

Minutes
Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees
September 16, 2016 9:00 a.m. - Lecture Hall

Members Attending:

Delegate Terry Austin, Delegate Richard Bell, LTC Kevin Callanan, Delegate Benjamin Cline, The Honorable Erik Curren, Joseph Fitzgerald, Pamela Fox, Dianne Fulk, Clifford Garstang, Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr., Delegate R. Steven Landes, Frank Nolen, Delegate Kenneth Plum, Peggy Sheets, Norman Smiley, Kenneth Venable, Paul Vames, Senator Frank Wagner

Members Absent:

Dr. Nwachukwu Anakwenze, Dr. John Ijem, John Higgs, William Sibert, Senator William Stanley, Emmett Toms

Guests Attending:

Elizabeth Griffin, Office of the Attorney General, Ned Ruby, President, American Frontier Culture Foundation, Justin Reiter, Executive Director, American Frontier Culture Foundation, Rebecca Cashion, John Lewis Society

Staff Attending:

John Avoli, Executive Director, Eric Bryan, Deputy Director, Merritt Schoonover, Director of Agency Administration, Joe Herget, Director of Marketing, Lydia Volskis, Sr. Administrative Coordinator, Andrew Richardson, Director of Education, Misti Furr, Interpretive Supervisor, Sally Landes, Historic Site Interpreter

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Paul Vames, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. He recognized Trustee Butch Smiley, who has finished his term on the Board, for his many years of service to both the Foundation and Trustee Boards, always offering good judgement and support. Mr. Vames presented a framed resolution to Mr. Smiley, who said a few words thanking his Board colleagues and noting the tremendous future potential of the Museum.

The minutes of the April 2016 meeting were approved as corrected.

BOARD ELECTIONS

Mr. Vames turned the gavel over to Chair Emeritus Senator Emmett Hanger, who presided over Board officer elections. He opened the floor for nominations and Delegate Landes said "I move that the Board of Trustees open the floor for nominations for Board Chair and Vice Chair", Mr. Nolen seconded the motion, there was no discussion and the Board voted unanimously to open the floor for nominations. Delegate Landes said "I move that the Board elect Paul Vames as Chair and Peggy Sheets as Vice-Chair". The motion was seconded by LTC Callanan. LTC Callanan then moved that the floor be closed to motions; Delegate Landes seconded and the Board voted unanimously to close the floor to further motions. There was no discussion and the Board voted unanimously to elect Paul Vames Chair and Peggy Sheets Vice-Chair. Mr. Vames thanked the Board and said that the Museum is in a wonderful position and looking towards a bright future.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Avoli said that while staff who oversee various departments will report in more detail later, he will highlight several areas of interest. He welcomed Delegate Austin, who is attending his first Trustees meeting. He expressed appreciation to the American Frontier Culture Foundation, its President Mr. Ruby and its Executive Director Mr. Reiter for their support of the Museum. He also expressed appreciation to the Trustees who are Members of the General Assembly for their assistance in procuring Maintenance Reserve funds for much-needed Museum maintenance projects. He thanked the Museum's volunteers and staff for their hard work, and noted that all have persevered, even over a long hot summer. He said that the Museum has experienced a successful event and facility rentals season and noted that even though we have had generally strong visitation numbers, the Museum is extremely weather-sensitive, thus a stretch of bad weather may cause a corresponding drop in attendance. He highlighted the challenge of staffing such a large site with current staffing levels, especially with the possible cost-savings plans under which the Museum might be required to return 5% of its budget to the state.

A. Budget and Technology

Director of Agency Administration Merritt Schoonover reviewed the financial reports for FY16 (just ended) and the first two months of FY17. She reviewed the FY16 Statement of Appropriations, Allotments, Expenditures and Revenue for all funds as of June 30, 2016, and described various fund balances. She reviewed the FY16 Revenue Status Report and highlighted admissions receipts related to annual pass sales. She presented a chart depicting revenue by type for all funds for FY16, and also a chart showing Comparison of Monthly Revenue by fiscal year for the last several fiscal years. She also reviewed a chart showing expenditures by service area for 0100 (General Funds), and 002239 (Non-general Funds) for FY16.

Mrs. Schoonover reviewed the Statement of Appropriations, Allotments, Expenditures and Revenue, the Revenue Status Report, the Revenue by Type as a Percentage of Income chart, the Monthly Revenue by Fiscal Year report and the Year-to Date Expenditures by Service Area for funds 0100 and 00239 report for the first two months of FY17. Mrs. Sheets asked if, with recent retirement and unfilled positions, the Museum still has about thirty fulltime and twenty part-time staff. Mrs. Schoonover said that that is basically correct, even though we have occasional fluctuations.

Mrs. Schoonover reported that the Museum's most recent VITA (Virginia Information Technology Agency) monthly bill was about \$1,038, and includes several laptops and desktop computers, email boxes, support and information storage and backup. In the near future, the bill will increase by about \$200 as we will add some new computers for staff use. The implementation of the new telephone system to replace the Museum's decade's old current system, which was delayed by the recent Verizon strike, is set for later in the fall.

B. Capital Projects and Maintenance Reserve

Cliff Edwards, Facilities Manager, described recent capital and maintenance reserve projects. The Welcome Center restrooms have been renovated, the Irish Farm roof has been replaced and the yard regraded and drainage improvements added, new LED lamps have been installed in the Dairy Barn parking lot, new entrance signage added, downspouts added to the Octagonal Barn, and general painting and repairs to the Administration building, Welcome Center, Store and Pavilion. Museum staff and outside contractors have also replaced sill beams in the German and English houses. Upcoming projects include 1850's Barn

stabilization, ongoing exhibit maintenance and upkeep, replacement of the Irish forge roof, drainage and paving around the Octagonal Barn, HVAC replacement in Dairy Barn 1. Eventual replacement of both Dairy Barn roofs is also under consideration.

Mr. Edwards continued that the Early American Industries Exhibit (Mill) plans are proceeding with final drawings due in late September. It is hoped that the construction will begin in December. Other upcoming projects include the construction of a barn for the 1820's farm, also set to begin in December, and pre-planning for a Crossing Gallery. Mr. Avoli pointed out that the 1820's Barn construction project received \$100,000 from an anonymous donor. He also thanked the Legislative Members for the funding for the Mill project.

C. Marketing

Marketing Director Joe Herget reviewed the Museum visitation report and said that the Museum has experienced positive growth for eleven of the last twelve months, with an overall increase of 19% in visitation for the past year. In the current fiscal year, FY17, Museum visitation is up by about 4% as July 4th had lower than expected visitation due to bad weather. He also reviewed a chart depicting various segments of visitation such as school group and general admission and others.

Mr. Herget reviewed a chart showing trends in the growth of Annual Pass sales, highlighting an increase in revenue and an increase in passes sold and used. He also reviewed a chart of pass sales by month and pass usage. He reviewed Marketing communication objectives and tactics, and said that the three main areas he plans to concentrate on are Education, Special Events, and General Visitation. He reviewed the tactics he plans to use to address each of the objectives.

Mr. Smiley asked about the use of billboards in marketing the Museum; Mr. Herget responded that we are testing a similar concept with Museum signage in Virginia rest stops, but that in general, billboards are less available along highways, are expensive, and it is often difficult to measure the return on the investment. He also said that in general, print media is increasingly expensive and often does not offer as good a return on investment as newer digital and social media platforms. He gave an example of a recent buy-one-get-one free admission coupon placed on the back of Museum rack cards distributed along highway rest stops. The Museum spent about \$10,000 for the rack cards but recorded only about 58 uses of the coupon. Dr. Fox noted that there are new digital, rotating signs at the Weyers Cave and Charlottesville airports which might be of interest in marketing the Museum, as well as digital billboards in Roanoke and Richmond. Several attendees said that the Museum could use capital project funds to add digital capacity to our own sign on Museum property facing the Interstate or Route 250. Delegate Landes added that the Museum should include its social media contact information on all printed materials in the future. Mr. Curren said that many tourists are now using their phone to navigate and find out information for localities they are visiting; Mr. Herget agreed and said that as many as 60-70% of hits on the Museum's website are from phones. Delegate Plum asked if the Museum purchases sponsored ads on Facebook; Mr. Herget replied that we generally use boosted posts and thematic targeted ads.

Mr. Herget gave special event updates for the Naturalization ceremony and Oktoberfest and reviewed the overall special events calendar for the year. Mr. Nolen asked if non-profits like the Muscular Dystrophy Association pay rental fees when using the Museum's facilities. Mr. Herget replied that in most cases non-profits or charities do not pay rental fees, but occasionally pay a small maintenance fee.

LTC Callanan asked when the 2017 Calendar of Events will be ready, noting that he and other Board Members might want to get various events onto their calendars as soon as possible. He also complimented

the recent Foundation Beach party fundraiser. Mr. Herget said that the 2017 Calendar of Events will be ready later in the Fall. Mr. Vames said that the Naturalization ceremony is one of the most meaningful events the Museum hosts and recommended that all Members try to attend.

EDUCATION & INTERPRETATION REPORTS

Director of Education Andrew Richardson reviewed the school program totals for FY16; the total for field trips and outreach programs was 27,494 students served. He noted that in the near future, a large group of students from Northern Virginia will visit the Museum; their trip is funded by a federal grant program. Recently, the Museum has hosted several school groups from West Virginia schools as well. School programs attendance goal for FY17 is 30,000 students.

Mr. Richardson described the Charles Fund, which is a grant organization endowed by a former Board of Directors Member, Mr. Ed Eisenhart. The Charles Fund grants allow schools with limited resources to apply for funds for transportation, entrance fees and lunches. In FY16 the Charles Fund benefitted about 9,950 students.

Mr. Richardson reviewed a slide showing feedback for FY16 school field trips and classroom outreach by educators. He reviewed attendance at the 2016 summer camps, Home School Day, and various other events such as Toddler programs, and Holiday workshops. He also reviewed education department plans for 2017 including a new poster/mailer to send to educators around the state.

Interpretive Supervisor Misti Furr gave an overview of the historic site staff which includes four new fulltime interpreters. She also gave an overview of the Museum's popular farm animals and their locations. She highlighted the John Lewis Society (junior volunteer group) and their work and said that the Museum will host a public information session in early November to give details of the program to prospective members for next year.

Mrs. Furr described the Museum's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs, the Watershed study and Bioblast, and said that several new interpretive programs have been developed including Brewing, Baking and Woodworking.

Mrs. Sheets, who is the Board Volunteer Committee liaison, reported that Museum volunteers donated over 9,000 hours during the past year. The volunteers include adult volunteers, youth volunteers and Board volunteers. She thanked the Members of the Volunteer Committee; Lydia Volskis, Lauren Egan and Kerri Donnelly, for their work, and said that the annual volunteer/staff appreciation cookout is set for later in the month.

REPORT FROM THE FOUNDATION

American Frontier Culture Foundation President Ned Ruby reviewed the AFCF condensed Statement of Financial Position (unaudited), and upcoming special events plans. He said that the Board of Directors has formed a new Development Committee which will plan future events and fundraisers.

The Foundation has re-organized its administrative staff to ensure more efficient use of time. Fran Carrington will serve as Museum Store Manager, and the position of Foundation Manager has been eliminated, as many of the duties are now carried out by the Foundation Executive Director.

The Foundation's goal is to increase Annual Fund giving by 10% during the upcoming year; the new Annual Fund drive begins in October.

Foundation Executive Director Justin Reiter reported that this year's Beach Party was the most successful ever raising about \$30,000 to support Museum programs. There was a slight decrease in online donations. He also announced plans to develop a strategy to recapture former donors who no longer give to the Foundation.

LTC Callanan complimented the Foundation on the Beach Party, and said it was the best such event he has attended.

Mr. Vames reminded all Trustee Board Members to support the Foundation, as often grant organizations ask about the percentage of Board support when making decisions to award funding.

OLD BUSINESS

No items of Old Business were discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

No items of New Business were discussed.

CLOSED SESSION

At 11:30 a.m. 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

For discussion of personnel matters pursuant to the exemption in Va Code §2.2-3711(A)(1) pertaining to the appointment and performance of the Executive Director.

The motion was seconded by Dr. Fox, there was no discussion and all staff and guests left the room at 11:30 a.m.

At 12:05 p.m. Delegate Landes said:

I move that the Board enter open session.

The motion was seconded by Dr. Fox, there was no discussion and staff and guests re-entered the room at 12:05 p.m.

Delegate Landes then 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; and

Whereas, Virginia Code § 2.2-3712 requires a certification by this Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, BE IT RESOLVED 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 Dr. Fox, there was no discussion, and each Member affirmed verbally that no other matters had been discussed.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for Friday April 28, 2017 at 9 a.m. in the Lecture Hall of the Dairy Barn.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.