

**Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees**  
**Executive Committee – Administration Building Conference Room**  
**Draft Minutes**  
**August 5, 2020 9 a.m.**

**Members Attending:**

Cliff Garstang, Emmet Hanger, Ned Ruby, Peggy Sheets, Bill Sibert, Paul Vames, Kenneth Venable,

**Members Absent:**

Pamela Fox, Emmett Toms

**Guests Attending**

Bradley Howdyshe (Foundation Board), Glenda Western (Foundation Board)

**Staff Attending:**

Megan Newman, Lydia Volskis, Cliff, Edwards, Eric Bryan, David Puckett, Susan Grable, Beth Scripps

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

Board and Committee Chair Peggy Sheets called the meeting to order at 9 a.m., welcomed attendees and noted that the Committee has not met since February due to the coronavirus.

**II. Approval of February 18, 2020 Minutes**

The minutes of the February 18, 2020 meeting were approved as presented.

**III. Agency Report**

A. Dr. Newman gave the agency update, noting that later in the meeting David Puckett will review changes to the language of the Collections Policy. She reported that the CASA 5K set for September as a part of the Queen City Mischief and Magic festival has been cancelled for this year; they are offering a virtual race instead. Megan and Eric spoke to our new Attorney General representative Ramona Taylor, and she gave some good advice relating to this kind of event.

Ms. Taylor will be in attendance at the September Board of Trustees meeting. She has experience working with colleges and universities and with public-private partnerships.

Megan continued that Maintenance Reserve funds and maintenance work is now shifting towards the West African and American Indian sites, New interpretive signage plans are underway; the signs will have updated content and a Q-code to link to further information. These new signs and links will help as the staffing is likely to remain slim for the foreseeable future.

David Puckett has been working on a new orientation exhibit for the Visitors Center, which he hopes will be nearly complete by \_\_\_\_\_

The coronavirus event has had significant impact on the Museum's budget and visitation. The Museum closed March 13<sup>th</sup> and reopened to the public on June 10<sup>th</sup>, largely because we are an outdoor, open-air Museum with plenty of space to social distance. Many interior areas are roped off with a small space allowed for "peeking" inside. Interpretive staff speak to the public from small tents roped off outside to enforce social distancing. Golf carts are available for rent, but we are not running the shuttle at present, as there is no safe way to social distance or clean the vehicle in between each rider. The Museum Store is similarly roped off with customers asked to social distance and ask staff to retrieve items they may want to purchase. Peggy complimented the staff for their work and creativity in solving many of the awkward situations the coronavirus has presented.

Megan reported that staff are developing digital content and field trips, which can be monetized for extra income in the Fall, as teachers seek supplements to their classroom or virtual learning. Some smaller private schools or home school groups may be able to visit the site using social distancing, and our staff may be able to visit schools to conduct lessons, also using safe protocols.

There has been about a 35% overall drop in education visitation since the pandemic started (80% from March – June). Since the Museum reopened on June 19<sup>th</sup>, we have had about 1/3 of our normal visitation, about half of which haven't been annual pass-holders. There has been an upturn in facility rentals due to re-bookings from previously cancelled events.

The Museum has been using social media more heavily; a good example is Independence Day, which was totally virtual this year. Museum staff posted a series of live streamed videos hourly and about \_\_\_\_\_ people watched all or part with 500 people watching the programs all day long.

Megan reported that Museum staff, after examining similar venue pricing in the area, have recommended that we increase rental fees for the Octagonal Barn (both floors) from \$1500 – 42000 and the Pavilion from \$2000-2500. Golf cart rentals would increase from \$10-\$15 to \$25. Senator Hanger asked what sort of rentals were hosted in the Octagonal Barn; Peggy gave several examples such as weddings, receptions, and the recent Hershey Corp. "boot camp". Cliff Edwards noted that we now offer free Wifi in the space as well.

Cliff Garstang asked if there were different prices for non-profits; Megan said that non-profits pay half price, and that there are also discounts for weekday rentals. Renters have access to both the upper and lower floors of the Octagonal Barn, as it is impossible to have two events there simultaneously.

Cliff Garstang made a motion, which was seconded by Kenneth Venable, that the Executive Committee accept the proposal to raise rental fees on the Octagonal Barn and Pavilion. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Megan said that for the Fall, while there may not be as much education visitation on site, schools still need content, and that the Museum will be ready with a variety of offerings. Andrew estimated that the Museum lost between \$85,000 and \$90,000 in revenue between the spring field trip season cancellation and the loss of summer camp income.

Home School Day will likely be offered in a modified format, with a morning group from 9-12 and an afternoon group from 1-4. With an hour between for staff breaks and cleaning/sanitizing. We will not reserve more than 250 people at either session to avoid overcrowding and maintain safe distancing around the site.

With the loss of our part-time staff, the interpretation department has a new schedule and operating model to cover weekends and the sites on a rotating basis. Staff with any sort of health vulnerabilities are carefully placed.

Megan pointed out highlights of the finance report and Susan notes that we have received some grants for programming. Audio-visual and VC orientation exhibit items were purchased with the grant funds. Susan said that the financial impacts from the coronavirus will continue throughout the current fiscal year (2021) which ends June 30, 2021, and possibly beyond. We do not expect a budget from the state until after the General Assembly has met later this month, but Susan has prepared some scenarios on how to handle any further reductions. We have frozen discretionary spending, and as requested by the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) have returned unused funds from the last fiscal year, which can be pledged towards any reductions in the current year. Senator Hanger said that no one knows how the budget session will go, and Peggy complimented Susan and her staff's work.

David Puckett reviewed the proposed changes in collections policy language, which clarify that the purchase of items deaccessioned by the Museum from its permanent collection is not allowed for staff or Board Members, as it represents a conflict of interest. Cliff Garstang made a motion that the Committee accept the changes to the Collections Policy. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sibert, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **IV. Foundation Report**

Mrs. Beth Scripps

Foundation Director Beth Scripps reported that the Executive and Nominating Committees of the Board of Directors are working to fill a space left open by the resignation of Mr. Jeff Wood recently.

The Foundation Board of Directors will host a Board orientation in September in conjunction with their Fall Board meeting. The meeting this time will not be held on the same day as the Museum's Board of Trustees meeting, due to the whole day format planned.

The Foundation is looking forward to receiving the annual budget request from the Museum

**V. Old Business**

A. Crossing Gallery update

B. Mill update

C. State budget request/Maintenance Reserve language

Mrs. Sheets/Dr. Newman

Mr. Chinh Vu/Mr. Scott Cryer

Mr. Cliff Edwards

Dr. Newman/Eric Bryan

Cliff Edwards reported that he had put the Mill project out to bid last year and that all of the bids had come in close to 1 million dollars over budget. Therefore, he plans to delay the next bid for twelve to eighteen months to allow the construction economy to settle down and prices to decrease. He said however, that we cannot wait too long. The Virginia building code has changed so he will send the project for an updated approval in the meantime. He is still working on the sign for the traffic circle. Mr. Sibert noted that the bids may have been high in part due to the millwright needing to be classified as a subcontractor, when, in his opinion, the millwright should be classified as an independent firm approved to do work for the state.

Mr. Bryan reviewed the updates proposed for the Museum's state budget citation regarding Maintenance Reserve. Each summer the Governor gives state agencies the opportunity to submit legislation or alter language pertaining to their agency. He reviewed the proposed changes to the Museums language, which expand the areas in which the Museum may expend maintenance reserve funds. These changes are in line with the language other state Museums have. Dr. Newman pointed out that we are not asking for anything in the regular budget, and reiterated that Maintenance Reserve is different from the regular budget and from Capitol project funds.

Mrs. Sheets said that the Crossing Gallery – as it has been called historically – has been under discussion for nearly thirty years and will be a large part of completing the Museum's overall Master Site Plan. She continued that in 2016 the Museum received pre-planning funds to begin planning, and is now working with the Department of General Services (DGS) and an outside firm on the design process. The staff, Board and contractor committee has logged ninety-two hours of meetings and presentations as they work through the first phases of the project. The group has hit all of the benchmarks they set at the beginning of the process, and soon the project will be presented to the Arts and Architecture Review Board for their review. Dr. Newman pointed out that the building has been designed "inside out", with Museum needs and functionality considered first in the planning with outside or superficial elements planned later. She introduced Scott Crider of DLR and Chinh Vu of the Department of General Services who are standing by online to give an update.

Mr. Cryder said that they planned to bring the group "up to speed" on the process and answer any questions. The thanked Mr. Vu and also Mr. Mike Gilbert of DGS for their involvement in and support of the project. He described the orientation and scope of the project, with Cochran Parkway

being the main access point, and pointed out the location on the new map of the existing Administration building and gift shop. He pointed out the location of the new buildings, and said that the new Collections Storage building will be located near the administration building. The building known as the Education Studio will be demolished to allow for the new expanded building. Monika Smith from DLR reviewed some details and discussed the site and the elevation of the new main building. She said that during the interactive exercise when staff were asked to select from a number of images those that they liked and tell why, most responses involved natural materials and light with an indoor-outdoor component. She showed a slide of the floor plan and slides of the overall appearance of the building, including generous and appealing landscaping and vegetation. The building has plenty of natural light, is composed of stone and wood and encompasses some indoor/outdoor spaces.

She showed slides of the interpretive programs building, maintenance building, and the collections storage building which will have a “green” roof with grass and plantings. While the main and auxiliary parking lots will be rearranged, the total of available parking spaces will increase by six.

Cliff Garstang said that the building was “gorgeous” and the rest of the Committee responded in kind. He asked if the Dairy Barns would be removed and Megan said that they would be, and the functions that are currently managed from them have been assigned space in the new buildings. Senator Hanger asked about the square footage of the new spaces; Cliff Edwards replied that the permanent gallery space was 8,000 square feet and that the gallery for changing exhibits will be 3000 square feet.

Dr. Newman said that it has been extremely helpful to have DGS working with us as the general contractor for the process, as they have all of the professional services we need plus an understanding of all of the state regulations and protocols which must be followed. Cliff Edwards said that the construction will be in phases, as the Museum must remain open while construction is proceeding.

Mr. Ruby asked where we are in the process of selecting a construction manager and company; Mike Gilbert of DGS responded that we have received a number of RFP (Request for Proposal) responses and that he hopes that a contractor will be selected by early October. Mr. Cryder said that in his experience with this type of project, the earlier the expertise and guidance of a construction manager is available, the better, as he can help avoid early mistakes which cause delays. Mr. Vu said that we can plan the phasing carefully, so as to keep costs under control. He also said that materials selection is important, so as to choose long-lasting, quality options.

Ms. Western and Mr. Howdyshell complimented the new building depictions, as did Senator Hanger. Dr. Newman pointed out the packet handout related to the Zoom presentation, and said that the design team has been very responsive to the Museum’s needs and concerns throughout the process.

Mr. Vames said that this project will affect the entire Museum site; Mrs. Sheets agreed and said that there will be both external and internal changes. Both Mrs. Sheets and Dr. Newman complimented DGS on their involvement in the process. Mrs. Sheets said that she and several others had a very

helpful conversation with staff from the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, who gave some excellent feedback on challenges they faces with a recent building project.

Mrs. Sheets asked that the Committee take a vote to accept the design presented. Mr. Vames asked if the Planning Committee recommends, and Mrs. Sheets responded in the affirmative. Dr. Newman said that once the design is accepted by the Executive Committee, it will be presented at the full Board meeting in September.

Mr. Vames made a motion that the Executive Committee accept the design as presented and send it to the full Board for consideration at their September meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Venable, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

## **VI. New Business**

At 10:45 Mr. Ruby said

*I move that the Executive Committee of 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.

At 11 a.m. Mr. Ruby said

*I move that the Committee enter open session.*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Garstang, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Garstang said:

*Whereas, the Executive Committee of 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 Executive Committee of 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 Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia.*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Venable and each Member certified verbally that no other matters had been discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

The committee reviewed the draft agenda and proposed topics for the September Board meeting, as well as the proposed ratification items.

The next Executive Committee meeting date is set for Wednesday October 14<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m. in the Lecture Hall. Ms. Volskis has also scheduled a brief Executive Committee meeting before the 9 a.m. Trustees meeting on September 25<sup>th</sup> in the event such a meeting is needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

Mrs. Sheets