

Draft Minutes

Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees April 19, 2024

9 a.m. Lecture Hall, Dairy Barn

Members Attending: John Avoli, Eric Bond, Ron Capps, Pamela Fox, Milton Franklin, Mona Huffer, Joan Hughes, Steve Landes, Peter Lipsett, Rob Orrison, Russet Perry, Ned Ruby, Chris Runion, Peggy Sheets, Scott Surovell, Tim Simmons, Paul Vames

Members Absent: Chris Head, Iris Park, Michael Webert

Guests Attending: Andrew Basinger, James Belshee, Dean Caldwell, John Dod, Emmett Hanger

Staff Attending: Lydia Volskis, Cliff Edwards, Andrew Richardson, Dorette Sobolewski, \Rachel Sites, Paige Hildebrand, Butch Smiley, Davis Tierney, Angela Lehman, Chase Chandler, Eric Bryan, David Puckett

I. Call to Order and Welcome of New Members

Board Chair Mrs. Peggy Sheets called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and asked each attendee to introduce him or herself.

A. Resolutions for Retiring Members

Mrs. Sheets said that resolutions for three retiring members have been prepared. Mr. Frank Nolen, Mr. Kenneth Venable, and Mr. William Sibert recently rotated off the Board and the resolutions thank them for their work.

B. Approval of Minutes September 2023

Mr. Capps made the motion that the minutes of the September 2023 Trustees meeting be approved as distributed. The motion was seconded by Dr. Bond, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

II. American Journey Gallery

A. Project Phasing

Mr. Andrew Basinger, of Kjellstrom and Lee, described the current status of the gallery project. He reviewed slides depicting the phasing plan over the next two years. He said that he would give more information in a few minutes when the group travels outside to see the outlines of the new building.

B. Visit to the Site

The Board, some staff and others boarded a fleet of golf carts to travel around the Museum site to view the outline and location of the new building, the new maintenance building, and several other features. The group then returned to the Lecture Hall to continue the meeting.

C. American Journey Gallery Process

Deputy Director Cliff Edwards reviewed aerial slides of the crossing gallery site, location maps and artists renderings. He also reviewed a diagram of the interior floor plan. He said that the General Contractors Kjellstrom and Lee still believe that the project will start in July/August.

Mr. Edwards continued that the land transfer process from the Foundation to the state has been completed with forms submitted to the Attorney General's office and the full board to ratify the action later in the meeting. This small parcel of land will be a part of the new main parking lot.

He said that the first submission of working drawings happened in February, a second submission at the end of March, and possibly a third submission in mid-May.

Mr. Edwards reviewed slide of various projects completed this past winter, such as decluttering and packing up the Dairy Barns and tree removal.

Dr. Fox asked about the media/press release plan and Mrs. Sheets said that we will use both traditional methods such as the newspaper/radio and television, as well as all of our social media outlets such as Facebook and Instagram.

IV. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Butch Smiley welcomed the new Members and noted that this would be the last meeting in this building due to the Gallery project and new construction. He thanked Andrew Basinger for his presentation. He said that visitation numbers have grown, revenue is stable, and revenue from the various front property leases is coming into the Foundation. He described a recent call he participated in with the Secretary of Education, during which he reminded her that revenues and visitation may decrease somewhat during the two-year construction process, but that the Museum has planned carefully, and the Foundation is ready to assist as needed. The Foundation is also starting their capital campaign and will keep in regular communications with Museum leadership. He said that both

the state and Foundation Boards are forming a joint real estate committee to manage future needs regarding the development property.

A. Marketing Update

Mr. Smiley gave the marketing report and said that working with the marketing firm we have retained is going well, and the Museum has achieved consistency in branding across a number of platforms. He reiterated Mrs. Sheets answer to Dr. Fox's earlier question, that the press release about the new building will be put forward in traditional media such as newspaper and television as well as using the Museum's various social media platforms.

V. Capital Projects Update

A. Mill Project Update

Mr. Edwards reviewed the definitions of and differences between capital and maintenance reserve projects. He said that he hopes to be able to put the Mill project out to bid later this year and noted extra state funds for the project.

B. West African Exhibit Update

Mr. Edwards reported that the West African site is being moved down the road to make way for the new Maintenance building. He estimated the entire cost to rebuild the site at 1 to 1.5 million. The buildings will look authentic, but some hidden modern building methods will be used to allow occupancy permits so guests can go inside.

C. Maintenance Reserve Projects

Mr. Edwards reported on recently completed Maintenance Reserve projects such as the English Farm yard re-grade, during which ADA accessible walkways were added on both sides of the farmhouse.

He also reported on upcoming Maintenance Reserve Projects such as the German Barn repair and painting, and the planned New World road extension.

VI. Programs and Education

Chief Operating Officer Andrew Richardson reviewed a slide depicting school group visitation over the last several years; Museum visitation has almost reached pre-Covid levels. He reported on summer camp status, the junior interpreter John Lewis Society and the recent Adventures at the Museum with local school systems participating. He highlighted the Trailblazers program in collaboration with the American Frontier Culture Foundation; the program supports school field trips from Title I schools, from the Valley

and beyond. The grant offsets transportation and entrance fees for the schools and students who might not otherwise be able to visit the Museum. Nearly \$140,000 has been awarded this school year to date.

Mr. Richardson reported that:

- The Interpretation Department spent time this winter packing the collections for storage, and decluttering and cleaning the Dairy Barn.
- This year's Fiber Festival hosted over 700 guests.
- Museum staff participated in Jamestown's "Military through the Ages: reenactment and received praise for their efforts. This allows for collaboration with other museum's such as Jamestown-Yorktown and Colonial Williamsburg.
- The Museum is currently hiring for one fulltime and two part-time costumed interpreter positions.
- Due to the impact of construction, some larger events such as Oktoberfest and Lantern Tours will be cancelled. And smaller events may be modified to meet the conditions.

VII. Content Development – Exhibits, Programs, Events

Director of Special Projects Eric Bryan said that he is excited to be here as we start the Gallery project and noted that several Board members have been with the Museum for quite some time as well. He described the gallery as a transformational project for the Museum.

Mr. Bryan continued that the Content Development, Exhibitions, Programs and Events Committee, consisting of several staff members, Trustees Iris Park, Rob Orrison, Dr. hEric Bond and Joan Hughes, had its inaugural meeting in November of last year. Mr. Orrison has agreed to be the Chair of the Committee. He gave an overview of the amount of space allocated for each dedicated space in the new building, and explained the process the Museum has been working through for planning the space with the PRD exhibit design group. He described the panel of about fifteen scholars who are assisting with the content development and whose scholarly research relate to the Museum's mission; Museum staff have met with six of the scholars to date.

VIII. Deaccessioning (and vote)

Curator of Collections David Puckett reported that over 1,200 artifacts have been moved from Dairy Barn 1 into off-site storage in advance of the construction and eventual Dairy Barn demolition. Packing and sorting is still in progress and items in Dairy Barn 2 will be underway before fall.

Mr. Puckett presented a list of items for deaccessioning. These are mainly items which do not fit the Museum's interpretive mission, are unauthenticated or broken/no longer useful. Deaccessioning removes the items from the permanent collection. He will also present a deaccessioning list at the Fall 2024 meeting. Mr. Avoli asked if the Museum has made proper notification to any donors, and

Mr. Puckett said that we have, and gave the example that the Ulster American Folk Park has declined to take back any of the items they donated many years ago.

Mr. Avoli made a motion that the Board approve the deaccession list as resented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Landes, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

IX. Finance and ARMICS

Finance Director Chase Chandler reviewed Museum revenues for FY24 from July 1, 2023 through the end of March 2024. He highlighted a year-to -comparison with FY23 and showed a pie chart depicting the composition of special revenues for the Museum. He continued and reviewed expenditures to date for FY24. He reviewed operational and capital expenditures comparing year-over-year with FY23 and showed a pie chart depicting operational expenses by category.

Mr. Chandler reviewed the Museum staffs work on ARMICS – Agency Risk Management and Internal Control Standards. He said that a staff committee is working through the ARMICS report document and making plan to address issues and make corrections to museum policy or procedures as needed.

X. Foundation Report

American Frontier Culture Foundation President John Dod reported that:

- The Annual Fund has raised \$68,500 of its \$85,000 goal; the deadline is June 30, 2024
- The American Journey 5K fundraiser will be held on April 27
- The next Golf Tournament will be on May 9, 2025 at the Club at Ironwood in Waynesboro
- The Trailblazer’s Fund has expended \$135,000 to support field trips to date this school year and expects to spend another \$40,000 before the end of the school season.
- Next year the initial amount will be set at \$175,000. “Pig pickin” fundraiser will be held at the red barn event space in Augusta County on August 24th.
- The Foundation is applying for other grants to support Museum programs.

A. Capital Campaign Update

Mr. James Belshee, Chair of the Foundation Capital Campaign Committee reported that the Foundation’s goal is to raise \$5 million dollars for the new gallery. The Foundation has pledged \$1 million towards the goal. Emmett Hanger and John Avoli are honorary co-chairs of the Committee, which will meet next in May. Fundraising materials are being developed,

Naming opportunities have been prepared for various spaces in the new gallery, and he reviewed a document showing each area and the suggested donation for naming rights.

He thanked Trustee Members serving on the Capital Campaign Committee.

B. Old Business

No item of old business were discussed.

C. New Business

A. Land Transfer Ratification

Mrs. Sheets explained that the land transfer ratification is necessary to transfer a small parcel of land from the Foundation to the state for use in the new parking lot. The land transfer documents have been submitted to the Office of the Attorney General and will be approved by the Foundation Board this afternoon at their meeting. Mrs. Sheets read the motion (attached). Mr. Avoli made a motion that the Board accept the land transfer as noted in the motion, The motion was seconded by Mr. Lipsett, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

D. Closed Session

No closed session was required.

E. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

F. Next Meeting Date (Sept 27, 2024)

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is September 27, 2024, at 9 a.m.

G. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11 a.m.