



APPROVED Minutes  
Quarterly Board of Trustees Meeting  
Lunch Presentation  
2500 West Broad Street

October 16, 2025  
12 p.m.

**Present:** Patricia Nicoson, Gina Burgin, Fran Bradford, Thomas Gottwald, Ram Venkatachalam, Dr. Robert Winn, Elsa Falls, John Ivins, Karey Malyszko, Amishi Amin, Dr. Denise Walters. Dr. Nisha Patel

**Absent:** Dr. Irma Becerra, Kate Hight, Jeff Bentley

**Staff:** Rich Conti, Courtney Moyer, Ash Harris, Timshel Purdum, Dr. Rose Basom, Martha Quinn, Maggie Gercken, and Ada Sue Siler.

**Other Attendees:** Lauren Coleman, Office of the Attorney General; J.C. La Riviere, Office of the Attorney General; Gregory Carden, Matt Brehony, Emily Valentine from Joe Smith.

## **Introduction**

Mr. Conti introduced the Joe Smith team, noting that the Science Museum serves as the “marketing agency for science.”

- It was emphasized that branding is more than a logo. It represents directional identity and storytelling that connects purpose with audience perception.
- Ms. Moyer reviewed the RFP process: 19 proposals were received; Joe Smith (the branding arm of Padilla) was selected to facilitate the branding project.

## **Presentation by Joe Smith**

- The team encouraged open discussion and questions, aiming to demystify branding and marketing terminology.
- The name “Joe Smith” represents craftsmanship (“Smith”) and approachability (“Joe”).

- The agency operates within Padilla, a 200-person communications firm with national reach and strong Richmond roots.
- They have worked with notable corporations and public organizations on brand transformation and narrative strategy.
- Successful brands balance what is new with what is true and enduring.
- The Science Museum's challenge is to honor its legacy and community trust while evolving its modern story.
- The process will begin with strategic discovery (stakeholder interviews, focus groups, audience research), leading to visual identity development.
- Emphasis on message consistency and key thematic storytelling across all platforms.
- Case studies and examples were shared.

### Questions and Comments

Dr. Winn asked about the challenge of standing out in a fragmented, noisy media environment. Mr. Brehony explained the move from static "key messages" to iterative thematic storytelling supported by Padilla's digital analytics expertise.

Mr. Venkatachalam asked whether the rebrand will extend beyond the Richmond audience. Mr. Brehony and Ms. Moyer confirmed it will maintain local identity while complementing Northern Virginia Science Center and Danville Science Center branding.

Ms. Burgin asked about appealing to multiple audiences. Mr. Brehony described using customer personas and mindset mapping to identify both shared and distinct motivations across audiences.

Ms. Moyer emphasized maintaining balance — expanding adult engagement without losing focus on families and schools.

Two questions were asked of the group for their feedback.

1: How should the Science Museum's community role evolve?

Dr. Winn shared that science should connect to daily life, not just as a concept but as a living process. Dr. Walters emphasized the need to break the bias that "science is hard." Ms. Burgin emphasized *relevance*, *relatability*, and inclusivity to attract guests who might not see themselves in a museum. Mr. Gottwald mentioned reconnecting with adults who visited as children; position the museum as "for everyone." Ms. Nicoson added the need to extend engagement beyond the physical museum, for instance with Northern Virginia Science Center partnerships. Dr. Walters said the Science Museum inspires future scientists; it shapes how young people think, process, and conclude.

2: What is something about the Science Museum you would hate to see change?

Ms. Moyer stated the importance of maintaining focus on both families and adults. Ms. Quinn mentioned preserving credibility while keeping fun and levity. Dr. Walters expressed the need to maintain joy in children's experiences. Mr. Gottwald shared the need to keep interactive exhibits and programming central. Ms. Burgin stated preserving independence and avoiding politicization; maintaining professional, science-driven content.

### **Closing Remarks**

The Joe Smith team thanked the group, noting this project is an opportunity to celebrate legacy while shaping the future.

The discussion concluded at 12:54 p.m.