



APPROVED Minutes
Quarterly Board of Trustees Meeting
VIRTUAL via Zoom
2500 West Broad Street

June 18, 2025
3 p.m.

Present: Dr. Denise Walters, Cristina Ramirez, David Mills, Patricia Nicoson, Gina Burgin, Fran Bradford, Dr. Irma Becerra, Thomas Gottwald, Ram Venkatachalam, Jeff Bentley, Dr. Robert Winn, Kate Hight, Elsa Falls

Staff: Rich Conti, Courtney Moyer, Ash Harris, Timshel Purdum, Martha Quinn, MJ Benson, and Ada Sue Siler.

Other Attendees: Lauren Coleman, Office of the Attorney General

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Mr. Mills, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. and verified a quorum was present. Mr. Mills reviewed the agenda and noted that this meeting is the first all virtual board meeting since the pandemic.

Mr. Mills asked the Trustees to review the April 17, 2025, meeting minutes. Dr. Beccera called a motion to approve the minutes with noted amendment. Dr. Walters called the second. Mr. Mills called for a vote to approve the minutes as presented which passed unanimously without objection.

Director's Report

Mr. Conti shared the following:

- The fiscal year is nearing its end.
- The joint meeting held in April was noted as productive.
- Upcoming efforts include branding initiatives, strategic discussions, and an aspirational rebranding process for the Science Museum.
- Financial performance has been strong, with revenue goals met as early as May, positioning the organization well for a successful FY26.

- The East Green project received approval from the AARB, which expressed appreciation for the project and offered positive feedback on the design. Cost estimation for the project is underway.
- The upcoming year will be significant for engagements with the General Assembly.
- The Science Museum plans to make two formal requests to the General Assembly: operating support for the Northern Virginia Science Center and design funding for renovations to Broad Street Station.
- Some construction days were lost due to inclement weather on the Northern Virginia Science Center project; however, exhibit contracts have been finalized and fabrication is currently in progress.
- Meeting dates for the upcoming year were reviewed and confirmed as follows:
 - Thursday, October 16, 2025
 - Thursday, January 22, 2026
 - Thursday, April 16, 2026
 - Thursday, June 18, 2026
 - Special Meeting: Wednesday, October 29, 2025
- On the days of Board of Trustees meetings, the Finance and Business Operations Committee will convene at 11 a.m., followed by the Education Committee at 1:30 p.m. Board of Trustees meetings will begin at 3 p.m. All meetings will be held in the RF & P Forum unless otherwise specified.
- A meeting with the legislative delegation is scheduled to take place during the special meeting in October.

Mr. Conti reviewed the Deficit Appropriation Acknowledgement

Pursuant to §4-3.01, if any agency violates any of the prohibitions stated above and incurs an unauthorized deficit, the Governor is directed to withhold approval of such excess obligation or expenditure. The section stipulates that there will be no reimbursement of said excess, nor shall there be any liability or obligation upon the state to appropriate funds to address the unauthorized deficit. Instead, those members of the governing board of any such agency who shall have voted, or its head if there is no governing board, shall be personally liable for the full amount of such unauthorized deficit. At the discretion of the Governor, violators shall be deemed guilty of neglect of official duty and will be subject to removal from his/her position.

Operations Report

Mr. Harris reviewed the following:

- Special events generated \$765,525 in revenue from a total of 187 events.
- Event types included: 67 fundraisers/gala events, 39 birthday parties, 30 meetings, 18 conferences, 16 weddings/celebrations, 15 vendor fairs, and 2 festivals/community events.
- Enterprise revenue streams reported as follows:
 - Café: \$165,983

- Concessions: \$123,247
 - Gift Shop: \$539,985
- Special Events are currently tracking 18% above last year's performance, with the majority of events being corporate functions and birthday parties.
- Enterprise operations have exceeded revenue budget expectations.
- Building updates include the successful completion of a nine-month HVAC project, which also introduced a new system for improved control.
- Discussions regarding the transition to Bean Sprouts, the new third-party café operator, are ongoing with a target completion date after Labor Day.
- Dome roof repairs have addressed leaks and weak spots and included repainting.
- Refurbishment of the woodwork in the train sheds is currently in progress.
- A project to install new windows and doors is scheduled to begin in the coming weeks.
- The update concluded with a call for questions.

Finance and Business Operations Committee Report

Ms. Burgin provided the following updates:

- The Trustee Summary, reflecting financial data through the end of May, indicates that overall revenues are up, although membership numbers are slightly behind projections.
- Expenses are currently tracking slightly below budget, with utility costs significantly reduced due to the discontinuation of services for the Workers Comp building.
- The Science Museum anticipates closing the fiscal year with a modest operating surplus.

Ms. Burgin then reviewed the proposed resolutions.

Resolution #002-2025

Approval to allocate funds for branding work.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to approve all transfers from the Trustee Discretionary Fund.

The Science Museum rebranded itself in 2011 to help change the way the community viewed the agency in order to increase attendance and support its mission. The brand successfully helped the Science Museum connect with the community on a deeper level and has contributed to the agency's success. As the Science Museum approaches its 50th anniversary, management would like to explore a new brand that will propel the agency forward and set the stage for even greater growth in the coming years.

Management would like to allocate \$200,000 to secure third-party expertise to guide the branding process, including significant research, strategic planning, and development of a new

verbal and visual identity. The goal is to complete work in time to unveil the new brand in early 2027 as part of the 50th anniversary celebration.

The Board authorizes the Science Museum of Virginia Foundation to transfer \$200,000 from the Trustee Discretionary Fund held in account #817 for the above expenses.

Trustees were asked to review the information and were invited to pose any questions.

Ms. Burgin requested that Mr. Conti and Ms. Moyer provide a recap of the key elements of the rebrand. Mr. Conti emphasized that the brand serves as the organization's voice within the community and noted the opportunity presented by the upcoming anniversary. He stated that outside expertise and additional support are necessary for the rebranding effort. In response to Dr. Beccera's inquiry about whether a Request for Proposals (RFP) would be issued, Ms. Moyer confirmed that an RFP had been posted and proposals were currently being solicited. Ms. Burgin affirmed that the Finance Committee recommended proceeding.

A motion to approve was called by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Dr. Walters. A verbal vote was conducted; all members approved, none opposed, and the motion passed.

Ms. Burgin then presented the next resolution.

Resolution #003-2025

Approval to encumber agency working capital.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to oversee agency finances and approve policy decisions regarding substantial investment of agency funds.

The Science Museum has experienced several years of record attendance, resulting in a financial reserve in earned revenue. While several exhibits within the Speed exhibition, which opened in 2016, are recognized as iconic experiences at the Science Museum, management would like to upgrade other exhibits to help keep the guest experience fresh and highlight new STEM content. In the absence of capital funding for these improvements, management would like to encumber a portion of agency working capital to revitalize the Speed exhibition to support the agency's mission and increase guest engagement.

The Board authorizes Science Museum management to encumber \$1,000,000 in agency working capital for the above purposes.

The Finance and Business Operations Committee voted to recommend the proposal. A motion to approve was called by Mr. Vencatachalam and seconded by Dr. Walters. A call

for discussion was made, but no comments were offered. A verbal vote was conducted, and the motion carried.

The Board then reviewed the proposed Capital and Operating requests.

Capital: ~\$2.2M

FF&E for Northern Virginia Science Center

Request for funding for furniture, fixtures and equipment (FF&E) to support operations. Funding supports education and programming equipment, cabling for data and communication, technology and security equipment, maintenance and janitorial equipment, first aid and accessibility equipment, exhibit maintenance tools and equipment, facilities equipment, exterior tools, furniture for administration and support areas, outdoor furniture for guest seating and dining.

Capital: ~\$3M

Detailed Planning for Refurbishment and Re-Allocation of Interior Space

Request for funding to advance the project to the next planning phase. Amount requested is typically 10% of the total construction cost, which will be finalized once pre-planning is complete. Once detailed planning is complete, construction funding will be requested.

Operating: ~\$2M

General Fund Support for Northern Virginia Science Center Operations

Request for an increase in agency General Fund support to hire Northern Virginia Science Center staff and augment staff at Broad Street to support the Science Center. Funding would also support general operations such as utilities, insurance, building maintenance, etc. Funding request is being finalized through the development of an updated pro forma.

A call for questions was made.

Mr. Mills inquired whether the items could be approved collectively or needed individual approval; Mr. Conti confirmed they could be approved together. Mr. Vencatachalam requested clarification on the interior refurbishment request, and it was explained that one request pertains to the Richmond campus while the other two relate to the Northern Virginia Science Center. Mr. Gottwald asked whether the General Assembly and state government staff were aware of these requests, and Mr. Conti affirmed that the information process is ongoing.

Mr. Gottwald also asked whether this combined format for Capital and Operating requests is typical, and Mr. Conti confirmed that it is the standard procedure.

Mr. Mills requested a motion to approve all three items; the motion was made by Ms. Nicoson, seconded by Mr. Gottwald, and all members voted in favor.

FY 26 Operating Budget

Ms. Burgin shared the following:

- The FY26 operating budget was presented, with the Finance and Business Operations Committee recommending that the Board approve the budget as proposed.
- The budget reflects a conservative approach, includes increased support from the Northern Virginia Science Center Foundation, and takes into account the potential addition of Bean Sprouts as a third-party café operator.
- Forecasts were based on FY25 figures.
- A call for questions was made.

Dr. Walters expressed appreciation for the team's efforts in controlling costs while continuing to advance the Science Museum's mission.

Ms. Bradford inquired about the decrease in revenue projections for the gift shop, facility rentals, and food service; Ms. Moyer confirmed that the anticipated transition to Bean Sprouts as an external operator would impact those revenue lines.

Mr. Mills called for a motion to approve the operating budget, which was made by Dr. Winn and seconded by Dr. Becerra. A verbal vote was taken, and the motion carried.

Attendance and Upcoming Exhibitions

Ms. Burgin began the presentation by reviewing recent attendance figures:

- Total year-to-date visitation is 514,816, representing a 7.5% increase compared to the previous year.
- Group visitation stands at 78,664 year-to-date, reflecting a 25.5% year-over-year increase and placing the organization on track to exceed 82,000 group visitors this year.
- Early attendance for *Ultimate Dinosaurs* is 15,483, which is 8.5% higher than attendance for *Tyrannosaurs* during the same time period.
- Upcoming exhibitions include:
 - Garner Gallery
 - *Towers of Tomorrow with LEGO® Bricks*: now–August 24, 2025
 - *Power of Poison*: October 4, 2025–April 12, 2026
 - *Science Unplugged*: May 8, 2026–July 3, 2026
 - *Rescue*: July 13, 2026–January 17, 2027
 - Dewey Gottwald Center
 - *Ultimate Dinosaurs*: May 31–September 1, 2025

- *Survival of the Slowest*: May 23–September 7, 2026
- *Food: Science, Culture, Cuisine*: summer 2027
- *Orbit*: fall 2025

Education Team Report

Ms. Purdum reported a successful school year, with group attendance numbers continuing to rise.

- The teen leadership program remains active and effective.
- Efforts are ongoing to expand programming that enhances guest engagement with the museum.

Dr. Walters presented three proposed additions to the Science Museum's collection:

- A 1943 RF & P train manifest documenting the busiest day at the station.
- A water drum commissioned from the Nottoway Tribe for the Water Exhibition in Danville, replacing a piece removed due to NAGPRA compliance.
- A Western Union stock ticker for display in the Speed exhibition.

The Education Committee recommended the acquisition of all three items.

Ms. Bradford moved to approve the acquisitions, Ms. Ramirez seconded the motion, and a verbal vote was taken. All approved, none opposed, and the motion carried.

Ms. Purdum reviewed upcoming education programming:

- June 21 Early Explore featuring Virginia Repertory Theatre
- June 23 Astronomy Watch Party: Rubin Observatory First Look
- July 10 Laser Show: Outkast
- July 12 Minds of All Kinds
- July 15 Senior Morning
- July 20 Early Explore featuring Virginia Repertory Theatre
- July 24 Science on Tap: Dino Night
- August 16 Early Explore featuring Virginia Repertory Theatre
- August 21 Laser Show: Pink Floyd
- August 25 Sunrise Science: Synchrotron Science: How to Mount a Dinosaur
- September 13 Teacher Resource Fair
- September 14 Early Explore featuring Virginia Repertory Theatre
- September 17 Senior Morning
- September 18 Laser Show: David Bowie
- September 26 Science After Dark: Well Made
- September 4 *Power of Poison* Opens

New Business

Mr. Mills acknowledged that having two meetings in October is challenging; however, members were encouraged to attend the special meeting to show support for the Northern Virginia Science Center team and to take advantage of the opportunity to meet legislators who will contribute to a successful opening.

Second, for the regular meeting on October 16, there was a note to request that the Executive Committee convene to discuss a personnel matter.

Third, with the quarter nearing its end, it was emphasized that full Board participation is crucial for grant acquisition. Members were encouraged to ensure 100% participation, highlighting that the level of involvement matters less than achieving complete participation.

Adjournment

A call was made for additional comments or questions, followed by a review of upcoming meeting dates on October 16 and October 29. With no further new business, Mr. Mills called for a motion to adjourn, which Mr. Vencatachalam made and Dr. Walters seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday October 16, 2025.