



APPROVED Minutes  
Quarterly Board of Trustees Meeting  
Forum  
2500 West Broad Street

April 20, 2023  
3 p.m.

**Present:** Cristina Ramirez, David Mills, Dr. Denise Walters, Elsa Falls, Fran Bradford, Glenn Davidson, John Benton, Dr. Kathy Lu (ZOOM), Lauren Mathena, Patricia Nicoson, Dr. Richard Groover, Dr. Rodney Berry, Suri Ganeriwala and Ukay Jackson.

**Staff:** Rich Conti, Timshel Purdum, Ada Sue Siler, Kinsey Peeler, and Ash Harris.

**Other Attendees:** Adam Kane, Office of the Attorney General

**Welcome and Introductions**

Dr. Walters called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m and verified a quorum was present before reviewing the agenda.

**Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Walters asked the Trustees to review the January 19, 2023, meeting minutes. Dr. Berry called a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Benton called the second. Dr. Walters called for a vote which passed unanimously without objection.

**Director's Report**

Mr. Conti discussed the following:

- The agenda for the day was reviewed.
- The Trustees took a tour during lunch of the new public art sculpture, *Cosmic Perception*.
- The completion of *Cosmic Perception* brings with it the completion of Phase I of The Green.
- Overall attendance and participation metrics for the Science Museum are back to pre-COVID levels.
- Revenues are up, expenses are down, and school group visitation is strong.
- The Science Museum's new organizational structure is working well. The three new Deputy Directors are thriving in their new roles.
- Some significant and meaningful numbers were highlighted:

- Over 3,000 guests attended the Science After Dark: GLOW event. The event was so successful that moving forward it will become an all-day event to better accommodate the impressive interest and participation.
- Currently seven construction projects are underway on the Science Museum's campus.
- On March 14, 2023, the Science Museum hosted the Governor's quarterly networking event. The event went beautifully for all those involved.
- The Commonwealth's budget for the next two years has not been approved.
- The Science Museum asked for two items in the budget: capital funds for demolishing the Workers' Compensation building and a construction fund supplement for the Northern Virginia Science Center.
- Operating funds and maintenance reserve funds will also be allocated in the Commonwealth's budget. New language was approved for utilizing maintenance reserve funds, \$1M, which allow for more flexibility.
- The Strategic Planning Committee met recently for the annual work plan development. The group settled on six key points to focus on, which fit into the established five-year plan for the Science Museum. All staff and participants had a chance to voice suggestions and thoughts.
- The six objectives are as follows:
  - Objective 1 - Develop an updated plan for Phase III of The Green that will encompass the expanded site and involve key stakeholder groups.
  - Objective 2 - Formulate a plan to address staff capacity, knowledge transfer, and continuity of leadership to ensure that people remain a core strength of the organization.
  - Objective 3 - Acquire the expertise to fully develop the narrative history of Broad Street Station and begin to incorporate it into the guest experience.
  - Objective 4 - Begin the process of identifying appropriate food service options for all of our audiences.
  - Objective 5 - Grow the volunteer program to strengthen the guest experience.
  - Objective 6 - Draft an interpretive plan that connects cutting edge topics in STEM to the public's interest.

Dr. Berry shared thanks for the efforts to focus on the history of Broad Street Station. He felt it is a good initiative that will bring in a different audience to the Science Museum.

Mr. Benton mentioned that the initiatives and key objectives were discussed in the Finance and Business Operations Committee meeting, and the group fully endorses the work plan.

Mr. Benton called for a motion to approve the FY 24 Work Plan as presented. Ms. Mathena called the motion to approve. Mr. Davidson seconded the motion. A vote was taken by verbal affirmation. All approved, none opposed. Motion carried.

Mr. Conti continued with the Directors Report.

- The Green Phase I faced some challenges with the hardscape. The walkways required additional work and needed an alternative material (concrete).
- The Green Phase II will go out to bid this summer and work will commence in August. The completion date is tentatively set for early next year.
- The Northern Virginia Science Center project still has not closed on the land. Hopes are high to close on the land by the end of June.

Dr. Berry asked if The Green Phase II will include repaving and striping of lines. Mr. Conti responded that, yes, Phase II will include repaving and the installation of speed tables to slow vehicular traffic.

Mr. Benton asked about construction cost increases for the Northern Virginia Science Center project. Mr. Conti responded that the initial cost estimates were at \$40M but have increased to \$65M for the building.

Mr. Ganeriwala asked about the theme and focus of the Northern Virginia Science Center. Mr. Conti responded that it will have a similar style to the Science Museum of Virginia but has been customized for the audiences of Northern Virginia. The building will be biophilic and feature an artistic interpretation of the cloud.

Ms. Bradford asked to be notified when the groundbreaking is scheduled for the Northern Virginia Science Center. The Trustees would like to participate.

Ms. Bradford asked about the status of the Commonwealth's budget. Mr. Conti pointed out that the new budget has not been approved yet, but the old budget will carry over if needed. The new budget will allow for a 7% raise for classified staff.

### **Operations Report**

Mr. Harris shared an overview of operations.

- The RF&P Forum renovation project was just completed this week. Upgrades to the space include the audio, video, media, and cabinetry. The cabinets were designed, fabricated, and installed by our staff. The audio visual system was designed by our staff as well.
- The Science Museum is hiring staff to fill full-time and part-time security positions.
- Concerted efforts are in place to dedicate funding and training for security staff to be knowledgeable and effective at their roles.
- Special event rentals continue to go well. Events took a brief pause last year to review policy and pricing. Events were brought back with thoughtful changes and the improvements are evident in satisfaction and smooth operations. Going forward, the events team hopes to bring back birthday parties and further utilize the train cars.

- Horticulture processes on campus are going smoothly. The landscape features were recently mulched and they look refreshed and vibrant.
- Les McLean, Exhibit Fabrication Manager, is retiring after 30 years of service and the Science Museum is excited to celebrate his service. .
- The newly renovated Discovery Room will open at the end of the week and will function as a dedicated education demonstration space.
- The pathway project behind the parking deck is almost complete.

Mr. Benton asked if revenues from special events are net or gross profit. Mr. Harris responded that the numbers quoted are gross.

Dr. Walters asked about the implementation of new policies for special events and if there has been any pushback. Mr. Harris said all policies have provided a better experience for clients and there has been no pushback.

Dr. Groover asked about the top level of the parking deck and its planned use. Mr. Conti replied that the top level could be used for solar panels but the business model for it is challenging.

Dr. Berry offered sincere accolades on the craftsmanship and design of the new cabinets in the RF&P Forum.

Mr. Davidson and Ms. Jackson offered compliments on the event for the Governor.

### **Finance and Business Operations Committee's Report**

Mr. Benton discussed the following:

- The financial position of the Science Museum is strong.
- The FY23 financial report was reviewed.
- Revenues are at 5% above budget and expenses are at 6% below projections.
- Working capital balance is at \$2.5M; there is a policy goal of keeping that balance at \$1.0M.
- Funds were used on new equipment and cameras for the parking deck.
- Some overages are due to the lag in reimbursements from the Foundation.
- Attention was also given to the reaccreditation of the Science Museum by the American Alliance of Museums. Only 3% of science centers are accredited. The Science Museum was awarded the reaccreditation with no substantial findings to resolve and no follow up items.

- The committee considered a resolution to approve new administrators for the Science Museum 403B plan.

## **Resolution #005-2023**

### **Written Resolution of the Science Museum of Virginia Board of Trustees**

Board of Trustees hereby removes Saa'dia Walker as administrator of the Science Museum of Virginia 403(b) Retirement Plan; and that the Board of Trustees appoints the Director of Administrative Services and the Finance Director of the Museum as the administrators of the Plan, each of whom shall be responsible for performing all actions necessary to carry out the administration of the Plan and to provide direction to Plan service providers as the administrators of the Plan effective as of the date of the adoption of these resolutions.

Mr. Benton called a motion to approve Resolution #005-2023 as presented. Mr. Davidson called the second.

A vote was taken, all approved, none opposed. Motion carries.

### **Communications and Marketing Report**

Mr. Conti recapped important figures for marketing and attendance.

- Attendance numbers are up 68% over the same quarter last year.
- In Q2, the Science Museum had over 117K guests.
- Danville Science Center's year-to-date attendance is up 97% over last year.
- Funds spent in the advertising campaign for Danville have helped double their attendance.
- Changes in membership will take place May 1. The individual membership level, Star, will return at \$65; Supernova memberships will include two adults and up to three children; and the Galaxy membership will increase by \$10.
- General admission prices will increase on May 1. Revenues are estimated to increase by \$140K as a result of the price change.
- The Science Museum is also introducing a new program for reduced price admission. Ten days out of the year admission will be \$10 per person, regardless of ticket category.
- *BODYWORLDS* is almost under contract to return as a feature summer exhibition. Details of specific specimens included in the exhibition have been requested.
- *Space: An Out-of-Gravity Experience* installation commences in just a few days. The exhibition will open on Memorial Day weekend.
- *Wild Kratts* will open in the fall in the Garner Gallery.
- The Dome will undergo upgrades to a laser projection system in September. The upgrades will offer better brightness, sharper pictures, and a better guest experience.

Dr. Groover asked if the seating in The Dome would be changed. Mr. Conti replied no, the seating will not change as part of this work.

Dr. Berry asked about the themes of programming and if any programs include a focus on artificial intelligence. Mr. Conti said that AI will not be a program feature for any upcoming exhibitions but may be a great topic for a guest lecture.

### **Foundation Report**

Ms. Peeler shared an overview of the Foundation's recent work.

- The annual Up & Atom women's leadership breakfast occurred on March 1. Over 300 people were in attendance and helped raise over \$85k, with that number expected to increase.
- Raising funding for The Green continues to be the main focus of the Foundation. So far, the Foundation has raised \$4.5M in support of The Green.
- Currently, efforts are set to fulfill a second matching grant. The matching grant is from the Cabell Foundation and challenges the Foundation to raise \$500K and then receive an additional \$250k.
- This year the Foundation is set to provide \$4.5M in support from restricted and unrestricted funding to the Science Museum.
- Two new staff were hired; an executive assistant and grant writer.
- With over \$31M in assets, recently the Foundation placed \$2M in a Certificate of Deposit.
- A video campaign from Allianz was shared.

Dr. Groover asked how the Allianz video will be used. Ms. Peeler said that the video is featured online and before some of our Dome shows. Ms. Jackson expressed that the video shows strong credibility to have such a strong partnership.

Ms. Peeler invited the Trustees to a cocktail party on May 7, 2023.

### **Education Report**

Dr. Berry provided highlights from the Education team.

- The Education team has had another busy quarter.
- The January teacher open house was well attended.
- Science After Dark programming continues to thrive.
- Minds of All Kinds and Camp In attendance continues to increase.
- Upcoming programming includes: Earth Day on April 22, Science After Dark on May 5, Minds of All Kinds on May 17, *Space: An Out-of-Gravity Experience* opens May 27.
- The first Camp Out will be held on June 10, 2023.

Mr. Mills asked what events are available for registration. Ms. Purdum responded that the Camp Out requires registration and is still open.

### **New Business**

Dr. Walters asked for any new business.

Dr. Groover shared about the January 5, 2023, event for the Virginia Academy of Science celebrating its centennial year. Ms. Falls mentioned that she serves on this board as the representative for the Virginia Academy of Science. The upcoming VAS meeting will be held in May at William and Mary University.

### **Adjournment**

With no further new business heard, Mr. Davidson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Dr. Berry. Dr. Walters called for a vote which passed unanimously without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

The next meeting will be on June 15, 2023.