

Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia
Draft Minutes Board of Trustees
9 a.m. on September 27, 2024 – Lecture Hall of Dairy Barn

Members Attending: John Avoli, Eric Bond, Ron Capps, Nadarius Clark, Milton Franklin, Ashlie Howell, Mona Huffer, Amy Laufer, Peter Lipsett, Robert Orrison, Russett Perry, Chris Runion, Peggy Sheets, Timothy Simmons, Scott Surovell, Emmett Toms, Paul Vames, Michael Webert

Members Absent: Pamela Fox, Chris Head, Joan Hughes, Steve Landes,

Guests Attending: Senator Emmett W. Hanger Jr.,

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

I. Call to Order and Welcome of New Members

Mrs. Peggy Sheets

Mrs. Sheets called the meeting to order and as there was a physical quorum in the room, the Board voted to allow Mr. Lipsett to participate remotely from his work conference in Arizona. (This follows the Virtual meeting policy and procedure prepared by the Office of the Attorney General for state agency Boards and adopted by this Board at its September 2022 meeting. Mr. Lipsett can be heard by the attendees, and he can hear and follow the meeting as well.)

Mr. Avoli made the motion to allow Mr. Lipsett to participate and Mr. Toms seconded the motion There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

II. Approval of Minutes – April 2024 meeting

Mrs. Sheets

The minutes of the April 2024 meeting were approved as presented.

III. Executive Directors Report

Mr. Butch Smiley

Executive Director Butch Smiley said that the Board will hear updates on the Gallery by several staff members. He reported that visits to the museum's Facebook site are up by 55%, Facebook posts are up by 238%, and the Museum has 386 new Instagram followers. Website use and visits are up by 1500%.

He reported that the Museum has had a new security firm in place since July, and that they are a very professional, well-trained and pro-active group who are also armed. They are always in uniform and have been of great assistance already to staff and guests. He said that Trustees Milton Franklin and Tim Simmons, both law enforcement officers with years of experience, have worked with him and Deputy Director Cliff Edwards to conduct a security review of the Museum's property and made strong recommendations.

Museum staff are working to be a part of community outreach and events; we are a part of the local 250th committee and Director of Events Paige Hildebrand serves on the local Tourism Advisory Board.

Mr. Smiley gave some highlights of the proposed move of the West African and Native American sites to the current location of the Dairy Barns, their improved visibility, access and safer construction, as well as the upgrades to the

Settlement Farm. He said that the Mill construction project is currently out for bid, and noted its location will be near the church and 1720's farm.

He described the process of value engineering, cost increases and delays as a normal part of the construction process, and said that the project will commence in early 2025.

IV. Capital Projects Report
A. Capital projects

Mr. Cliff Edwards
Mr. Edwards

Deputy Director Cliff Edwards reviewed the differences between Maintenance Reserve and Capital projects in the state. He reviewed the status of the Gallery and Mill projects and said that the Mill pre-bid meeting was a success with several firms attending. He followed up Mr. Smiley's report concerning the West African and Native sites and presented slides to allow Trustees to visualize their new location.

B. Maintenance Reserve Projects

Mr. Edwards

Mr. Edwards reported that the Museum is involved in several Maintenance Reserve projects including the German Barn repairs, chinking on the 1820's barn, brush removal and early planning for the New World road expansion.

C. Exhibit Presentation

Ms. Dorette Sobolewski

Mr. Smiley introduced Trustee Rob Orrison, who is the Chair of the Research, Education and Interpretation Committee, which is working to prepare content for the gallery as well as content materials for the interpretive programs which will continue the story in living history context. Mr. Orrison complimented the staff on the committee for their hard work so far.

Director of Research Dorette Sobolewski said that the scope of the Gallery planning is wide and complex. She continued that she and others have spent more than a year working with design firm PRD and sixteen international scholars to plan the Gallery. She also thanked the American Frontier Culture Foundation for their support of the project, and Mrs. Sheets and Mr. Smiley for their support.

Ms. Sobolewski reviewed several data slides depicting visitor responses to several museum experience questions and compared responses to Museums in general to responses specifically pertaining to the Frontier Culture Museum and explained the survey results. She also shared a slide of the Gallery floorplan and described the various phases of the installation.

Peter Lisett asked how the overall theme would be linked from the indoors Museum to the outdoor sites; Ms. Sobolewski said that these plans are currently underway. Mr. Vames asked how many schoolchildren would be able to visit the exhibit at a time and Ms. Sobolewski responded that the details are still to be worked out in collaboration with the education department. Delegate Laufer said that guests will enjoy both being outside and the indoor gallery. Delegate Clark suggested more information on the interactions of the African people with those they encountered on the frontier, and Senator Surovell suggested exploring the history of those who did not come directly to Virginia, but came after spending time in other states such as Pennsylvania. Ms. Sobolewski noted that both of these themes will be explored in the Gallery. Senator Surovell also mentioned that distilleries and the production of "spirits" were an important part of frontier life, and Ms. Sobolewski also said that apple cider and hard cider were popular. Delegate Laufer said that farming has changed a great deal over the years and that some themes about agricultural change would be of interest.

V. Programs and Education

Mr. Andrew Richardson

Chief Operating Officer Andrew Richardson reported that visitation numbers have rebounded from the covid era and are almost at pre-covid levels. He reviewed both education and visitation attendance and also reviewed the Foundation's Trailblazers program, which supplies grant funds to allow schools to come on field trips which might not otherwise be able to. He said that the recent reenactment weekend focused on Lord Dunmore's rebellion was well-attended and a good community-wide event. Museum staff and guest reenactors marched through downtown Staunton, reenacting the muster of local militia in the pre-revolutionary war era.

VI. Deaccessioning

Mr. David Puckett

A. Items for de-accessioning

Curator of Collections David Puckett explained the list of items proposed for deaccessioning. He has been spending much time over the last year cleaning and assessing the Museum's collections, and so as not to store and eventually move items which are not of value to the Museums collecting periods, he has recommended the items for sale, discard or de-accessioning. He gave an explanation of how an item might be "lost" as described on the list. This could mean original items which could include those (in the Museum's early days) used on site and damaged or destroyed, those not properly accounted for and thus no longer within the collection. In the early days of the Museum sometimes large number of unusable items were accepted without proper research or cataloging. Delegate Webert asked if the Museum holds any Native American artifact as there are special laws which govern there. Mr. Puckett responded that we do not. He said that if we have any material culture items in the new exhibit, we will consult with our Native American advisory group.

Mr. Avoli made a motion that the Board approve the list for de-accessioning, the motion was seconded by Mr. Capps. There was no discussion and the morion passed unanimously.

Mr. Pucket continued that there are small revisions to the Livestock policy, mainly regarding the chain of command and who has final authority to make decisions on animal care, use and disposition.

Mr. Avoli made a motion that the Board approve the language changes to the livestock policy, the motion was seconded by Mr. Capps. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

B. Livestock Policy updates

See above.

VII. Finance and ARMICS

Mr. Chase Chandler

A. Ratify Authority Matrix

Mr. Smiley reported that revenue is steady and as expected. He said that the agency ARMICS review is essentially complete and called the Board's attention to the Authority Matrix included in their table packets. He noted that the Executive Committee had approved the document at its last meeting. The document describes who is in charge of

various agency functions, especially fiscal. Mr. Avoli made a motion that the Board approve the document as presented. The motion was seconded by Delegate Clark, there was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Foundation Report

Senator Emmett Hanger

American Frontier Culture Foundation President Senator Emmett Hanger, greeted the group and said that he was honored to have recently been elected President of the Foundation. He noted that fundraising is an important part of the Foundation's mission on behalf of the Museum and said that fundraising is underway for the American Journeys Gallery. He complimented the Foundation's staff for their hard work and dedication and for helping him become acquainted with current projects and various aspects of the Foundations daily operations.

He continued that the Foundation would continue to work closely with the Museum to raise and spend funds as needed - not to create a "nest egg" that goes unused.

Senator Hanger reported that the August fundraiser at the Red Barn event center in Augusta County raised \$24,000 to support the Museum.

He continued that there has been some interest in the "For Sale" sign on the DeJarnette property, and thanked Mr. Paul Vames and others who have served on the real estate committee.

Senator Hanger presented a slide depicting a new memorial plaque for Mr. Frank McDonough, a longtime Trustee and Museum supporter who passed away recently. The plaque will be placed somewhere on the Irish Farm.

IX. Old Business

Mrs. Sheets

No items of old business were presented.

X. New Business

Mrs. Sheets

A. Deaccessioning Ratification

Mr. David Puckett

See above.

B. Livestock Policy Update Ratification

Mr. David Puckett

See above.

C. Virtual meeting policy review

Mrs. Sheets

Mrs. Sheets reviewed the virtual meeting attendance policy for boards, prepared by the Office of the Attorney General and approved by this Board at its September 2022 meeting. She pointed out that the Board used the policy to allow Mr. Lipsett to participate virtually from Arizona this morning.

D. Bylaws/Nominations – Officer Elections and Executive Committee Membership

Nominations/Bylaws Committee

Mrs. Mona Huffer reported on behalf of the Nominations Committee and presented a slate of officers for two-year terms. The Nominations Committee recommends Mrs. Peggy Sheets for Chair and Mr. Ron Capps for Vice-Chair. Mr. Avoli

made a motion that the Board approve the officers, the motion was seconded by Mr. Simmons, there were no nominations from the floor, there was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Huffer continued that the following Trustees have agreed to serve on the Executive Committee for a two-year term; they are Mr. John Avoli, Mr. Ron Capps, Delegate Katrina Callsen, Mr. Steve Landes, Mr. Ned Ruby, Mrs. Peggy Sheets, and Mr. Paul Vames. Mr. Avoli made a motion that the Board approve the Executive Committee membership, the motion was seconded by Mr. Simmons, there were no nominations from the floor and no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

XI. Closed Session (if needed)

Committee

There was no closed session.

XII. Public Comment

Mrs. Sheets

There was no public comment.

XIII. Next Meeting Date (May 2, 2025)

Mrs. Sheets

The next meeting is set for Friday May 2 at 9 a.m, in the Octagonal Barn at the Museum.

XIV. Adjournment

Mrs. Sheets

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.