



DRAFT Minutes
Quarterly Board of Trustees Meeting
Forum
2500 West Broad Street

April 18, 2024
3 p.m.

Present: Cristina Ramirez, David Mills, Elsa Falls, Patricia Nicoson, Dr. Richard Groover, Dr. Rodney Berry, Gina Burgin, Fran Bradford, Karey Malyszko.

Staff: Rich Conti, Timshel Purdum, Courtney Moyer, Ash Harris, MJ Benson, and Ada Sue Siler.

Other Attendees: Deborah Love, Office of the Attorney General
Cindy Norwood-Marquez, member of the general public

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Mr. Mills, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. and verified a quorum was present.

Mr. Mills asked the Trustees to review the January 18, 2024, meeting minutes. Ms. Nicoson called a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Berry called the second. Mr. Mills called for a vote which passed unanimously without objection.

Mr. Mills reviewed the agenda for the meeting then introduced Dr. Irma Beccerra, the newly appointed Trustee to the Board.

Dr. Irma Becerra, President of Marymount University, expressed her great honor at joining the board and gratitude to Governor Youngkin for the appointment. She eagerly anticipates collaborating with the Board and is particularly excited about Mr. Conti's upcoming visit to Marymount in Arlington. Dr. Becerra highlighted the university's initiatives, including the urban agriculture unit and its impressive strategic plan. Marymount University is celebrating its 75th anniversary. Noteworthy

strengths include the nursing program, ranked number one in the private sector in Virginia, and the recent introduction of an engineering program. Since 2020, Marymount has been designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and has achieved national university status, earning a place in Forbes' Top 500 Colleges and Universities. Additionally, the university boasts a strong Division III athletic program. Ms. Bradford acknowledged the significance of having Dr. Becerra, an electrical engineer, on the Board.

Director's Report

Mr. Conti highlighted the following:

- The Green Phase II is progressing towards completion by March 2024.
- The Science Museum is more than just numbers, but recent months saw record attendance, with four out of the last five months being the highest attended in the Science Museum's 47-year history.
- A budget presentation is scheduled for the next meeting with detailed analysis of financial data.
- A Strategic Work Plan review is also slated for upcoming sessions.
- The successful public event for the eclipse marked a turning point for Phase I of the The Green project, with Phase II underway.
- Phase II aims for streamlined development while preserving the building's historic integrity.
- Constraints around the development of Northern Virginia Science Center and ongoing work were discussed.
- Plans to put the building construction contract out to bid were mentioned, with significant interest and comments regarding fire safety.
- Numbers regarding bids and other matters won't be available until summer.
- There was a brief discussion about a significant gift from Amazon Web Services (AWS) for the Science Center's Foundation.
- The General Assembly allocated funds for various refurbishments at Broad Street Station's campus including designs for a new full service restaurant and demolition of 1000 DMV Drive.
- Additional projects include terrazzo floor installation in the concessions area, HVAC upgrades, and accessibility improvements.
- Some projects, like widening entry doors for ADA compliance, may impact operations.

Operations Report

Mr. Harris provided a brief overview of operations.

- The Director of Facilities is retiring and a replacement has been hired to provide overlap for a smooth transition.
- The Technical Solutions Manager position is open, seeking the optimal candidate.
- Special Events have performed well, generating \$535k YTD, a 12% increase over last year during the same period.
- Enterprise merchandise gross revenue stands at \$475k, up 19% from last year.
- Concessions revenue has increased by 49% to \$224k.
- The increase in merchandise sales is attributed to higher attendance and themed merchandise related to exhibits.
- Efforts are underway to attract large groups for rentals through word-of-mouth and promotional packages.
- Housekeeping services are now in-house, yielding positive outcomes.
- Technological upgrades include LED walls installation, Science on a Sphere updates, and completion of the Laser system installation in The Dome.
- Facilities and exhibits project highlights included the completion of the Thalhimer Pavilion updates in March, upcoming renovations and a new exhibition in the Dome Lobby and the Quetzalcoatlus exhibit which will be installed in late April.
- The Request for Proposal period for a third-party cafe operator has closed. Next steps are to review proposals and hopefully determine a provider.
- Recognition was given for the successful Earth Day celebration.
- Security presence during Earth Day was addressed, with clarification that security is partially managed by in-house staff and contract security personnel, maintaining a visible presence in the Science Museum building.

Finance and Business Operations Committee's Report

Ms. Burgin reviewed the Trustee Summary and confirmed that the organization is on track with its budget.

- The Science Museum's financial state is robust, reflecting meticulous management practices.
- Revenue has exceeded projections, surpassing the budget by \$105k, with increased memberships contributing to this success.
- While revenue from the Foundation lags behind, it has not been necessary to utilize these funds.
- Wage expenses have stabilized and numerous expense categories are under budget, largely due to timing. However, more expenses tend to occur towards the end of the year.

- A substantial portion of the \$1.5M in Working Capital allocated to The Green Phase II project has been expended. Any remaining expenses will be paid through the Foundation.
- Attendance records reflect positive trends, with visitation numbers rising notably, including group visits and spring break attendance.
 - January–March visitation: 133,774, up 12.5%
 - YTD: 384,808, up 7.4%
 - Group visitation: July–March: 44,894, up 10%
 - Spring bookings (April–June): 14,659
 - Spring Break: 16,785, up 12.5%
- The Science Museum grapples with an attendance puzzle characterized by several complexities.
- Firstly, numerous individuals attend special events, posing the challenge of determining the appropriate sell-out threshold to maintain customer satisfaction and quality without overselling and compromising the guest experience.
- Additionally, there are instances where members reserve tickets but fail to show up, further complicating attendance management.
- This situation requires a delicate balancing act to optimize attendance while mitigating potential issues.
- Furthermore, the Science Museum faces challenges related to scammers and scalpers attempting to resell tickets on its social media platforms, necessitating vigilant monitoring and proactive measures to address such activities.
- Upcoming exhibitions include:
 - *Discover Steampunk*, February 10–August 18, 2024
 - *Secrets of the Sea*, opened March 1, 2024
 - *BODY WORLDS: The Anatomy of Happiness*, May 25–September 2, 2024
 - *Animal Kingdom*, opens June 1, 2024
 - *Math Alive*, September 28, 2024–January 12, 2025
 - *Towers of Tomorrow with LEGO® Bricks*, February 1–August 24, 2025
 - *Ultimate Dinosaurs*, May 31–September 1, 2025

Mr. Mills inquired about the timeline for projecting exhibits and acquisitions. Ms. Moyer responded that they aim to book as far in advance as possible. Ms. Falls sought clarification on the sources of exhibits, to which Ms. Moyer explained they consult with various groups and utilize multiple sources.

Ms. Nicoson raised concerns about the high number of no-shows impacting ticket sales, prompting Ms. Moyer to acknowledge a 30% no-show rate among members and ongoing efforts to address the issue. Mr. Mills suggested exploring precedents at other

institutions and potentially limiting free events for members or implementing educational initiatives or nominal fees.

Ms. Burgin inquired about the sell-out threshold for the Science After Dark event, to which Ms. Moyer indicated they are currently determining the limit, dependent on programming and venue. Mr. Conti suggested it to be around 1750 people. Dr. Becerra suggested that implementing timed entry may also aid in managing attendance.

Education Report

Dr. Berry provided the following highlights of team Education's recent work.

- During the third quarter, the organization demonstrated productivity, particularly from January to March.
- Summer camp will kick off on June 17, spanning eight full weeks and one partial week, accommodating 60 campers per week and granting a total of 71 scholarships.
- The Science Museum hosted seven events, including the popular 21+ event Science on Tap.
- The Science within Reach initiative distributed 16 family membership passes across five library systems as part of its Library Pass Program.
- Volunteer engagement remains robust, with 77 regular volunteers, 53 group volunteers, and a collective contribution of 2,200 hours of volunteer time.
- Additionally, the Science Museum has hired six summer college interns and three high school interns.
- An interpretive plan was drafted and shared with the committee, with subsequent processing of feedback to refine the plan.
- Upcoming program includes:
 - April 19 Minds of All Kinds
 - April 23 Sunrise Science: Chemistry in a Cone
 - April 23 Haeleon Earth Day
 - April 25 Senior Morning
 - April 27 YMCA Healthy Kids
 - April 27 Dia de los Niños @ Broadrock Library
 - May 4 ¿Qué Pasa? Festival @ Brown's Island
 - May 10 Science After Dark
 - May 15 Senior Morning
 - May 18 Curiosity Camp Out
 - May 18 ASCV Family Festival @ Crump Park
 - May 25 BODY WORLDS: The Anatomy of Happiness
 - June 1 Greek Festival Outreach

- June 8 Multicultural Festival @ Dogwood Dell
- June 6 Sunrise Science
- June 17 Summer camp begins!
- June 23 Minds of All Kinds

Mr. Mills stated that the Interpretive Plan will be shared with the Board and they will have the opportunity to provide feedback.

Strategic Work Plan Report

Mr. Mills shared an overview of the Foundation's recent efforts and progress.

- A recent session involving Ms. Bradford and Mr. Mills focused on outlining the DNA of a work plan for staff for the upcoming year, which will serve as a guiding framework for their work.
- This marks an exciting opportunity for significant progress.
- There is a need to forecast key areas of focus for the next three years to ensure continued advancement.
- Objective 1
 - The Science Museum aims to strategically plan and maximize the impact of its 50th anniversary in 2027, recognizing it as a significant opportunity for celebration.
- Objective 2
 - An emphasis will be placed on analyzing staffing to develop a more effective model for hiring, retaining, and employing talented individuals, with the goal of sustaining continued growth and retaining exceptional talent.
- Objective 3
 - Attention will be given to critical building systems, with a focus on formulating a long-term plan for maintaining Broad Street Station.
 - The objective is to adopt preemptive and proactive measures to prevent operational disruptions.
- Objective 4
 - Efforts will be made to implement creative strategies to fully support the Foundation during its ongoing restructuring.
 - This may involve increased participation in Foundation events, maintaining momentum, and engaging more frequently with the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees, especially considering the foundation's significant role in the East Green.
- Objective 5

- The Science Museum will undertake a comprehensive study to analyze the utilization of interior space and develop recommendations for future improvements.
- This includes exploring the possibility of adding additional spaces or repurposing the third floor to accommodate programming needs, such as expanding summer camp or providing more room for various activities.

During the discussion, Dr. Berry raised a question about facilities ranking programs in spaces and assigning prioritization to optimize space utilization. Dr. Becerra expressed concerns about the landlocked situation and highlighted the importance of considering time of use for reconfiguration.

Mr. Conti emphasized the pressing need for planning, noting that the Science Museum has nearly outgrown its current space. Dr. Becerra suggested involving the state in the planning process, particularly to align with areas of focus such as teen programs or preschools, seeking direction from the Governor's office.

Ms. Bradford added that while the Foundation is undergoing restructuring, it's crucial for the board to support its work through this transition.

Mr. Mills called for a motion to approve the FY 25 Work Plan initiatives. The motion was called by Dr. Groover and seconded by Ms. Falls. A vote was taken by verbal affirmation, all approved. Motion carries.

New Business

Mr. Mills asked for any new business.

Dr. Groover mentioned a Science Award Program scheduled for November 2024 to be hosted by the Virginia Academy of Science. The program will be held at the Science Museum.

Ms. Nicoson offered accolades to the housekeeping team and their great work.

Adjournment

With no new business heard, Dr. Berry made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Dr. Becerra. Mr. Mills called for a vote which passed unanimously without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

The next meeting will be on June 20, 2024.