

**Minutes**  
**Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**April 28, 2017 9:00 a.m. - Lecture Hall**

**Members Attending:**

Nwachukwu Anakwenze, Terry Austin, Richard Bell, David Bushman, Kevin Callanan, Erik Curren, Pamela Fox, Dianne Fulk, Clifford Garstang, Emmett Hanger, John Higgs, Steven Landes, Frank Nolen, Peggy Sheets, William Sibert, Emmett Toms, Paul Vames, Kenneth Venable

**Members Absent:**

Benjamin Cline, Joseph Fitzgerald, John Ijem, Kenneth Plum, William Stanley, Frank Wagner

**Guests Attending:**

John Avoli, Elizabeth Griffin, Office of the Attorney General, Ned Ruby, President American Frontier Culture Foundation, Justin Reiter, Executive Director, American Frontier Culture Foundation, Thomas Sheets, Chuck Anakwenze, Ryland Winston, Collett and Associates, Charlotte Walters, Allegra Morrison

**Staff Attending:**

Eric Bryan, Interim Agency Head, Merritt Schoonover, Director of Agency Administration, Joe Herget, Director of Marketing, Lydia Volskis, Sr. Administrative Coordinator, Andrew Richardson, Director of Education, Cliff Edwards, Facilities Manager, Morgan Pendleton, David Puckett

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Paul Vames called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and each person introduced him or herself. Mr. Vames called former Trustee Tom Sheets and his wife, current Trustee Peggy Sheets, to the podium for a special presentation. Mr. Sheets, as a longtime Museum supporter, former Trustee and friend of Mr. Avoli, presented Mr. Avoli, who retired as Executive Director on February 28, with a framed Board of Trustees resolution commending and thanking him for his state and civic service and his fifteen years as Director of the Museum. Mr. Sheets commented on the strong, positive presence Mr. Avoli brought to the Museum's profile on the local, state and international scenes, and the many projects he was able to guide to completion through his many connections and friendships. He said that the Museum is substantially better off and stronger than it was when Mr. Avoli arrived and that current and former Boards are grateful for his service. Mr. Avoli said it has been a privilege and a labor of love for him and that he plans to still support the Museum and do whatever he can to ensure its future success. Mrs. Sheets and Mr. Vames both shared recollections of Mr. Avoli's time at the Museum.

Senator Hanger made a motion that the minutes of the September 2016 meeting be approved as submitted, the motion was seconded by Mr. Landes, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

## II. AGENCY HEAD REPORT

Mr. Eric Bryan, Internal Operations Manager and Interim Agency Head thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting. He said that there are two months left in Fiscal Year 2017, and that the Museum is performing well. The primary measure of the Museum's performance as a state agency is visitation during each fiscal year. In FY2010, the Museum hosted 49,946 guests, in FY14 the Museum hosted 59,489 guests, in FY2016 the Museum hosted 71,160 guests and to date in FY17, the Museum has hosted 60, 458 with about two months remaining in the fiscal year. This is about 11% more than last year at the same time. The Museum is also categorized as an educational institution, and of the annual visitation totals, education visits have also increased. In FY2010, the Museum hosted 16, 499 students and teachers, in FY16 the Museum hosted 27, 494, and to date in FY17 the Museum has hosted 26,302 students and teachers, with two months left in the fiscal year. Revenue growth has been strong as well, and response to the Museum on social media has been overwhelmingly positive.

He continued that Museum staff have adopted a more assertive approach to garnering visitation, rather than a passive approach consisting of waiting for visitors to arrive. New programs and events have been offered to attract a variety of age groups and income levels. Once a visitor has been to the Museum for an event or program which they enjoy, there is a strong possibility that they might purchase an annual pass, or attend another program or event in the future. The Museum staff have worked to provide quality programs to attract repeat visitors.

Mr. Bryan pointed out that the Museum is open 8 hours a day, 7 days a week for about 362 days a year, and employs between 60 -70 people depending on the season, both full and part-time. He said that the Museum is grateful to local and Trustee legislators for their help during the budget process in obtaining funds to replace staff lost during the cost savings reductions, and for maintenance reserve and planning funds for the proposed Crossing Gallery.

Mr. Bryan also thanked Elizabeth Griffin, of the Office of the Attorney General for her support of and assistance to the Museum.

He called attention to the Naturalization Service, hosted annually by the Museum, and set for Tuesday September 19<sup>th</sup> at 11 a.m. The Naturalization Service is one of the most meaningful and enjoyable events the Museum hosts, and as a museum about immigration it is very pertinent to the Museum's mission. This year, Museum employee Jean Claude Hatungimana will receive his citizenship at the ceremony and will also be the keynote speaker. He also highlighted the upcoming Waterways exhibit, a Smithsonian traveling exhibit which will be installed in the Visitor's Center from October 21 – December 3. The Museum was able to host the exhibit with help from the Virginia Association of Museums and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.

Mr. Vames complimented the Museum's staff saying that the staff go "the extra mile" when presenting programs and interacting with the public.

## **A. Budget**

Director of Agency Administration Merritt Schoonover gave the financial reports, as of April 20, 2017. She presented the Statement of Appropriations, Allotments, Expenditures and Revenues for all funds, pointing out the \$59,000 insurance reimbursement for the Irish Farm roof fire, which must be recorded as revenue.

She also reviewed the Year to Date Expenditures report by Service Area for All Funds, and the Revenue Status Report. She highlighted income from the “pay what you will” days, which in some cases exceeded the Museum’s average income on a paid admission day, and noted that the Visitor’s Center is now selling items which might be useful to people touring the Museum such as sunscreen, bug repellent, jackets, umbrellas and other assorted items. The Museum will receive an installment of the Sheetz rental income from the Foundation within a day or two, and the summer camp scholarship fund drive for 2017 is underway.

Mrs. Schoonover reviewed the Diversification of Revenue by Percentage, the Monthly Revenue by Fiscal Year Comparison chart for All Funds and the January through mid-March Admissions Comparison for Revenue and Visitation for the last several fiscal years. She reiterated that the “pay what you will” days showed an increase in revenue due to donations over regular admission days, and called attention to the increased annual pass-holder visitation.

Mr. Curren asked how the ticketing at the Food Truck battle was managed; Mrs. Schoonover said that the Museum handles the ticketing, which is processed as revenue, and then reimburses the organizing committee, minus our agreed-upon fee. This method not only allows for careful accounting of funds for the festival organizers, but also satisfies state auditing and financial requirements so that the Museum can participate in the event.

Mr. Avoli thanked the Legislators on the Board of Trustees for their help in securing increased maintenance reserve funds for much needed repair projects to the Museum’s buildings and grounds.

## **B. Capital Projects and Maintenance Reserve**

Facilities Manager Cliff Edwards reviewed the state’s definition of capital and maintenance reserve projects. He reviewed various maintenance reserve projects completed during the Fall and Winter.

Completed maintenance reserve funded projects include:

- Renovation of the main space in the Museum’s Visitor’s Center
- Replacement/re-thatching of the Irish Farm roof lost due to fire
- Expansion of the Visitor’s Center complex courtyard with the addition of a pave-stone outdoor fireplace
- Paved non-slip walkway to pavilion
- Expanded golf cart parking and charging area outside of Visitor’s Center, with room to turn the large tram

- Sill log replacement for the German and English farms
- Stabilization of the 1850's Barn
- Stabilization (with the help of a turnbuckle) of the English House walls

Future maintenance reserve projects include:

- Correction of drainage issues and paving of the Octagonal Barn parking areas
- HVAC replacement in Dairy Barn 1
- Roof replacement for both Dairy Barns, a standing seam metal roof has been recommended
- Electrical infrastructure and space planning for food trucks and other vendors near main parking lot
- Roof and siding replacement for the 1850's farmhouse

Capital projects include:

- Early American Industries Exhibit (Mill) drawings and other preliminary work complete, wood sourcing to begin soon
- Foundation poured for 1820's barn, other work proceeding
- Crossing Gallery, preliminary plans approved, likely repurposing of Dairy Barn 1

### **C. Marketing**

Director of Marketing Joe Herget reviewed the Visitation report for Quarters 1, 2 and 3 in FY17. Overall visitation has increased by about 10% over the last fiscal year at the same time. He reviewed the Annual Pass usage chart, noting that Museum staff have sold about 350 passes this month. The previous highest total for annual pass sales in a month was 114. There are nearly 900 current passes in use including April sales to date.

He reviewed current marketing targets and objectives which include focus on families with children and school groups, along with a variety of other smaller "niche" groups who visit the Museum. Marketing communications strategies include local radio ads, social media and a bit of print media. Communications with educators and school groups includes classroom posters/mailers as well as educator e-news messages.

Special events during last Fall and Winter season included Oktoberfest with over 1,000 attendees, the Holiday Market with over 2,000 attendees spread over three weekends, and holiday Lantern Tours, also with over 1,000 attendees. He also presented a Special Events overview for the rest of 2017.

Mr. Vames asked Mr. Herget to give brief descriptions of several of the new programs being offered. Mr. Herget said that the Saturday morning toddler program was launched about a year ago and has been very popular except for when the weather is nicer and families can take their children to outside events. The Movie Nights have also been enjoyable and successful and a free

night has been offered as well. The Museum sells food and drink concessions at these evenings, and hopes to reach a different audience – young families with children – who may then decide to visit the Museum for other events in the future. He also said that there will be five “pat what you will” days during the upcoming year.

### **III. EDUCATION & INTERPRETATION REPORTS**

Director of Education Andrew Richardson reported that education attendance has increased by 11% For FY17 so far with 20,588 having already visited and over 10,000 scheduled before the end of June. Of the Total. About 7,000 are students who received an outreach program.

The American Frontier Culture Foundation provided grant funding for 102 schools from all over the state to visit the Museum which might otherwise not have visited, as well as for 27 outreach programs. Support totaled \$158,076 and allowed 13, 244 children to be touched by Museum programs. The largest donor to the field trip fund is the Charles Fund which contributed \$75,000 to the total.

The Museum has offered a toddler program on Saturday mornings for about a year, with structured programs for children under age six, and limited to about 15 per session. The program has been popular and will be offered at both 10 and 11 a.m. during months when the weather is not conducive to outside play.

Registration for summer camps is underway, this year the Museum is offering early drop off (8 a.m.) and late pickup (5 p.m.) for \$50 extra a month per child. The Museum has received enough donations for 23 summer camp scholarships and is seeking extra funds to bring the total of scholarship campers to 44, or 10% of the maximum camp capacity. Mrs. Sheets handed out pledge cards so that Board Members could participate in sponsoring a camper this summer. The cost to sponsor a child at summer camp for one week is \$150.

Home School Days are scheduled several times this year, and will be moved back to Saturdays, after feedback from the attendees.

The Education Department will send educational information posters to teachers again during the next school year, as well as a newsletter, and social media interactions (new Museum Education Department Facebook page). There will be some new programming both on site and within the outreach programs.

Mr. Richardson said that the Museum has 12 full-time interpreters, 2 interpretive site supervisors, 1 costumer, 1 architectural historian, 14 part-time interpreters and 12 site volunteers, a few of whom work in costume. These employees staff 11 exhibits seven days a week from March – December.

Mr. Richardson gave an overview of the farm animals that live at the Museum.

The Museum's youth volunteer group, the John Lewis Society, as seven new members for a total this year of 31 students. Mr. Vames complimented the program. Mr. Curren asked about the placement of John Lewis students and how their costumes were prepared; Mr. Richardson responded that the students work for a while and are trained at the beginning of the year, before we prepare a specialized costume for them for the farm to which they are assigned.

#### **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Vames introduced and welcomed Mr. Ryland Winston, of the Collett Group, the company overseeing the front property development.

No items of Old Business were discussed.

#### **V. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. Report from the Foundation**

Mr. Vames thanked the Foundation for their support of the museum, and introduced Foundation President Mr. Ned Ruby to give the report. Mr. Ruby reviewed the Condensed Statement of Financial Position as of 2/28/17.

In other Foundation news:

- Five Members will rotate off of the Foundation Board of Directors, and Mr. Berndt Dollt will become an Honorary Member of the Board. Mr. Ruby will remain as President for one more year, and Kristi Van Pelt will serve as Vice President. Mr. Jeff Wood will be one of the new Members.
- The Annual Fund has raised \$90,000 of its \$125,000 goal; the end of the fund year is June 30, 2017. The Foundation Board has 100% participation in the annual fund. Mr. Ruby encouraged the Board of Trustees Members to consider a donation.
- All schools who applied for field trip grant support were offered aid, none were turned down.

Foundation Executive Director Justin Reiter reported that the Foundation is in a strong financial position, and has transferred the annual pass program to the Museum. The Foundation's budget this year is \$783,000, as opposed to FY14's budget of 1.1 million. The budget has decreased due to a staff reorganization, and the transfer of the facilities rentals and annual pass program to the state.

Mr. Reiter continued that last year the Museum received several large gifts and added many new smaller donors, even though the current philanthropic climate is challenging. He said that the Foundation has achieved a platinum level transparency rating on Guidestar, a website on which prospective donors can review financial information for non-profits.

**B. Ratification Items (if needed)**

There were no ratification items.

**C. Miscellaneous**

Mr. Vames reminded attendees that the Foundation Board of Directors will meet at 1 p.m. in the old Dices Building across Frontier Drive from the Museum, Trustees are welcome to attend.

Mr. Sibert said “I move that the Board identify Mr. Eric Bryan as Interim Director who will assume all duties required of an agency head.” The motion was seconded by Mrs. Sheets, there was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**D. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**VI. CLOSED SESSION (IF NEEDED)**

At 10:50 Delegate Landes said:

*I move that the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia enter closed session for:*

*Discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business' or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community, pursuant to the exemption in Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(5), and related to the potential sale or lease of real property conveyed by the Museum to the American Frontier Culture Foundation.*

AND

*Discussion of personnel matters pursuant to the exemption in Virginia Code §2.2-3711(A)(1) pertaining to the resignation of the Executive Director and appointment of an interim Executive Director.*

Mr. Higgs seconded the motion, there was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously. Guests and staff Members left the room at 10:50.

At 11:27 Mrs. Sheets said:

*I move that the Board enter open session.*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Sibert, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. Guests and staff re-entered the room at 11:27.

Delegate Landes said:

*Whereas, the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia convened in closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act;*

*NOW BE IT RESOLVED, in accordance with Virginia Code § 2.2-3712, that the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum 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 closed meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia.*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Sibert, there was no discussion and each Member affirmed verbally that no other matters had been discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **VII. NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Friday September 22, 2017 at 9 a.m.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.