

**Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees**  
**Executive Committee – Lower Octagonal Barn**  
**Draft Minutes**  
**February 26, 2025 10 a.m.**

Members Attending: John Avoli, Ron Capps, Steve Landes, Ned Ruby, Peggy Sheets,

Members Absent: Kristina Callsen, Paul Vames

Guests Attending:None

Staff Attending:Butch Smiley, Lydia Volskis

**I. Call to Order and Welcome** Mrs. Peggy Sheets

Board and Committee Chair Peggy Sheets called the meeting to order at 10 a,m,and offered the Board’s condolences to the family of Board of Director’s member Jim Belshee, who passed away recently.

**II. Approve January 2024 Minutes** Mrs. Sheets

The minutes of the February 2025 meeting were approved as distributed.

**III. Agency Update** Mr. Butch Smiley

- A. Director of Interpretation
- B. Gallery and Mill Report

Mr. Smiley reported that the Museum made an offer to the top candidate, but he eventually declined to accept the offer. The job ad has been reposted.

After a week of weather delay, Kjellstrom and Lee(K&L) Construction has started work, and new construction fencing is expected next week. Mr. Capps asked when actual construction will begin, and Mr. Smiley said that mid-March is the best estimate. Mr. Smiley said that he and Mr. Edwards will attend a social gathering with K&L staff tonight.

The Frontier Drive gate is closed to thru traffic and will serve as a construction entrance.

Mr. Smiley reported that Mr. Eric Bryan will host a construction meeting regarding the Mill later this week.

Mr. Smiley said that he presented the Quarterly Management Review (QMR) to the Secretary of Education last week. He noted that the Museum has hosted about 1400 guests less than the same

time last year. This is about the number of guests who might have attended Oktoberfest, which was cancelled this year. We anticipate hosting several thousand kids and parents from Newport News schools in March and April. Last year the Museum welcomed about 60,000 guests and this year to date we have welcomed about 31,000 with the busy Spring season yet to come. The Secretary of Education was concerned about revenues, but Mr. Smiley pointed out that cautions about possible revenue decreases during construction have been presented for several years and that the Board of Trustees is fully aware of the possibilities. Mr. Landes said that if there are further concerns as to whether the Board has been fully informed, the minutes of the past several years Board of Trustees meeting can be consulted.

Mr. Smiley continued that Irish Road Bowling (March 8), and the annual Fiber Festival (April 5-6) are coming up soon and will kick-off the events season.

**V. Foundation Report**

Senator Emmett Hanger

Mrs. Sheets gave the Foundation report on behalf of Senator Hanger. She reported that: The Foundation applied for and won a grant from Donors Trust, a Foundation affiliated with a family cheese factory in Wisconsin. The funds will support new signage on the American sites. Trustee Peter Lipsett recommended the fund to the Foundation.

Mr. Gordon Barlowe, longtime Museum friend and supporter, will transfer some of his collection to the Museum for use in the new Gallery and permanent collection. The Foundation will purchase some of the pieces and he will donate others. Some of the items will go into temporary storage. Mr. Avoli made a motion that the Trustees approve the transfer of Mr. Barlowe's items to the Museum. Mr. Landes seconded the motion, there was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Oral history recordings will begin soon, and will include early Museum friends, staff and supporters as well as more recent folks such as Mr. Barlowe.

**VI. Old Business**

Mrs. Sheets

Mrs. Sheets said that the Bylaws update is only an update of the names and descriptions of the standing committees as approved by the Board last year and will be presented to the full Board at its May meeting.

She reported that planning for the Calendar of Events 2025 is underway, and that Trustee Rob Orrison will be present for a Gallery design meeting Friday.

The Museum has been assigned a new representative in the Office of the Attorney General, Lauren Coleman. She will be invited to attend the May 2 Trustees meeting.

The May Board of Trustees meeting may be held at an alternate location, and more information is to come. The Office of Senator Chris Head has prepared a resolution commemorating the work of the late Mr. Bill Sibert as a longtime Trustee of the Museum. They will be in contact with the Museum to arrange the presentation of the resolution to Mrs. Sibert.

Longtime volunteers who have retired or passed away will be commemorated at the summer volunteer/staff picnic.

There is some interest in the DeJarnette property, point of contacts are Senator Hanger for the Foundation and Mr. Paul Vames for the Board of Trustees. Attorneys may soon begin work on details, and more information should be available soon.

**VII. New Business**

Mrs. Sheets

No new business.

**VIII. Closed session**

Mrs. Sheets, Committee

No closed session.

**IX. Next Meeting (March 26)**

Mrs. Sheets

The next meeting is set for Wednesday March 26 in the administration building lower level.

**X. Adjournment**

Mrs. Sheets

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.