



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

June 20, 2024
3 p.m.

Present: Dr. Denise Walters, Cristina Ramirez, David Mills, Elsa Falls, Patricia Nicoson, Dr. Rodney Berry, Gina Burgin, Fran Bradford, Karey Malyszko, Ukay Jackson, Dr. Irma Becerra (Virtual), Thomas Gottwald

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

Other Attendees: Adam Kane, Office of the Attorney General; Cindy Norwood-Marquez, member of the general public

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

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

Dr. Walters asked the Trustees to review the April 18, 2024, meeting minutes. Ms. Ramirez called a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Berry called the second. Dr. Walters called for a vote which passed unanimously without objection.

Mr. Conti introduced Mr. Thomas Gottwald, the newly appointed Trustee to the Board.

Mr. Conti reviewed the agenda for the meeting. This meeting marks the final one for the fiscal year, and approval is needed for next year's budget. The agency, which has been in existence for 47 years, is currently experiencing the highest attendance ever.

Director's Report

Mr. Conti highlighted the following, beginning with the FY25 Work Plan initiatives and The Green:

- The Science Museum will begin the planning process to maximize the impact of its 50th anniversary in 2027.
- The Science Museum will analyze its current staffing and develop a more effective model for hiring, retaining and employing talented individuals to allow for continued growth.
- The Science Museum will assess all critical building systems and formulate a long-term plan for maintaining Broad Street Station.
- The Science Museum will implement creative ways to fully support the Foundation during its current restructuring.
- The Science Museum will undertake a comprehensive study to analyze the utilization of interior space and develop recommendations for future improvements.
- The conversation then shifted to discussion of The Green Phases I and II.
- There are some issues with the grass due to drought conditions, but they are being addressed.
- A portion of the East Green has been seeded, after the demolition of 1000 DMV Drive.
- Additional surface parking lots will be removed in the East Green area.
- A Request for Proposals has been issued to hire a new design team, with a selection to be made this summer.

Dr. Berry inquired about irrigation, and Mr. Conti confirmed that irrigation is incorporated into the design of the greenspace.

Ms. Falls asked about the staff parking lots, and Mr. Conti confirmed they will be removed. Staff will park in the parking deck or elsewhere on the site.

Dr. Berry inquired about the Bon Secours building, and Mr. Conti indicated there is not much of an update currently. The City of Richmond Department of Parks and Recreation could be relocated into the building.

Ms. Burgin inquired about the K-lot parking area, and Mr. Conti confirmed that the K-lot will remain.

- Northern Virginia Science Center building construction is currently out for bid. Once the cost of construction is finalized, the next step will proceed, with groundbreaking planned for the fall.
- The General Assembly approved an appropriation of \$250,000 for planning interior refurbishment of Broad Street Station including a full-service restaurant.
- *Orbit*, a new gallery space outside The Dome entrance on Level 0, will introduce a mini-gallery, a new terrazzo floor, and new utilization of space outside. *Orbit* will offer guests an enhanced journey through space concepts, including an anechoic chamber.
- Other Science Museum projects include HVAC system upgrades and renovations to exterior windows, the portico, and main entry doors.
- Upcoming meeting dates were reviewed, with a meeting scheduled for a Wednesday in June of next year.
- Deficit appropriation was acknowledged, noting that the Board is technically responsible for any debt incurred by the Science Museum.

Operations Report

Mr. Harris provided a brief overview of operations.

- The new Director of Facilities, Sonny Knighton, is settling in well.
- The Science Museum has also hired the new Exhibits and Technical Solutions manager, Dylan Anderson.
- Special event rentals continue to thrive, including the return of birthday parties.
- From July 2023 to May 2024, Special event rentals generated gross revenue of \$651,717, which is 31% ahead of last year, with birthday party revenue amounting to \$7,818.
- The gift shop earned \$592,305 from July to May 2024, marking a 14% increase from last year, and food and beverage gross revenue earned \$299,984, a 28% increase from last year.
- The cafe registers are upgraded to support both Apple and Android payments.

Mr. Mills inquired if the tap-to-pay option contributed to the increase in sales, and Mr. Harris confirmed that it did.

Ms. Bradford asked about the best-selling items in the gift shop, and Mr. Harris noted that there are observable themes and patterns, and that staff attend the toy fair in New York City each year to stay apprised of retail trends.

Ms. Jackson asked about the online presence, and Mr. Harris confirmed that they are now equipped to handle e-commerce.

Finance and Business Operations Committee's Report

Ms. Burgin reviewed the Trustee Summary and confirmed that the Science Museum is on track with its budget.

- The operating budget review highlighted both revenues and expenses.
- Revenue from Education Program Fees has increased due to rebounded group attendance and higher summer camp capacity.
- The budget includes six months of café revenue and a conservative estimate of six months of revenue share from a third-party café operator.
- Conservative increases in admission, membership, and special events revenue are planned.
- No Federal grant revenue is anticipated at this time.
- There is an allocation for potential wage and salary increases for Special Fund positions.
- Non-personal services expenses will decrease, while personal services expenses will increase due to the in-sourcing of housekeeping and security.
- The staff structure in Special Events and Technical Solutions is being adjusted to support new programming, internal AV needs, special events, and to provide support to the Foundation.
- One new position is being added in Communications.

Ms. Jackson inquired about the 3% salary increase for staff. Mr. Conti explained that this increase is determined by the state, and they will pay the staff accordingly. General fund positions are covered by the state, but special fund classified positions are not and must be covered by the agency. Mr. Conti further mentioned that there is a strong performance evaluation process in place, and staff must meet certain criteria to be eligible for the increase.

Dr. Berry asked about the grants line item. Mr. Conti clarified that this line item pertains specifically to Federal grant funds; he noted that this is distinct from private grants.

Ms. Malyszko asked about other revenues, to which Ms. Moyer responded that these typically include surplus or miscellaneous items that do not fall into standard categories. Ms. Malyszko also inquired about the change in utility expenses, which Mr. Conti responded is mainly due to the demolition of the former Workers' Compensation building.

Ms. Bradford asked about the anticipated lower revenue in the gift shop and food service line. Mr. Conti explained that this is due to the introduction of a third-party operator.

Ms. Burgin stated that the committee recommends approval. Dr. Walters called for a motion to approve the FY25 Budget as presented, which was called by Dr. Berry, seconded by Ms. Ramirez. Dr. Walters then asked if there were any additional questions or items. The call for a vote resulted in unanimous approval.

- Ms. Burgin shared the Six-Year Capital Project Plan.
- Project: Development of the East Green: Cost: \$10,000,000
 - The long-term vision for greenspace on the Science Museum's campus has expanded to include development down DMV Drive to include the property formerly occupied by the Workers' Compensation building. Drawing on lessons learned from Phase I and II, the new East Green project would have a new design, engineering and construction team, with goals helped set by several rounds of community involvement and feedback.
- Project: Completion of infrastructure improvements to expand access to food service and touring exhibitions: Cost: \$6,000,000 (\$250,000 in planning received)
 - This project would allow the Science Museum to make the infrastructure improvements to convert the Garner Gallery and NewMarket Plaza into a full-service restaurant to service guests at the Science Museum and The Green. It would also make the infrastructure improvements to convert the Level 3 office space into a touring exhibition gallery.

Dr. Walters asked for questions about the plan. Dr. Walters asked for a motion to approve the Six-Year Capital Project Plan as presented, called by Ms. Jackson, seconded Dr. Winn, vote all in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

- Attendance records reflect positive trends, with visitation numbers rising notably.
 - Group visitation has officially surpassed last year with July 2023 to May 2024 reaching 62,668.
 - June group bookings are at 4,835.
 - *BODY WORLDS* attendance numbers are at 9,024.
- Upcoming exhibitions include:
 - *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

Education Report

Dr. Berry provided the following highlights of team Education's recent work.

- Summer Camp commenced on June 17.
- Science After Dark: Prehistoric Party in May celebrated the installation of the Quetzalcoatlus exhibit.
- Sixty-two guests camped outside in the Garner Pavilion during May's Camp Out.
- Sunrise Science attendees enjoyed learning about and tasting ice cream, as well as exploring cutting-edge cancer research.
- Summer hours and programming in The MiX began on June 4.
- The Science within Reach program supported 13 community events, 11 of which took place in April, engaging with 3,000 guests.
- The Science Museum has been certified as an Accessible Hospitality Location in Richmond by VisitAble.
- Eighty-five unique volunteers contributed 1,400 hours of volunteer time from April to May.
- Six summer interns and students from Partnership for the Future, Girls for Change, and the Mayor's Youth Academy were welcomed.
- Dr. Winn received praise for his Sunrise Science talk at the beginning of June.

Ms. Falls inquired about the Virginia State Anatomical Program's body donation initiative. Mr. Conti clarified that the program will focus on promoting organ donation.

Ms. Burgin asked about the Science on Tap event. Ms. Moyer provided an overview of the Science on Tap 80's Night programming. Ms. Bradford asked if alcohol would be served at the event, to which Ms. Moyer confirmed that alcohol would be available.

New Business

Dr. Walters asked for any new business.

Dr. Walters recognized Ms. Jackson for her 10 years of dedicated service, noting her as a fierce advocate within the organization. Dr. Walters expressed her pleasure in working

alongside Ms. Jackson. Mr. Conti added that Ms. Jackson remains an integral part of the organization's family and continues to serve on the Liaison Committee. Dr. Walters expressed admiration, stating that Ms. Jackson is her role model.

Adjournment

With no additional new business heard, Ms. Jackson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Ms. Ramirez. Dr. Walters called for a vote which passed unanimously without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

The next meeting will be on October 17, 2024.