



**APPROVED Minutes**  
Science Museum of Virginia  
Finance and Business Operations Committee Meeting  
Forum  
2500 West Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23220

April 18, 2024  
11 a.m.

**Present:** Gina Burgin, Karey Malyszko, Patricia Nicoson

**Staff:** Rich Conti, Ash Harris, Courtney Moyer, MJ Benson and Ada Sue Siler.

**Other Attendees:** Debora Love, Office of the Attorney General  
Adam Thailhimer

**Welcome, Call To Order and Approval of January 18, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Burgin welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 11:07 a.m.

Ms. Burgin called for a motion to approve the January 18, 2024, meeting minutes. Ms. Nicoson made the motion. Ms. Malyszko seconded it. The motion was called by voice vote and all voted in favor of approving the January 18, 2024, meeting minutes as presented.

**Director's Report**

Mr. Conti highlighted the following:

- The day's agenda includes plans for a tour of The Green Phase II after lunch.
- It was noted that four of the last five months have seen the highest attendance in the Science Museum's history, prompting a discussion due to the exceptional numbers.
- The focus has shifted to the Foundation, which is currently undergoing restructuring, with new board members and leadership changes. There's a

deliberate approach to filling vacant positions, seeking the best candidates without rushing the process.

- Various outdoor projects are underway, including The Green Phase II and the demolition at 1000 DMV Drive.
- Guest operations will be impacted by upcoming projects, such as HVAC upgrades and window installations.
- A new concessions stand area is being developed and the work plan will be reviewed accordingly.

Andrew Thailhimer sought clarification on the location of concession stands, to which Mr. Conti confirmed and elaborated on the scope, emphasizing a holistic approach focusing on the new floor and exhibit elements.

Ms. Malyzko inquired about securing contractors for complex historic elements such as doors and windows. Mr. Conti explained that window bidding is pending for June or July, expressing confidence in finding specialized contractors.

Ms. Burgin raised the possibility of conducting work after hours, to which Mr. Conti acknowledged and said that will be considered if possible.

Ms. Moyer mentioned the aim to consolidate most of the work to the month of September, during the lower attendance period. Mr. Conti noted the agency considered closing for the month of September to facilitate comprehensive renovations, but as that's not feasible, admission costs may be reduced to reflect the construction and closed areas during this period.

### **FY24 Work Plan Updates**

Mr. Conti gave the following updates on the FY24 Work Plan:

- Work Plan Objective 1 focuses on Phase 3 development for The Green. Work is underway, although progress has been slower than anticipated in achieving a new budget and project identity, resulting in a two-quarter delay. Fundraising efforts are needed to support the project's advancement.
- Work Plan Objective 2 focuses on staff capacity, knowledge transfer, and continuity of leadership to strengthen the team. Significant progress has been made, with the retirement of Mr. Teacher and the overlap of the new Director of Facilities.
- Work Plan Objective 3 involves documenting the history of Broad Street Station, with Dr. Brian Green leading interviews and transcription efforts. While progress is being made, substantial work remains, particularly in exploring the social history of the 1930s and 1940s. A grant from another museum has been secured to support this endeavor.

- Work Plan Objective 4 pertains to food service, with a completed bid for the food space in the café. Progress is being made on establishing a full-service restaurant, although its work will continue in the next fiscal year. Mr. Conti indicated that the location for the restaurant will most likely be incorporated into the NewMarket Plaza.
- Work Plan Objective 5 focuses on the volunteer program, with Mr. Strawderman effectively managing and strengthening the program.
- Lastly, Work Plan Objective 6 centers on the interpretive plan, which is meeting its goals by highlighting mathematics in exhibit galleries and strategically aligning topics with social streams.

### **Trustee Financial Summary Review**

Ms. Moyer provided an overview of the financial statement:

- During the discussion, the focus was on revenue and expenses, with a desire to see less red and more black indicating over-budget revenue in several areas, a positive sign as it indicates less reliance on Foundation funds.
- On the expense side, there's a conservative management approach, with many items under budget, although wages were initially high but have since leveled out.
- The Working Capital of \$1.5M allocated for Phase 2 of The Green project is nearing exhaustion and will be fully expended by next month.

Ms. Nicoson expressed satisfaction with the financial numbers.

Mr. Conti shared that the Foundation has \$2M earmarked for The Green and plans to initiate the East Green project once the concept is finalized.

Regarding 1000 DMV Drive demolition, Ms. Burgin asked about its status, and Mr. Conti clarified it as a standalone project funded with \$2.5M from the state.

### **Capital Projects Report**

Mr. Conti reviewed the status of the following projects:

- The discussion focused on funding from the state for capital projects and Maintenance Reserve funds for Broad Street Station, with new authority to allocate some towards exhibit projects.
- Updates on the Northern Virginia Science Center project were deferred as bidding has not yet occurred, but once completed, construction funds will be secured.

- Critical infrastructure and upgrades were also highlighted.

Ms. Nicoson inquired about funding in capital funds, to which Mr. Conti explained that it spans multiple years. Mr. Conti further elaborated that there will be a 3% increase in salary for classified staff, while for special fund staff, the difference for the raise will need to be paid from earned revenue.

### **Business Operations Report**

Ms. Moyer reviewed the attendance performance patterns:

- The Science Museum had record attendance, with a 12.5 percent increase quarter over quarter and a 7.4 percent increase year to date.
- Group visitation is also on the rise, up 10 percent year over year, with spring break seeing a significant increase of 12.5 percent, totaling over 16,000 visitors.
- However, new challenges have emerged, such as determining the threshold for a sold-out event and potential impacts on guest experience, particularly with events like Science After Dark.
- Additionally, complications arise from member no-shows, prompting consideration of educational efforts to improve compliance with ticket bookings.
- Furthermore, the issue of social scammers scalping tickets, both individuals and bots, on social media platforms was raised as a concern.
- Exhibitions and films
  - *Discover Steampunk*
    - February 10–August 18, 2024
  - *Secrets of the Sea*
    - Opened March 1, 2024
  - *BODY WORLDS: The Anatomy of Happiness*
    - May 25–September 2, 2024
  - *Animal Kingdom*
    - Opens June 1, 2024
  - *Math Alive*
    - September 28, 2024–January 12, 2025
  - *Towers of Tomorrow with LEGO® Bricks*
    - February 1–August 24, 2025
  - *Ultimate Dinosaurs*
    - May 31–September 1, 2025

Mr. Thalhimer inquired about additional programming for spring break, to which Mr. Conti responded that the Science Museum maintains normal programs but at full capacity.

### **Looking Ahead**

Mr. Conti gave the following points:

- In June, the proposed FY25 budget will be presented, which will remain largely similar but with some tweaks and adjustments.
- The Foundation rebuild process is ongoing and will require time and change, with an active fundraising process in place.
- Also highlighted that approval to go to bid for Northern Virginia Science Center construction will be the next significant milestone. With this approval, construction can commence soon after, and firm dates will be established, alongside the completion of the exhibit package. Additionally, variable pricing for demand times has been considered.

Ms. Nicoson mentioned developments regarding fundraising for the Northern Virginia Science Center, particularly with Ms. Spivey and hopes for increased funding from Amazon.

No other comments or new business occurred.

### **Adjournment**

Ms. Burgin called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Nicoson called the motion and Ms. Malyszko seconded the motion. A vote was taken and it passed without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

The next Finance and Business Operations Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 20, 2024.