APPROVED Minutes
Quarterly Board of Trustees Meeting
VIRTUAL via ZOOM

June 18, 2026
3 p.m.

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

Absent: Kate Hight, Amishi Amin, Jeff Bentley

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

Other Attendees: J.C. La Riviere, Office of the Attorney General

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Dr. Winn welcomed everyone to the meeting at 3 p.m. and reviewed the agenda. A quorum was confirmed.

Dr. Winn presented the meeting minutes from the April 16, 2026 Trustees meeting and lunch presentation for Board review and approval. Mr. Ivins noted one edit to the lunch presentation minutes. Ms. Nicoson made a motion to approve the minutes as presented with the noted amendment. The motion was seconded by Ms. Burgin. Dr. Winn called for a vote by verbal affirmation. All members voted in favor, with none opposed. The motion carried.

Director's Report

Mr. Conti presented the Director's Report and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. He acknowledged Ms. Falls and Ms. Nicoson for their 10 years of service on the Board and noted that both trustees would conclude their terms at the end of the month. Mr. Conti also highlighted the Science Museum's continued financial and operational success, including its 19th consecutive year of balancing the budget.

- The Northern Virginia Science Center construction remains on schedule and within budget. Progress photos and videos were shared.
- *Orbit* installations continue and planning for the *Speed* refresh is underway.
- The East Green project has entered the detailed design phase.
- The Science Museum is preparing for a significant year of capital projects while also planning for its 50th anniversary celebration.
- The brand architecture initiative continues, which includes work sessions, interviews, focus groups, and audience testing.
- The proposed brand platform, "Rethink Remarkable," is intended to elevate and refine the Museum's identity while maintaining its established reputation.
- Visual identity elements, including colors and logo design, remain under development.
- The rebranding effort is intended to create a unified identity across the Science Museum's multiple campuses and digital platforms.

Ms. Bradford commented on the significant progress being made at the Northern Virginia Science Center and inquired about food service options available to guests. Mr. Conti responded that retail and restaurant development is planned across the street from the facility and that vending options will be available within the Science Center.

Mr. Winn asked whether a map identifying nearby dining and other amenities could be made available for guests. Mr. Conti acknowledged the suggestion as the surrounding area continues to develop. Mr. Venkatachalam noted that the nearby Loudoun County area currently offers numerous dining options and expressed optimism that similar offerings would emerge as the Kincora development continues to grow.

Following the East Green update, Ms. Walters asked whether the planned water feature would utilize continuous water flow to help minimize mosquito activity. Mr. Conti confirmed that the design incorporates the site's natural topography to create continuous movement and natural water sounds, both of which are intended to discourage insect activity.

During the discussion of the brand architecture initiative, Trustees provided feedback on the proposed visual identity and branding direction. Mr. Winn expressed support for the simplicity and accessibility of the proposed visual approach, noting that it would help create a cohesive identity across the Science Museum's multiple campuses. Ms. Walters commended staff for the thoughtful and comprehensive work that has been invested in the branding process and expressed appreciation for the effort to balance innovation with continuity of the Science Museum's established identity.

FY 27 Meeting Dates

The proposed FY27 Board of Trustees meeting schedule was presented for review.

- The proposed Board of Trustees meeting dates for FY27 were presented as follows:
    - Thursday, October 22, 2026

    - Thursday, January 21, 2027
    - Thursday, April 15, 2027
    - Thursday, June 17, 2027, virtual
- The proposed schedule takes into consideration the anticipated opening of the Northern Virginia Science Center in spring 2027.
- Board of Trustees meetings will begin at 3:00 p.m. and will be held in the RF&P Forum unless otherwise noted.
- Meeting dates and locations may be adjusted as needed.

Dr. Becerra commented that the proposed June meeting date falls relatively late in the month and asked whether an earlier date could be considered. Ms. Moyer explained that state reporting requirements and financial reporting timelines influence the meeting schedule. The proposed schedule provides sufficient time for staff to prepare complete financial reports and supporting materials for trustee review.

Notice of Deficit Appropriation Acknowledgement

Mr. Conti shared the following Code of Virginia item with the Trustees:

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.

Operation's Report

Mr. Harris presented the Operations Report and provided updates on Enterprise operations, facility improvements, retail performance, and special events.

- The café by Bean Sprouts Café opened on June 11, 2026.
- Gift shop and concessions revenues continue to show strong growth, supported by expanded offerings, including Friday Date Night programming, laser shows, and higher-end retail merchandise.
- Efforts are underway to create a more modern and sophisticated retail experience for Science Museum guests.
- The Science Museum's windows and doors replacement project remains on schedule and is projected to be completed by fall 2026.
- The Special Events department has implemented a new staffing model to support operational needs and future growth.
- Event space enhancements are being explored to increase rental capacity and improve the guest experience.

- Staff are evaluating opportunities to utilize the currently unused train car as additional rentable event space.

Ms. Bradford commented on the breadth of activity taking place across the Science Museum and expressed enthusiasm for the direction of the various operational initiatives. She noted that the organization appears to be making significant progress in multiple areas and commended staff for their efforts.

Finance Committee Report

Ms. Burgin presented the Finance Report and reviewed the Trustee Summary.

- All revenue categories continue to track ahead of budget with one month remaining in the fiscal year.
- Overall expenses remain approximately 2% below budget.
- The projected year-end cash balance remains approximately $3.7 million.

Mr. Conti reviewed the proposed FY27 Operating and Enterprise budgets, capital and operating funding requests, and a proposed Trustee Discretionary Fund transfer.

- Enterprise budgeting and reporting processes have been enhanced to provide greater structure, transparency, and accountability. Enterprise funds remain separate from state funds and generate interest income. Management plans to propose utilizing approximately $150,000 in enterprise funds to support the upcoming Gift Shop renovation project.
- The proposed FY27 Operating Budget reflects a conservative growth strategy while maintaining consistency with earned revenue performance experienced in FY25 and FY26.
- The proposed budget includes $1.5 million in startup and operational support from the Northern Virginia Science Center Foundation, with direct payment arrangements utilized whenever possible.
- The budget may require adjustment pending final approval of the state budget.
- Increased utility costs, including water and sewer rates rising 18% and electricity rates rising 27%, have been incorporated into the FY27 budget.
- FY27 represents the first year of Northern Virginia Science Center operating expenses with limited earned revenue outside of Foundation support.
- A capital funding request of approximately $3 million was presented to support detailed planning for the refurbishment and reallocation of interior space.
- An operating funding request of approximately $700,000-$900,000 was presented to provide additional General Fund support for Northern Virginia Science Center operations and reduce reliance on Foundation funding during the startup phase.
- An additional operating request of $975,000 was presented to permanently increase the Science Museum's Nongeneral Fund appropriation authority.

- Resolution #002-2026 was presented to authorize an additional transfer of $350,000 from the Trustee Discretionary Fund to support implementation of the Museum's rebranding initiative.

Mr. Winn asked about the duration of financial support being provided by the Northern Virginia Science Center Foundation. Mr. Conti explained that the funding is intended to assist with startup and early operational expenses associated with opening the facility. He noted that the Foundation is expected to continue supporting the Science Center after opening, although the nature of that support may evolve over time.

Mr. Ivins asked about potential contingency plans should the state budget process continue to be delayed. Mr. Conti responded that he does not anticipate significant disruption to operations and emphasized that the organization remains in a strong financial position. He added that staff remain optimistic that the Commonwealth's budget process will conclude in the near future.

FY27 Enterprise and Operating Budget Approval

Mr. Winn called for a motion to approve the FY27 Enterprise and Operating Budget as presented. Ms. Becerra made the motion, and Ms. Walters seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Capital and Operating Funding Request Approval

Mr. Winn called for a motion to approve the Capital and Operating Funding Requests as presented. Ms. Walters made the motion and a second was received. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution #002-2026: Trustee Discretionary Fund Transfer Approval

Mr. Winn called for a motion to approve Resolution #002-2026 authorizing an additional transfer of $350,000 from the Trustee Discretionary Fund for implementation of the Science Museum's rebranding initiative. Mr. Venkatachalam made the motion and Ms. Burgin seconded.

No further questions were raised by the Board.

Attendance and Exhibitions Report

Ms. Moyer presented an update on attendance trends, exhibition performance, and upcoming exhibition and film offerings.

- Year-to-date visitation has reached 539,453 guests, representing a 4.9% increase compared to the same period last year.
- Group visitation totals 66,505 guests, representing a 15% decrease compared to the prior year. Earlier weather-related disruptions contributed to lower group visitation during portions of the fiscal year.

- *Survival of the Slowest* opened on May 23, 2026, and welcomed 14,899 visitors through June 16.
- Upcoming exhibitions in the Garner Gallery include *Science Unplugged*, *Rescue*, *Above & Beyond*, and *Phenomena*.
- Upcoming exhibitions in the Dewey Gottwald Center include *Survival of the Slowest* and *Food: Science, Culture, Cuisine*.
- *Horse Power* opened in The Dome in April and *Wild Rescue* is scheduled to open in July.

Ms. Bradford asked for clarification regarding the meaning of the exhibition conversion rate. Ms. Moyer explained that the conversion rate represents the percentage of general admission guests who choose to purchase admission to the featured exhibition experience. She noted that the current performance of *Survival of the Slowest* compares favorably to recent exhibitions.

Mr. Winn asked about the types of data collected to evaluate exhibitions and guest experiences. Ms. Moyer explained that the Science Museum gathers both quantitative and qualitative data. In addition to attendance and participation metrics, staff collect guest feedback and information regarding how guests learned about exhibitions, including word-of-mouth referrals and other sources that help inform marketing and program evaluation efforts.

Education Committee Report

Mr. Venkatachalam presented the Education Committee and provided updates on educational programming, community engagement, volunteer participation, and summer learning opportunities.

- The Science Museum welcomed 12 college and high school interns for the summer internship program.
- The Spring 2026 Teen Leadership Program engaged 28 participants, who collectively contributed more than 1,150 hours of service and learning.
- Through Science Within Reach, the Science Museum directly served 1,783 individuals.
- Ninety-one volunteers contributed a combined 2,799 hours of service.
- The Science Museum received a Richmond Regional Tourism Community Connector Award in recognition of its community impact.
- During the reporting period, 175 schools and 14,658 students visited the Science Museum, with 18% receiving financial assistance to support the cost of attendance.
- *The Forge* expanded community partnerships through collaborative projects with Groundwork RVA Green Team, Compass Academy, Sacred Heart Center, and the Red Shield Boys & Girls Club.
- *The MiX* summer program began on June 2 and provides 11 weeks of free programming for teens.
- Summer camp began on June 8 and offers nine weeks of summer camp programming, serving approximately 60 campers each week.

- Through the Museums for All program, 10 campers each week are receiving camp scholarships.

Ms. Purdum shared upcoming educational programs and public events scheduled through September, including Sunrise Science, Senior Science, Laser Shows, Science on Tap, Science After Dark, Minds of All Kinds, the Teacher Resource Fair, and Operation Rescue family programming.

Ms. Purdum highlighted recent changes to operations within *The Forge*. She explained that staff are adjusting weekend schedules to more closely align with weekday workshops and challenge offerings.

Trustees discussed the breadth of educational and community engagement programming underway throughout the summer and noted the continued growth of programs that expand access to STEM learning opportunities for youth and families across the region.

Mr. Venkatchalam called for questions. No questions were raised.

Foundation Update

Ms. Quinn presented the Foundation Report and provided an overview of fundraising performance, financial results, investment management activities, and planning efforts related to the Science Museum's upcoming 50th anniversary campaign.

- Through the end of May, the Foundation had raised $5.394 million, reflecting a successful fundraising year.
- Trustees were encouraged to consider making a gift before the close of the fiscal year to support grant applications and demonstrate Board participation.
- Giving, membership, investment income, support expenses, and operating expenses were reviewed.
- Staff noted that the decrease in Science Museum support reflects the timing of transfers and expenditures rather than a change in overall support levels.
- Total Foundation assets are approximately $39 million, including $27.8 million in endowment assets, $10.5 million in cash, approximately $1.1 million in pledges receivable, and approximately $30,000 in other assets.
- Following a competitive review process conducted by an independent committee, the Foundation selected JP Morgan as its investment management partner.
- The proposed Foundation budget for FY27 was presented.
- Staff shared preliminary plans for the Museum's 50th anniversary campaign.
- Trustees were encouraged to help identify and connect Foundation staff with individuals capable of making major gifts of $25,000 or more through multi-year commitments.
- Staff reviewed additional campaign engagement opportunities, including prospect identification, event participation, introductions to potential donors, challenge gifts, and support for upcoming fundraising events.

Dr. Winn reiterated the importance of achieving 100 percent Trustee participation in annual giving. He emphasized that Board participation serves as a significant indicator of organizational support for grantmakers, foundations, and prospective donors and can strengthen fundraising efforts.

Ms. Bradford asked whether Trustees could receive notification regarding their annual giving status before the close of the fiscal year. Ms. Quinn indicated that staff would work to provide trustees with information regarding whether they had made a contribution during the current fiscal year.

Trustees discussed the Foundation's strong financial performance and expressed appreciation for the fundraising team's efforts during FY26. Additional discussion focused on the upcoming 50th anniversary campaign and the important role Trustees can play in cultivating donor relationships, identifying prospective supporters, and advancing campaign goals.

New Business

Dr. Winn called for new business. None heard.

Adjournment

Dr. Winn made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Mr. Venkatachalm and seconded by Ms. Bradford. Dr. Winn called for a vote. All members voted in favor, with none opposed. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at **4:00 p.m.**

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held in person on October 22, 2026.