to charge for parking is possible for the future, but the Science Museum will not be charging at this time
- The next phase is the removal of the asphalt surface lot to make way for development of the Green
- The Green project phase 1 is out for bid, due at end of month
- Phase 1 is expected to be completed in spring of 2022
- The Science Museum will hire a full time horticulturist to help maintain the Green and provide programming for the guests

Mr. Conti discussed the updates on the Northern Virginia Science Center.

- Progress on the project is in a holding pattern pending the outcome of the land donation agreement

- The state will not proceed with construction until the land is transferred to the Science Museum
- Currently there is a dialogue with developer to work out the final details and ensure best interests of the state are met
- The exhibit design is nearing completion, the building design is very preliminary
- The state is working hard to ensure that the immediate surroundings of the building site will be appropriate in decades to come
- A STEM Advisory Board was created with the dedicated work of Mr. Chuck English, VA State STEM Coordinator
- The Board will assist in development of standardized STEM education plan for the Commonwealth
- In June the Board of Trustees approved the expenditure of funds for interior refurbishment, staff training and development, and the hiring of a DEAI consultant
- An RFP is out for bid for the DEAI consultant contract, 18 responses were received.
- Danville upgrades are continuing with excellent guest feedback on the new exhibitions.

Mr. Benton asked for clarification on ownership of the Northern Virginia Science Center building and site. Mr. Conti responded that the state is building the structure and will retain ownership of the building, and that the funding is secured. The site is on the edge of a nature conservancy. Total value of the project is \$78M.

Ms. Laufer asked about the term of lease for the land. Mr. Conti stated that the state will also own the land, but must take care to ensure development of the surrounding area over the next 100 years is compatible with the mission.

Strategic Planning

Mr. Conti discussed the detail of the newly updated plan:

- The strategic planning process continues to make great progress
- Currently it is a five year plan covering the period 2021-2026
- The work plan for the upcoming year and updated budget will be developed in the new year
- The finalized written plan was sent out to Trustees, several adjustments were made to dates and some details were fine tuned in the final version

Mr. Conti asked for Trustees to approve of the Strategic Plan as presented.

Dr. Walters asked for a motion to approve the Strategic Plan as presented. Mr. Benton called the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Mills. Dr. Walters then called for a vote, which passed unanimously without objection.

Finance and Business Operations Committee Report

Dr. Groover remarked that the Science Museum's financial condition appears strong in spite of the constraints presented by the current economic climate. He then passed the report to Mr. Conti.

Mr. Conti then reviewed the Trustee Financial Summary:

- The main challenge has been overcoming the 6 month closure last year and the \$4.5M in earned revenue losses
- Early cost cutting measures in the beginning of the COVID pandemic kept finances stable
- Expected cuts to the General Fund were not forthcoming
- Strong one-time rental revenues offset losses in revenue from usual streams
- This year, strong attendance to summer exhibits, and the lifting of occupancy caps and COVID restrictions contributed greatly to earned revenue
- The Science Museum was awarded a Shuttered Venue Operating Grant of \$2.3M
- The Science Museum received a General Fund increase of \$343K
- Cost control was highly effective: payroll \$1.43M, total expenses \$2.2M
- Reserves in a solid position with \$2M in working capital, TDF at \$1M plus an additional \$509K, other liquid cash assets at \$600K
- The exceptional performance of *Tyrannosaurs: Meet the Family* helped the bottom line considerably
- Membership is recovering, and is back up to 5,700 membership households
- Retail earnings set a new record in July.
- Total attendance for *Tyrannosaurs: Meet the Family* was over 59K
- Overall general attendance YTD is over 155K
- The Model Railroad Show will return to the building the weekend after Thanksgiving, admission will be via timed entry tickets to control traffic flow

Dr. Groover asked about the overall cost of the *Tyrannosaurs: Meet the Family* exhibit. Ms. Moyer answered the cost was a flat rate expense, no royalties. The total cost was just under \$250K.

Marketing Update

Ms. Moyer discussed key points on Marketing

- Membership campaign very successful, from 3,700 back up to 5,700 households

- 234 memberships were regained during the spring campaign push
- *Tyrannosaurs: Meet the Family* admission was free for members, which helped drive membership numbers back up
- 1,402 memberships were sold during *Tyrannosaurs: Meet the Family*
- Museums for All households are at a record high of 1,355, there is now a digital membership application for this program
- *Tyrannosaurs* is the Science Museum's most successful summer exhibit in the Dewey Gottwald Center to date
- School field trips and other large groups are not expected to return during the fall and spring
- Initially the advertising campaign for the opening of *Hot Wheels: Race to Win* was conservative to avoid too many guests at one time
- Danville Science Center has reopened, new exhibits are highly successful and well received
- Mid-November focus on a \$10K advertising campaign for Danville Science Center to boost attendance and social media followings
- *Skin: Living Armor, Evolving Identity* touring exhibition will open next spring in the Garner Gallery
- A new strategy going forward will be to market the openings of Dome features as major events. Ideally using films with flat rental fees and no royalties
- Potential partnerships with local restaurants to offer a package deal of Dinner and a Dome feature are being explored
- Upcoming Dome features include *Birth of Planet Earth*, *Antarctica*, and an additional yet to be determined spring feature
- Upcoming exhibits include *Skin: Living Armor, Evolving Identity*, *Planet Shark: Predator or Prey*, and *Space: An Out of Gravity Experience*
- Upcoming films and summer exhibits are being prepaid with SVOG funds

Ms. Laufer asked about the possibility of promoting Danville new exhibits via local PTO/PTAs. Ms. Moyer responded that Danville responds very well to those types of grassroots promotion efforts, and the Science Museum plans to explore those options.

Education Report

Ms. Purdum discussed the following:

- Digital programming is still experiencing great participation and has been very successful
- The use of new software called Streamable has allowed access to audiences across the country
- Onsite field trips and groups slowly started back over the summer
- Forge Maker Challenges continue to succeed and are very popular
- Summer Camp sold out for the season, with smaller groups of 30 kids per week
- Net return from Summer Camp was over \$33K

- Summer interns and work study students were very successful, and included 4 student interns from Cristo Rey
- The Museum partnered with the Down Syndrome Association of Virginia to host students for work activities, which gave them vital experience and skills
- The Partnership for the Future paid intern program went very well
- The Girls for Change paid intern program allowed the Science Museum to continue to build community relationships and develop programming for *Mind Matters* and content for guests with low vision
- The Science Museum also hosted an intern from the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, the intern assisted with phones and general office tasks
- The desired end state is for all internships to be paid positions as part of the One Virginia Plan
- The Science Museum is continually looking for new community partnership opportunities
- Education Collection item, Fairmont Railway W64-A-3 flatcar, is being transferred to the RF&P Railroad Historical Society in Fredericksburg
- Live demos will return this fall, including Rat Basketball
- Spooky Science will be held the last week in October
- Girls in Science sponsored by DuPont will be on November 13th
- Model Railroad returns November 26 through November 28th
- The Fast and the Curious! will celebrate the science of speed, power and performance from December 27, 2021 through January 2, 2022

Mr. Benton suggested establishing an endowment to assist with paid internship programs for the Science Museum. Ms. Purdum responded that the aim of the Science Museum is to increase equity and accessibility to quality internships, and ensuring paid internship programs will greatly assist with meeting this objective.

Ms. Laufer asked about the process of contacting and selecting students to participate in the internship programs. Ms. Purdum responded that the Science Museum contacts community partners such as Girls for Change and Cristo Rey, and reviews their policies and procedures. The Science Museum then holds interviews for candidates and selects candidates from the pool. For college interns, the Science Museum maintains a database of networking connections with colleges and universities and uses these to market the internships.

Foundation Update

Mr. Feeser discussed the following:

- The Foundation Board of Directors held their quarterly meeting yesterday in the new parking deck
- Fundraising for The Green is currently at \$2.4M raised with another \$1.4M in pending requests

- The Board of Directors are excited about the new committee structure and the growing partnership with the Science Museum Trustees
- The Foundation recently conducted an effectiveness survey with Directors to assist with promoting engagement in meaningful ways
- Budgeted support to the Science Museum for FY 2022 is at \$4.16M
- This figure includes \$664K in unrestricted funds and \$3.5M in restricted funds
- Available funds from the Virginia Ellett Estate Gift are at \$1.8M
- Over \$681K has been given by the Foundation Board of Directors, reflecting an 83% participation rate
- Donations by Museum Trustees are at \$50 with 7% Trustee participation
- Total Assets at \$32.267M, cash at \$8.49M and investments-endowment at \$22.459M
- Total assets have grown almost \$9M over the last year

Dr. Groover asked about sponsorship and donor recognition plans for The Green. Ms. Peeler shared that many different avenues for donor recognition are being explored. Examples include digital and rotating placards in addition to more traditional methods such as benches and bricks.

New Board Positions

Dr. Walters asked for a motion to approve new Board committee assignments and chair positions. Mr. Davidson called the motion, seconded by Mr. Berry. Dr. Walters asked for a vote by show of hands, all approved, none opposed. Motion passed.

Mr. Conti noted that many of the mechanics to activate the committee groups are still being worked out, and new approaches for hosting meetings and encouraging involvement are being considered. Efforts will be made to concentrate meetings over short periods of time to ensure convenience for all participants. All meetings are public meetings and all are welcome to every meeting, not just individually assigned committees. In order to execute action items, more than one Trustee must be present.

Word of Thanks

Dr. Walters and Mr. Conti offered their appreciation and thanks for Glenn Davidson's service over the course of his three year term as Chair of the Board of Trustees through unprecedented circumstances.

New Business

Dr. Walters asked for any new business with nothing heard.

Adjournment

Dr. Walters called a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Carter made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Berry. The meeting was adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

The next meeting will be on January 21, 2022