



**APPROVED Minutes**  
Science Museum of Virginia  
Finance and Business Operations Committee Meeting

October 16, 2025  
11 a.m.

**Present:** Gina Burgin, Patricia Nicoson, Jeff Bentley (virtual), Ram Venkatachalam, John Ivins, Karey Malysko

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

**Other Attendees:** Lauren Coleman, Office of the Attorney General; J.C. LaRevere, Office of the Attorney General

**Welcome, Call To Order and Approval of June 18, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Burgin welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m.

Ms. Burgin called for a motion to approve the June 18, 2025, meeting minutes. Mr. Venkatachalam made the motion. Ms. Malysko seconded it. The motion was called by voice vote and all voted in favor of approving the June 18, 2025, meeting minutes as presented.

**Director's Report**

Mr. Conti began the meeting with a review of the agenda, noting that a detailed discussion of ongoing projects would take place during the 3 p.m. session. Topics scheduled for later review included performance metrics, the Northern Virginia Science Center project, the East Green project, ongoing building and maintenance projects, Foundation progress, and Commonwealth budget requests.

Mr. Conti reported that attendance and revenue figures remain above projections, indicating a strong overall financial position.

Mr. Conti provided updates on major initiatives:

- The Northern Virginia Science Center Science Center is now in its seventh year of development, with construction underway and a joint meeting planned soon to review progress.
- The East Green project has generated strong community interest and will significantly transform the Science Museum campus.
- Current active building projects include the window and door restoration and the resurfacing project.
- The Foundation Board has appointed a new president, added 10 new members, and continues to be instrumental in funding key initiatives.
- Historically, the Science Museum has received state funding for one project during each General Assembly session. This year, the agency is requesting \$2 million in operating funds for the Northern Virginia Science Center and planning funds for restaurant and campus improvement projects.

Mr. Conti noted that Troutman Pepper would provide a presentation at the 3 p.m. meeting regarding the upcoming state election. No questions were raised at this point.

### **Trustee Summary**

Ms. Moyer presented the Trustee Summary through the end of September, noting a strong start to the fiscal year with revenues and expenses largely in line with the approved budget.

- Revenues from the gift shop and facility rentals appeared lower due to pending enterprise account transfers. The Science Museum is working with the Department of Accounts (DOA) to restructure its enterprise accounts to align with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) model.
- Rental income is temporarily lower because the training camp lease payment has not yet been received.
- The wage line item is within budget, with classified salaries below projections.
- Workers' Compensation premiums increased due to a combination of higher staffing levels and several recent claims.
- Cash balances total approximately \$3 million, with \$1 million encumbered for *Speed* exhibition improvements.
- The Trustee Discretionary Fund (TDF) holds \$1.7 million, with \$800,000 committed to current projects.

Mr. Conti invited questions regarding first-quarter performance.

Ms. Burgin asked for clarification on facility rentals. Ms. Moyer explained that this category includes special event rentals, where rental income is from the Foundation office space and the City of Richmond's lease of the training field. No further questions were raised.

### **Capital and Maintenance Reserve**

Mr. Conti reviewed the current state of capital and maintenance reserve project funding, explaining that maintenance reserve funds support the preservation of the historic building and that a portion can also be used to maintain exhibit infrastructure.

When Mr. Conti called for questions, Mr. Venkatachalam commented that there were many exciting and engaging projects underway. No further discussion followed.

### **Attendance and Exhibition Report**

Ms. Moyer presented an overview of attendance and exhibition performance for the period July through September.

- Total visitation reached 176,789 guests, representing an 11.8% increase year over year.
- Group attendance totaled 7,528 guests, reflecting a 3.4% decrease compared to the previous year. The decrease was due to summer 2024 group visits that the agency did not see in summer 2025 due to the nature of the summer exhibition.
- Emphasis was given to the exceptional performance of the Ultimate Dinosaurs exhibition.
- Exhibition attendance was 84,462 visitors, a 74.3% increase over last summer.
- Upcharge revenue totaled \$247,152, up 45.6% from the prior year.
- Total exhibition revenue reached \$1.35 million, an overall 24.4% increase from the previous summer.

### **Upcoming Exhibitions and Films**

Ms. Moyer reviewed the upcoming schedule for major exhibitions and films:

#### Garner Gallery Exhibitions

- *Power of Poison*: October 4, 2025 – April 12, 2026
- *Science Unplugged*: May 29 – June 30, 2026
- *Rescue*: July 13, 2026 – January 17, 2027

#### Dewey Gottwald Center Exhibitions

- *Survival of the Slowest*: May 23 – September 7, 2026
- *Food: Science, Culture, Cuisine*: May 22 – September 6, 2027

#### Films

- *Encounters in the Milky Way*: Opened October 1, 2025
- *Arctic: Our Frozen Planet*: Opens November 1, 2025

Mr. Venkatachalam asked about the duration of the *Power of Poison* exhibition. Ms. Moyer explained that while most exhibitions typically run for three months, this particular one is larger in scale, so the Science Museum opted to extend its duration to maximize visitor engagement and attendance.

Ms. Burgin inquired about the future of the current exhibition space. Mr. Conti clarified that the area will eventually be converted into a restaurant space as part of the campus improvement plan.

### **New Business**

Mr. Conti concluded the report with a brief overview of upcoming administrative items:

- A mid-year budget adjustment will be presented in January. Trustee Discretionary Fund (TDF) investments will be reviewed at that time.
- Updates on the Commonwealth budget will also be provided.
- There are six state museums that receive state funding — including the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Frontier Culture Museum, Virginia Museum of Natural History, and Gunston Hall.
- Despite receiving only one-fifth of the funding of some peer institutions, the Science Museum continues to outperform proportionally in both reach and impact.

Ms. Burgin called for new business, and none was heard.

### **Adjournment**

Ms. Burgin adjourned the meeting at 11:28 a.m.

The next Finance and Business Operations Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 22, 2026.