



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

October 19, 2023
3 p.m.

Present: Cristina Ramirez, David Mills, Dr. Denise Walters, Elsa Falls, Fran Bradford, Patricia Nicoson (Teleconference), Dr. Richard Groover, Dr. Rodney Berry, Amishi Amin, Gina Burgin, Fran Bradford, Dr. Robert Winn, Karey Malyszko.

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

Other Attendees: Cindy Norwood-Marquez, Office of the Attorney General; Sumeet Shrivastava, Chair of Northern Virginia Science Center Foundation; Adalene Spivy, Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Science Center Foundation; Justin Taylor-Raymond, Deputy Secretary of Education; and Suri Ganeriwala, member of the general public.

Welcome and Acknowledgements

Dr. Walters called the meeting to order at 3 p.m. and verified a quorum was present.

The board took a moment of silence in remembrance of John Benton and his service on the Board of Trustees. Details regarding Mr. Benton's memorial service were shared with the Board.

Introductions and Word of Thanks

Dr. Walters invited all in attendance to introduce themselves. Newly appointed trustees include: Karey Malyszko, Dr. Robert Winn, Amishi Amin, and Thomas Gottwald.

Dr. Walters took a moment to acknowledge Mrs. Norwood-Marquez. This meeting is her last formal meeting serving as the Office of Attorney General representative for the Science Museum. A gift was given to Mrs. Norwood-Marquez, a framed limited print of Broad Street Station.

Mrs. Norwood-Marquez expressed her joy in serving with this board. She will continue to serve as a member of the Education Committee as a member at large.

Mr. Conti shared that Ms. Norwood-Marquez is a valued partner who always fought hard for the needs of the Science Museum.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Walters asked the Trustees to review the June 15, 2023, meeting minutes. Mr. Mills called a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Berry called the second. Dr. Walters called for a vote which passed unanimously without objection.

Director's Report

Mr. Conti highlighted the following:

- The Science Museum has a modest workforce of only 60 full-time staff members, yet continues to punch above its weight class.
- Phase I of the Green project has been completed. Immediate initiation of Phase II construction took place and significant progress has already been achieved.
- There continues to be deliberation on the direction for other options to further green the campus. The Science Museum will look to hire a new architectural and engineering design team as planning continues.
- The Science Museum anticipates the land closing for the Northern Virginia Science Center to be in the coming weeks, after a two-year effort. Working drawings will also be submitted to DPB soon for review.
- The inaugural Sunrise Science speaker event is scheduled for November 2 at 8 a.m., featuring Dr. Rick spinrad from NOAA. The events will continue in the new year:
 - On January 10, 2024, Sunrise Science will feature “Here, There and Everywhere: AI in Our Lives Today,” presented by Prem Natarajan, PhD, Chief Scientist and Head of Enterprise AI, Capital One.
 - The April 2024 lecture will be given by the owner and founder of Gelati Celesti Ice Cream, Steve Rosser
 - The June 2024 will feature Dr. Robert Winn, Director and Lipman Chair in Oncology, VCU Massey Cancer Center and Senior Associate Dean for Cancer Innovation and Professor of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine, VCU School of Medicine.
- The Science Museum thrives in efficiency and effectiveness despite its small team, but looks to grow its reach with talented staff. Several key positions have recently been hired: Director of Exhibits, Human Resources Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, Director of Guest Experience, Digital Information Coordinator, David and Jane Cohn Scientist, Education Specialist, and a new Director of Advancement with the Foundation.
- Innovation is underway in The Dome. Installation is almost complete for five new laser projectors, a new speaker system, lighting and controls upgrades, and new

Digistar 7 software. The Dome is a valued and effective tool at the institution's disposal.

Operations Report

Mr. Harris provided a brief overview of operations.

- Housekeeping is going to transition to inhouse staff using the same model as how the security team transitioned. By early 2024, the new housekeeping staff will be in place.
- Special Events continue to perform well. July to September gross revenue totaled over \$173k. The first two weeks in October have already surpassed over \$100k in gross revenue.
- The team is examining what other offerings can be provided: birthday parties, micro weddings, and company picnics. The goal is to utilize alternative spaces in the Science Museum, such as the NewMarket Plaza.
- The Thalhimer Pavilion needs significant repair work to replace the carpet and lighting and to add fans and ventilation.
- To add to the overall guest experience, a food/catering option needs to be added to our offerings.
- Discussions with Manask Consulting, an industry leader in consulting for revenue operations, brought advice on direction for food service operations at the Science Museum.
- Manask Consulting suggested BeanSprouts as a full service operator of a family focused cafe within the Science Museum.
- Mr. Harris shared a sample menu from the provider.
- Operations plans to reintroduce free meeting spaces to community partners. The free meeting space will be provided one evening a month for partners such as Richmond Astronomical Society and Richmond Public Schools.

Ms. Burgin asked about the size of the free community spaces. Mr. Harris responded that the options will include the Barbara Thalhimer Theater, the RF&P Forum, and the Executive Conference room.

Ms. Bradford asked about the increased residential development along Arthur Ashe Boulevard and its impact on operations. Mr. Harris said that the increase in development will bring in more guests and create ample more opportunities.

Dr. Winn asked about any set plans for remodeling the public restrooms in the Science Museum. Mr. Harris said plans are in place for continued restroom remodeling.

Mr. Ganeriwala asked about the cafe's operating hours. Mr. Harris said that the cafe will operate during the Science Museum's operating hours.

Dr. Winn asked about how cell phone usage factors into the guest experience at the Science Museum. Mr. Harris responded that free public wifi is available throughout the Museum and QR codes are available to expand the experience.

Finance and Business Operations Committee's Report

Mr. Conti provided an overview of the financial position of the Science Museum.

- The financial position of the Science Museum continues in a strong direction.
- First quarter performance is as expected and the trends for the second quarter look great.
- Working capital is in strong shape.
- Projections are proving accurate for the budget.

Trustee Discretionary Fund Transfers, Resolution 001-24 and 002-24

Mr. Conti reviewed the proposed transfers.

Resolution #001-24

Approval to reduce the fund transfer for completed projects and amend the purpose of the transfers for ticketing and membership systems and the development of food service concept(s) for the Science Museum.

It is the responsibility of the Board to approve reductions or amendments in funding to previously approved transfers from the Trustee Discretionary Fund.

The transfers below were made to accomplish specific projects that have been completed. Management is requesting that the remaining funds be transferred back to the Trustee Discretionary Fund. The following reductions are requested:

- Staff bonuses reduced from \$11,250 to \$0 and
- DEAI consultant reduced from \$55,430.33 to \$0.

In resolution #002-2021, the Board of Trustees approved a \$80,000 transfer from the Trustee Discretionary Fund to allocate funds for the costs of the Ticketure ticketing and membership system. As of September 30, 2023, there is \$28,078.68 remaining in the fund. Management would like to request that the purpose of that funding be expanded to include costs associated with improvements to the Science Museum admission process.

In resolution #007-2023, the Board of Trustees approved a \$150,000 transfer from the Trustee Discretionary Fund to hire expertise to evaluate potential restaurant space.

Management has identified a partner with experience operating food service within museums. The partnership would provide a more immediate solution to the Science Museum's food service needs within the existing cafe space. Management would like to repurpose the \$150,000 in Trustee Discretionary Funds to complete the renovations and purchase the equipment needed to operate the new food service concept.

The Board of Trustees authorizes the Science Museum of Virginia Foundation to return \$66,680.33 to the Trustee Discretionary Fund from the previously approved projects above, expand the purpose of the remaining \$28,078.68 in the ticketing and membership fund and repurpose the \$150,000 allocated for restaurant expertise to cafe renovations.

Mr. Mills made a motion to approve 001-24. The second was called by Ms. Ramirez. A vote was taken, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Resolution #002-24

Approval to allocate funds for improvements to the Thalhimer Pavilion.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to approve all transfers from the Trustee Discretionary Fund. Management is requesting an action to approve a transfer of \$100,000 to complete improvements to the Thalhimer Pavilion.

The Thalhimer Pavilion was created more than 20 years ago as a temporary event space. The space continues to be utilized for special event rentals; however, it is in need of new carpets and lighting, as well as ceiling fans and a thorough cleaning of the canvas walls. Management anticipates the updates will result in increased usage and revenue for the Science Museum.

The Board authorizes the Science Museum of Virginia Foundation to transfer \$100,000 from the Trustee Discretionary Fund held in account #817 for the above expenses.

Mr. Mills made a motion to approve 002-24. Mr. Mills Dr. Berry seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Attendance Report

Ms. Moyer reviewed recent attendance and engagement figures.

- July to September visitation is down 8.6% year over year, total attendance for the period was 135k.
- The summer exhibition *Space: an Out-of-Gravity Experience* proved not as popular as *Planet Shark: Predator or Prey* or *Tyrannosaur: Meet the Family*.
- The closure of The Dome for renovations also impacted admission.

- Total attendance for *Space* was 45k, which is down 9% from *Planet Shark: Predator or Prey* and 27% down from *Tyrannosaur: Meet the Family*.
- Conversion rate, guests who purchased an upgrade ticket from general admission, was at 28%.
- Repeat member attendance for *Space* was up 292% from last summer.
- Group attendance was up 179% from last summer and 786% up from *Tyrannosaur: Meet the Family*.
- September brought a rebound in general attendance and group visitation is up. Fall group booking are up 50%
- Review of upcoming exhibitions:
 - *Wild Kratts®: Creature Power®!* - September 23, 2023 – January 21, 2024.
 - *Discover Steampunk* - February 10 – August 18, 2024.
 - *BODY WORLDS: Anatomy of Happiness* - May 25 – September 2, 2024.
 - *Math Alive!* - September 28, 2024 - January 12, 2025.
 - *Towers of Tomorrow with LEGO® Bricks* - February 1 – August 24, 2025.
 - *Ultimate Dinosaurs* - tentative summer 2025.
- Review of upcoming films:
 - *Ancient Caves* - opened October 1.
 - Extended *Into America's Wild* and *Antarctica* leases for another year.
 - Spring film about water (ideally sharks).

Dr. Winn asked about the trends from other museums on the performance of exhibitions centered around space, dinosaurs and sharks. Ms. Moyer responded that anecdotal information is difficult to pull from. Mr. Conti added that balancing science content and blockbuster focus is tricky, but important.

Ms. Burgin asked about how the target audience and demographics factor into the success of the summer exhibitions. Ms. Moyer stated that a deep dive would be needed to pull that information from the data.

Ms. Falls asked about *BODY WORLDS: Anatomy of Happiness*. Ms. Moyer responded that the exhibition will focus on how the human body processes and expresses happiness.

Education Report

Ms. Purdum gave a recap of Education's recent work.

- Team members just returned from the four day ASTC annual conference.
- Topics explored included: walking the line of blockbuster exhibits and science experiences, immersive experiences, artificial intelligence, climate change, and planetary health initiatives.
- New interpretive signage and QR codes were installed in The Green in both English and Spanish.

- Last year the Science Museum received grant funding from LEGO. This year an additional funding opportunity is available called “Build the Change,” with the focus on encouraging building the change “you want to see in the world.” The Science Museum is partnering with BlueSky Fund on this initiative.
- Programming is in development for *The Forge* to host an activity for participants to build and picture options for further greening of the Science Museum campus. .

Dr Berry shared with the group some additional highlights from the Education team:

- The second annual Virginia Fiesta was a huge success. The event was well attended and well reviewed.
- Science After Dark and Minds of All Kinds programming continues.
- Additional offerings are in development for the local retirement community.
- The early learner programming in *LightPlace* is undergoing a revamp with additional weekly engagement opportunities.
- Summer camp again proved to be a great success with a solid return on investment. Next year the Science Museum hopes to expand summer camp from 6 to 9 weeks.
- The Science Museum hosted a NOAA community engagement event offered completely in Spanish.
- Upcoming programming review:
 - Science After Dark: Spooky Science with American Chemical Society - October 20.
 - Minds of All Kinds - November 1.
 - Sunrise Science: “An Ocean Apart” presented by Dr Rick Spinrad - November 2.
 - Girls In Science Camp In presented by Dupont - November 11.
 - 46th Annual Model Railroad Show presented by Dominion Energy - November 24, 25, and 26.
 - Girl Scout Camp In - December 2.
 - Favorite Things Week! - December 26-December 31.

Mr. Mills asked if the camp-ins were full. Ms. Purdum responded that the camp in’s are not full, but the Girl Scouts camps are private.

Northern Virginia Science Center Report

Mr. Sumeet Shrivastava gave sincere words of thanks to the Science Museum Board of Trustees and their support and collaboration for the Northern Virginia Science Center project.

Ms. Spivy offered words of appreciation and remembrance for John Benton. Mr. Benton was greatly involved in the project and proved to be a wonderful asset. Many great lessons were learned from him. He will be greatly missed.

Ms. Spivy also expressed thanks to Ms. Norwood-Marquez and her work over the years to support the Northern Virginia Science Center project.

Ms. Spivy shared a fly-through video of the current renderings of the project.

Ms. Spivy gave a brief project overview:

- The real estate closing is forecasted to occur in mid-November.
- Fundraising efforts by the campaign committee are well underway with all galleries having a title partner.
- A title partnership requires a minimum \$1M gift.
- The goal is to raise \$25M for the project and there is \$6M left to raise.
- The project has received great support from government contracting entities and local Northern Virginia technology and data businesses.

Mr. Mills asked if the raw fundraising prospects will help close the final \$6M left to raise. Ms. Spivy responded that the Foundation is always looking for new connections and they greatly appreciate any help. Mr. Shrivastava commented that community and family connections make a great difference in expanding fundraising prospects.

Foundation Report

Ms. Peeler shared an overview of the Foundation's recent efforts and progress.

- Great attendance was received at the Green Phase I donor gathering.
- The Foundation is restructuring the Board of Directors meeting schedule to help increase participation.
- Sue Rockwell joined the Foundation team as the Director of Advancement.
- The Annual Fund campaign is being re-branded to better focus efforts. The campaign is now called Annual Giving, and once giving hits a set goal, all additional funds will be endowed for title 1 students to come to the Science Museum for free.
- The Foundation assets and endowment is managed by Spider Management and TIFF Investment Management.
- Current total assets are at \$31.9M, \$2M is in investments and \$9M in cash assets.
- The Foundation will be hosting a social for board members and donors on November 14, 2023 in The Dome.

Committees and Board Positions

Mr. Conti reviewed the current slate of board positions and committee assignments.

- Chair - Dr. Denise Walters
- Vice Chair - Mr. David Mills
- Secretary - Ms. Cristina Ramirez
- Finance Committee - Ms. Gina Burgin
- Building and Site Committee - Mr. David Mills
- Strategic Planning Committee - Ms. Fran Bradford

- Education Committee - Dr. Rodney Berry
- Northern Virginia Science Center Committee - Ms. Patty Nicoson
- Dr. Walters recommended that new board members consider which committee they would like to serve on.

Dr. Walters asked for a motion to approve the current slate of board positions and committee members. The motion was made by Dr. Berry and seconded by Mr. Mills. The motion was carried unanimously.

New Business

Dr. Walters asked for any new business.

Adjournment

With no new business heard, Dr. Berry made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Ms. Burgin. Dr. Walters called for a vote which passed unanimously without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

The next meeting will be on January 18, 2024.