

Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees
Executive Committee – Lower Octagonal Barn
Draft Minutes
June 23, 2021 9 a.m.

Members Attending:

Cliff Garstang, Emmett Hanger, Ned Ruby, Peggy Sheets, William Sibert, Emmett Toms, Paul Vames, Kenneth Venable

Members Absent:

Pamela Fox,

Guests Attending:

Staff Attending:

Megan Newman, Lydia Volskis, Eric Bryan, Susan Grable, Cliff Edwards, Andrew Richardson, David Puckett, Davis Tierney

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Mrs. Peggy Sheets

Peggy Sheets called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and welcomed attendees back for the first "in-person" meeting in about a year. She noted that the Committee will change the agenda order due to one member needing to leave early.

II. Approval of February, March, April and May Minutes

Mrs. Sheets

Mrs. Sheets asked if there were any changes or corrections to the February, March, April and May Committee minutes (these have not been approved due to a lack of quorum). There were no changes. Mr. Garstang made a motion that the minutes be accepted as presented, the motion was seconded by Mr. Venable, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

At 9:05 Mr. Toms said:

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

- 1. 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.*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Ruby, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. All staff left the room.

At 9:20 Mr. Garstang said:

I move that the Committee end closed session.

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

Mr. Vames said:

Whereas, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia convened in closed meeting on June 23, 2021 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 Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Garstang, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. Each Member certified verbally that no other matters had been discussed.

III. Agency Report

Dr. Megan Newman

A. Finance Report

Ms. Susan Grable

Finance Director Susan Grable reported that the Museum is ending the fiscal year in a better position than we had expected, and that the 02239 fund has been increasing. She received permission from the Department of Planning and Budget to shift several employees between cost codes during the last part of FY21 in order to improve cash flow. She continued that in May the Museum received \$51,000 in revenue and that to date in June the total is approximately \$40,000. Some space rentals are a bit behind a normal year but are slowing returning, and the agency has left several full time positions unfilled for the time being. The agency was able to give merit bonuses to staff with the small amount of surplus funds available, and pay several bills ahead. Mrs. Sheets thanked her for her work to gain control and transparency over the budget.

Mrs. Sheets asked Senator Hanger about any plans during the Assembly special session to assist agencies who are required to raise certain revenues but have concerns due to field trip and visitation losses.

Dr. Newman said that the staff have been very diligent about saving money and supplies and that Ms. Grable has an excellent grasp of day-to day finances and is able to project ahead.

B. Interpretation Report

Mr. Davis Tierney

Director of Interpretation Davis Tierney reported that we are not “penning” the interpreters anymore to keep them distant from guests, but do provide resources to them if they want to at least create boundaries to maintain distance. He said that the staff are presenting more hands-on activities and in general are feeling back to normal. We have hired several part-time interpreters after having laid off nearly twenty in the Spring of 2020, and now we have new staff training materials and protocols.

Dr. Newman said that future event planning still has a bit of uncertainty but we will be planning somewhat smaller events this year such as thematic weekends etc...She said that we hosted 869 people at Juneteenth!

C. Education Report

Mr. Andrew Richardson

Director of Education Andrew Richardson reported that current visitation numbers are lower than pre-covid at this time of year, but better than he expected. Virtual programs are doing well, and make up about half of the education visitor numbers. The museum has hosted some home school and private school groups, and staff have conducted outreach programs as well. He noted that he sees evidence that school districts are lifting field trip restrictions for Fall, and expects by the end of summer that school reservations may rebound. He said that summer camp programs are not bringing groups this summer, but that staff have done virtual programs for both Western State Hospital and the Commonwealth Center for Children. In July the staff will travel to Berkeley West Virginia for a total of six visits to reach the entire school division.

Mr. Richardson continued that the virtual programs have received outstanding reviews. Several staff members spoke at the virtual ALHFAM (Association of Living History, Farm and Agriculture Museums) conference which we hosted, and their remarks were well-received. He said that the popular Non-Fiction Nights will be held either this Fall or in the Spring, with a new name.

Mr. Edwards said that he will begin the sample scale model buildings for the West African Farm next week to determine the exact combination of building materials which will stay in good shape for the longest time. He is working through the bid process for the traffic circle sign, and may wait until Spring of 2022 so that the high costs of building materials will decrease. He also reported that he has been doing some clearing of scrub brush etc...on the front property.

Dr. Newman continued that the construction firm Kjellstrom and Lee has been selected as construction manager for the new building, and their staff and their subcontractors may be seen around the site soon. They will be asked to check in at the Visitors Center and receive a special badge to wear on site.

Dr. Newman reported that Marketing Director Joe Herget is attending a meeting regarding the upcoming plastics ban. She said that the Museum will be impacted in a number of ways and that Joe will relay information he receives. She also reported that the Museum has acquired and installed two new handicapped accessible water fountains for the site.

Mr. Edwards reported that he is currently reviewing IT needs for the new gallery and education spaces so that these needs can be included in the planning process, along with storage and space plans for records retention, programming supplies and janitorial supply. We will also collaborate with VITA.

An Igbo film crew will visit the site in July to make a documentary about the West African Farm.

Mr. Garstang asked about a press release regarding the new building; Dr. Newman responded that it will be released within a day or two. She also asked Committee Members to alert her if they are part of an organization (civic club etc..) who might like to host a program about the new building by a member of the Museum staff.

Mrs. Sheets said that the recent Chamber of Commerce "Business After Hours" event hosted by the American Frontier Culture Foundation went well and we were able to introduce the new project. She also noted that Davis, David, Andrew and Eric are working on the content of the permanent exhibit.

D. Marketing Report

Dr. Newman

Dr. Newman reported that the Museum is currently logging about 50% of the visitation recorded before covid, but that we have been seeing gradual increases since April. Reporting and comparisons over the next couple of years will be skewed, due to the unusual year in 2020 and part of 2021.

The Museum's first Juneteenth collaboration with Staunton area leaders was a success and we hosted 869 guests. We hope to expand the festival in future years. Many of the attendees had not visited the Museum before.

Dr. Newman continued that July 4th weekend the Museum will be open with no restrictions but with high cleanliness standards, that the Roots Music concerts on Sunday evenings in August are ready to launch, and that programming over Labor Day weekend will span all three days (Saturday, Sunday and Monday). The Lecture Series and podcasts are ongoing. Mr. Venable said that Juneteenth was planned quickly within about three months this year, but that we can plan further ahead for next year's expanded event. He mentioned that he has some ideas on how the Staunton African American Festival could merge with the Juneteenth Festival in future years. Those who have been leading the African American Festival for years are aging, and there are few younger people to take over. He pointed out to the planners that rules may be different when planning an event on state

property as opposed to city property. He also noted that it was nice to see the wide variety of people who enjoyed the Juneteenth Festival in its new larger venue.

IV. Foundation Report

Foundation Representative

Mrs. Sheets presented the Foundation report on behalf of Mr. Trainum.

She reported that:

- The Foundation's annual fund is well over its goal and will soon come to an end for this year.
- Bids for the traffic circle sign are being returned.
- The Foundation is hosting a Golf Tournament in September in honor of Frank McDonough
- Work will soon begin on the capital campaign to raise funds for the Crossing Gallery furnishings

V. Old Business

Mrs. Sheets

VI. New Business

Newport Schoolhouse

Mrs. Sheets

Mrs. Sheets recently spoke with local historian and Augusta County Historical Society Member Nancy Sorrells, concerning a historic schoolhouse located in Augusta County, which is currently threatened by construction. Ms. Sorrells would like some assistance with bringing community members together to discuss options to save the schoolhouse and let the needed construction proceed. Mrs. Sheets said that while the Museum does not want the schoolhouse, we would be glad to help facilitate discussions is needed. Museum employee Ray Wright, who serves on the Augusta County historical Society Board, went and examined the building, and noted that the schoolhouse could be moved whole to the back of the property on which it now sits, thus preserving it and moving it away from the construction project.

VII. Next Meeting Date

Committee

The next meeting date is set for Wednesday August 25th at 9 a.m. – there will be no July meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

Mrs. Sheets

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.