

Draft Minutes
Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees Meeting
September 21, 2012 9:00 a.m. - Lecture Hall

Members Attending:

T.E. Beck Jr., Richard P. Bell, Emmett W. Hanger Jr., John Higgs, Scott MacMillan, Frank McDonough, Lynn Mitchell, Rhodes Ritenour, Peggy Sheets, William Sibert, Paul Vames

Members Absent:

Nwachukwu Anakwenze, William Card, Benjamin Cline, Pamela Fox, Ophie Kier, Steve Landes, Kenneth Plum, Philip Rundle, Beverly Sherwood, William Stanley, Cheryl Talley, Frank Wagner

Guests Attending:

Judy Wyatt, Legislative Aide to Steve Landes, American Frontier Culture Foundation Members James Russell, and Dorothy Nelson, American frontier Culture Foundation President John Dod

Staff Attending:

John Avoli, Eric Bryan, Lydia Volskis, Mike Sutton, Mark Gatewood, Fran Carrington

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES :

Trustees Chair Paul Vames called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and welcomed attendees. Each person introduced him or herself.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Executive Director John Avoli thanked both the Board of Trustees and the Museum's staff for their hard work during the past several years, particularly during the recent economic downturn. He also commended Dr. Gabrielle Lanier for her service during her two terms on the Trustees Board; Dr. Lanier left the Board in June.

In an overview of items, some of which will be covered in more detail later in the meeting, he noted the following:

- The Museum and the American Frontier Foundation have both had successful years; the Museum posted an increase in visitation and the Foundation was successful in its array of fundraising efforts and special events. There are several more special events and programs during the remainder of this year.
- The Museum's marketing efforts have been generally positive as well, with some declines in July and August due to alternating extreme heat and wet weather.
- There is a need to address some basic infrastructure problems with aging facilities and utilities, as the Museum approaches its twenty-fifth birthday.
- The American Farm Tobacco Barn is nearly complete, and it is hoped that the reconstruction of the Mt. Tabor United Methodist Church will commence soon.

- He thanked the American Frontier Culture Foundation for its purchase of a small piece of property adjoining the Museum's land along Frontier Drive; this leaves only one parcel of land which the Museum does not own between the Museum and Frontier Drive; that parcel is privately owned.
- There are two new Trustee Members from the Senate of Virginia, Senator William Stanley and Senator Frank Wagner; both were unable to attend the meeting today.

Budget and Finance:

Deputy Director Eric Bryan reviewed the expenditure report for Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12). The report covered payroll, operating, capital projects and cash available with the state Treasury (General Fund, Non-general fund and surplus). He emphasized several areas of interest; increased expenditure for employee health benefits due to unexpected changes in coverage and the hiring of part-time staff to complete the construction of the West African site. The Museum ended FY12 with \$12, 930 in cash with the state Treasury.

He reviewed a chart comparing revenue between FY11 and FY12. FY12 ended with \$21,072 less than FY11 due to the sale, in FY11, of a historic Indian Dress. The proceeds from the sale are being used to support the construction of the American Indian exhibit. He also reviewed a slide detailing the FY2013-14 biennium appropriation to the Museum. Each year of the two-year budget cycle the Museum will receive \$1, 453,848 in General Fund dollars and is approved to raise and expend \$446,243 in Non-general fund income. The income projection is established by the Department of Planning and Budget. He reported that in FY13, the Museum's spending is as expected, but that revenue was down slightly in July and August due to the extremely hot and wet weather. Revenue appears to be slightly lower as well due to the lack of recorded revenues for the Fortune-Williams Music Festival which ended its run in 2012. Often in July and August ticket sales from the Festival caused revenue numbers to increase; the levels normalized when the Museum repaid the Festival for its portion of the ticket sales later in the Fall.

Mr. Sibert asked what portion of the Museum's overall expenditure is covered with its own revenue; Mr. Bryan responded that the number is about 25%. Mr. Sibert noted that a good goal might be to strive for 30%. Mr. Bryan agreed, but noted that tight economic times may not allow this until sometime in the future. Mr. Avoli pointed out that the Frontier Culture Museum has not raised its entrance fees for eight years, and is still substantially less expensive than similar regional museums and attractions. Mrs. Sheets reminded the Board of the Museum's small marketing budget; when the budget is increased, the Museum should see a reciprocal increase in attendance. Senator Hanger asked if there were any funded positions which remained unfilled. Mr. Avoli responded that there were none, only authorized but unfunded positions.

Mr. Bryan reported that the Museum cancelled both of its First Friday free evenings this summer due to dangerous storms.

Information Technology:

Currently the Museum has 2 computers managed by the Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA), and only a few VITA emails for selected staff. Service from VITA is still slow and

unpredictable, although the Museum has been notified that these computers are due for an upgrade to Windows 7 before the end of FY12. The \$75,000 mistakenly removed from the Museum's budget for IT expenses has been restored by the Department of Planning and Budget. The Museum's current monthly bill from VITA ranges between \$187-200, as compared to the previous \$6,200 monthly bill, which had been projected to rise to \$10,000 per month. The current IT plan involves the upcoming Windows 7 upgrade, an upgrade in the Visitors Center from cash registers to iPad ticketing, and includes a long-range goal of adopting an internet-based reservations and admissions system.

Capital Projects:

General Administration Manager Mark Gatewood reported on the following future capital infrastructure needs around the Museum. Estimates given are preliminary staff estimates, not final quotes. Once the list is prioritized and Board approval has been given, Museum staff will work to secure actual professional estimates for the projects. It is possible that the Museum may work with another larger state agency nearby to gain the best rates. Senator Hanger mentioned the energy audit program which could also facilitate plans for the work. Mr. Avoli noted that he had spoken to Richard Sliwoski of the Department of General Services for guidance. Listed below are the items Mr. Avoli has decided to pursue.

1. Replace HVAC systems and controls in Administration, Welcome Center and Museum Store. Existing systems were installed during the original construction in 1988 and are well past useful life. New systems need to meet current energy efficiency standards. Estimate \$100,000 for planning, design and project management, \$250,000 for replacement
2. Pave (asphalt) Dairy Barn lot; stripe for parking and flow; make drainage improvements to facilitate storm water flow into existing retention pond. Estimate \$70,000
3. Pave (asphalt) access road to Octagonal Barn lower and upper levels. Estimate \$60,000.
4. Replace carpet in Administration Building reception area, hallway and offices, and Education Dairy Barn Lecture Hall and interpreters' locker rooms. Estimate \$15,000.
5. Contract to have autumn olive and other growth cut in existing storm water retention pond. Estimate \$5,000.
6. Resurface ("tar and chip") road from Dairy Barns to American exhibits area. Estimate \$20,000
7. Replace bridges on Loop Road. Complete: deck, support beams, railings, concrete drain channels. No estimate.
8. Dredge ponds to remove sediment, duck excrement. Proper disposal. No estimate.
9. Construct all-weather accessible walkways from Loop Road to English, German and Scots-Irish houses and to houses within the West African compound. "Tar and chip" surface treatment. No estimate.
10. Master Utility Plan. Contract with Architect/Engineer to create accurate plan of existing underground water lines, hydrants, electric lines, power distribution panels. Assess condition of existing water system, water pressure issues, future needs, projected useful life of system components. No estimate.
11. Rekey all buildings, interior locks and padlocks (June 2014) Estimate \$1,000.
12. Continue with signage plan to construct directional signage upon entering main parking lot; direct visitors to Octagonal Barn, Pavilion, Dairy Barns, Welcome Center; same at road to Dairy Barn lot. No estimate.

Education and Interpretation:

Mr. Bryan reported that in FY12 the Museum welcomed 19, 225 students from elementary, middle, high school, and colleges, an increase of over 2,000 from the previous year. The goal is to eventually host 25,000 students per year. From September until December 2012 the Museum has reservations for about 4,104 students; this number increases daily.

“Home School Days” is set for October 5; in May 2012 the Museum hosted 312 students at Home School Days and in October 2012 hosted about 1,600.

The American Frontier Culture Foundation gave strong support to education programs in FY12, bringing 5, 887 students from 87 schools to the Museum at a cost of over \$70, 000. Of this amount, \$62, 500 came from Charles Fund grants and \$7,570 from other sources including funds raised by special events.

Mrs. Sheets informed the Board that the Museum has about 180 volunteers on the roster of which about 80 are active at any one time. She thanked the American Frontier Culture Foundation for its support of the volunteer program. The Foundation provides funds for volunteer polo’s and sweatshirts as well as several recognition events each year. Recently, the annual Volunteer Appreciation cookout hosted about 100 volunteers and their families as well as some staff.

Mr. Bryan reviewed the Museum’s summer camp programs. In summer 2012 there were 225 campers spread over the six weeks of camp; one student attended two weeks of camp and one attended for four weeks. Total revenue was \$28,475 and expenses were \$9,721 with net revenue of \$18,753. In the summer of 2011, camp net revenue was \$12,390.

The Museum’s junior volunteer society, the John Lewis Society (JLS), is hosting its largest ever class this year. In 2010 the JLS had 35 members who gave 2,024 hours of service, in 2011 the JLS had 40 members who gave 2136 hours of service and this year the JLS has 45 members who are on expected to deliver an estimated 3250 hours of service.

Mr. Bryan reported that this Fall the Museum has ten full-time interpreters, seventeen part-time interpreters and three other staff who are able to work in costume if needed. He thanked the Legislative members of the Board for their support in securing extra funds last year for part-time staff. This allows the Museum to staff nine out of ten exhibits most days of the week. The paid staff are supplemented by nine or ten adult interpretive volunteers who help on the site on occasion. The interpreters must staff ten outdoor exhibits from March through December, be available for special events and evening programs and conduct educational programs with visiting schools throughout the year.

Mr. Sibert stressed the importance of an increase in the number of interpretive staff to interact with the public and school groups. He recounted his recent trip across country during which he visited many living history Museums which had interesting buildings but no budget for staffing and proper maintenance. He felt that the Frontier Culture Museum was superior in all ways to these sites and

noted that our slogan “Bringing the Past to Life” is accurate in terms of visitor experience and perception of their educational experience.

Mr. Bryan reported that the Museum is pursuing the next steps in the process of reconstructing the historic Mt. Tabor United Methodist Church at the Museum site. The Museum still requires a formal, written offer of the building from the Church’s Trustees as well as from the United Methodist District and Conference. The Museum has outlined a proposed program which will require the cooperation of the congregation of the small church. The congregation worships in a “new” church on the same site, built about 1912. The smaller, older log structure has been used as a fellowship hall and for storage in recent years. He noted that Museum representatives will seek a meeting with the Church Trustees soon. Mr. MacMillan asked about the age of the log structure; Mr. Bryan responded that while we can make an educated guess from oral tradition, dendrochronology is the only way to know for sure.

Delegate Bell asked if there were any concerns about reconstructing a church of a specific denomination at the Museum. Mr. Bryan responded that he knew of no issues at present but would look into the matter further. Mr. Avoli noted that Secretary of Education Laura Fornash was informed of the progress of the project and had asked about the cost, but had expressed no other reservations about the project.

Mr. Bryan relayed some interesting historical information about why the small former slave church became a Methodist Church as opposed to another denomination. The man who gave the land for the church as a gift in the mid to late nineteenth century had specified that the land was for the construction of an African Methodist Episcopal Church, which group was later absorbed into the larger United Methodist Church. In general, Methodists and Baptists of the nineteenth century were agreeable to including enslaved peoples and recently freed people into their congregations. He also noted that Museum staff are regularly involved in discussions about religious backgrounds of the cultures represented and the religious freedoms sought in the New World by the immigrant peoples, so the topic of faith and religion is not unusual in Museum interpretation.

Visitor Experience and Satisfaction:

Mr. Bryan reported that the Museum’s goal is to have 100% of respondents rate the Museum as good or excellent on Museum report cards. In FY12 we collected 855 report cards, of which 851 or 99% rated the Museum as good or excellent. He showed a slide detailing the responses by quarters, and noted that only 2.5% of visitors complete the card. The goal is to have about 5% complete the report card. He showed several sample slides of visitor report cards from the same day in June 2012; one had concerns and two gave the Museum a strong positive rating.

Marketing:

Marketing Director Mike Sutton reviewed FY12 visitation totals. Total Museum visitation increased by 5% over last year to 72,160. General admissions were up by 3.8% and school admission by 12.9% over last year.

He reported that the new Virtual Museum Tour, on the “Virtual Rabbit” website, launched in November 2010, has hosted 44,700 visitors to date, including 25,000 from FY12. In the past six

months the website has hosted 51, 254 unique visitors including 165,321 page views. About 52% of visitors to the Museum's page arrive via a Google search. The Museum has 1,727 Facebook fans, an increase of 416 in the past three months.

He reviewed a visitation chart comparing attendance in FY10, FY11 and FY12. The chart shows steady growth in overall visitation. He also presented a Power Point slide describing the marketing budget allocation for FY12. He noted that recent studies show that television is still the main marketing method to most adults, followed closely by the internet, radio, mobile phone, magazines and tablet computers. The same study, conducted by TVB Media, also shows that social networking sites such as Facebook, while popular, are not important drivers of purchasing for adults aged 18 and older. Just 6.8% of adults make decisions about purchasing based on internet advertising, according to the study.

Mr. Toms thanked Mr. Sutton for all his work in helping the Chamber of Commerce plan the upcoming new Festival "Good Times, Tastes and Traditions".

REPORT FROM THE FOUNDATION:

American Frontier Culture Foundation President John Dod reported that FY12 was a successful year for the Foundation. The annual fund's goal was \$75,000, raised \$73,954 or 99% of its goal. The Unrestricted Fund's goal was \$15,000 and raised \$106,170 or 708% of goal. The Special Event Fund's goal was \$103,000 and raised \$201,555 or 196% of goal, and the Friends of the Frontier's (membership program) goal was \$22,000 and raised \$19,240 or 86% of goal. The Frontier Legacy Society for planned giving has raised \$268,770 and the Foundation-sponsored international trips garnered \$30, 500 in profits.

OLD BUSINESS:

No items of old business were brought forward.

NEW BUSINESS:

Board Elections:

Senator Hanger made a motion, seconded by Mr. Beck, that the Board retain the current officers, Chair Paul Vames and Vice-Chair Frank McDonough. There was no discussion, and the motion carried unanimously. The next election of officers will take place in September 2014.

Closed session:

Mr. Sibert made a motion, seconded by Mr. Toms as follows:

"I, Bill Sibert, move that pursuant to **Section 2.2-3711 (A) (3)** of the Freedom of Information Act, that the Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees go into "Closed Session" for the discussion of real estate matters."

There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. All non-Trustees left the room at 10:55; Members and Chair of the Foundation Board were asked to remain.

At 11:15 a.m. Mr. Sibert made a motion, seconded by Mr. McDonough that the Board enter open session. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Vames read the following statement:

“WHEREAS, the Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees has convened an executive meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of The Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by this Board that such executive meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees hereby certifies that, to the best of each member’s knowledge, (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under Virginia law and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting by the Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees.”

Mr. Beck made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Sheets that no other matters were discussed; there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. Ms. Volskis polled the Board in a roll call vote and each Member affirmed that no other matters had been discussed.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Mr. Sibert made a motion, seconded by Mr. Beck that the usual Trustees meeting date of the first Friday after Easter be moved forward a week to April 12. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. The next meeting of the Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees is scheduled for Friday April 12, 2013 at 9 a.m. in the Lecture Hall.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.