

Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia
Board of Trustees Meeting
Draft Minutes

9 a.m. on October 10, 2025 – Lower level Octagonal Barn

Members Attending: John Avoli, John Bowers, Carolyn Bragg, Mona Huffer, Joan Hughes, Steven Landes, Rob Orrison, Ned Ruby, Chris Runion, Peggy Sheets, Tim Simmons, Emmett Toms, Paul Vames, Stephen Wilson

Members Absent: Katrina Callsen, Nadarius Clark, Milton Franklin, Chris Head, Ashley Howell, Mike Lawson, Peter Liupsett, Russett Perry, Amy Laufer, Scott Surovell, Michael Webert

Guests Attending: Emmett Hanger, Lauren Coleman

Staff Attending: Butch Smiley, Lydia Volskis, Cliff Edwards, Andrew Richardson, Chase Chandler, Eric Bryan, Dorette Sobolewski, Rachel Sites, Angela Lehman, Mary Kate Claytor, Tiffany Fisk,

I. Call to Order and Welcome Mrs. Peggy Sheets

Board Chair Peggy Sheets called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and asked each person to introduce themselves.

II. Approval of Minutes – May 2025 meeting Mrs. Sheets

The minutes of the May 2025 meeting were approved as presented.

Mrs. Sheets made the announcement that Mr. Smiley would be retiring on June 30, 2026 and that she and the Executive Committee would begin planning for the search process for a new Executive Director soon.

III. Executive Directors Report Mr. Butch Smiley

Mr. Smiley said that the cocktail party the previous evening had forty-two attendees and was a good time for members of both boards to meet.

He reported on the Museum’s capital budget items and projects which include the new gallery building, and described the several upcoming budget requests. These are the request for funds to correct salary compression and ensure staff are paid as close to the state median for their role codes as is possible, a request for extra positions to manage and care for the new gallery, and other requests. He explained how the state budget submissions work and described several slides depicting the construction’s anticipated impact on revenue, visitation and rentals. He said that Mr. Edwards will cover more details in his report.

There was some discussion, and Mr. Avol mentioned the possibility of in the future capturing the number of people using the Museum’s research capabilities online.

Mr. Smiley highlighted the newly reconstituted Teacher’s Advisory Committee and complimented COO Andrew Richardson, Associate Director of Education Angela Lehman and their staff for the success of the program which will continue to grow.

Mrs. Sheets acknowledged the staff attending the meeting and thanked them for their work.

IV. Capital Projects Report

Mr. Cliff Edwards

- A. Deputy Director Cliff Edwards Reviewed the differences between Capital projects and Maintenance Reserve funds and described the request for funds to move both the West African and Native American sites, in order to lower maintenance costs and build carefully to allow for an occupancy permit so guests can enter the dwellings. He said that he has received A&E (Architects and Engineers) cost estimates for these two sites plus the planned move of the settlement site. Work will also be planned on the site of the historic still.
- B. He reported that one major maintenance reserve project, the German Farm repair, will begin later in the Fall.
- C. Mr. Edwards said that the gallery construction is on time and on budget! He noted that working with Kjellstrom and Lee has been great – a very positive experience. He showed slides of time—lapse drone footage of the changes to the various construction zones and also reported that the Visitor’s Center will move to a temporary ticketing and sales “pod” in late 2025 to allow the building they are currently in to be renovated.
- D. Mr. Eric Bryan, Director of Special Projects reported that the Mill construction is progressing, and that well-known millwright Ben Hassett has been helping as a consultant and with on-site work. Mr. Hassett is based in Kentucky and his large shop is constructing some of the parts for the Mill. Currently the foundation has been poured, and concrete blocks are in.
- E. Ms. Dorette Sobolewski, Director of Research, described the objectives for the permanent gallery, and notes original surveys located in the Augusta County courthouse were used for background information. She reviewed slides of the American Journeys Exhibit and areas of work. She thanked other staff for their help and also thanked Trustee Rob Orrison for his support. She also highlighted the plans for the temporary exhibit gallery and library which will be located in the building.

V. Programs and Education

Mr. Andrew Richardson

Chief Operations Officer Andrew Richardson reviewed visitation slides and noted that visitation is down a bit this year as expected due to construction, and not holding Oktoberfest, Adventures at the Museum and the Black Friday event. These will return once construction has been completed. He reported that the Museum is running a promotion on annual pass sales and have sold nearly fifty so far.

Mr. Richardson gave an overview of education group totals compared to the previous year at the same time and showed a slide depicting revenue as well.

Mr. Vames asked if the Museum’s programs are still connected to the state Standards of Learning (SOL’s) and Mr. Richardson responded that they are and that museum staff are also able to prepare customized programs for special groups if needed.

Mr. Richardson showed a new poster for teachers/classrooms and described the impact of the Foundation’s Charles FDN grants on school’s ability to visit the Museum.

He showed two maps depicting the state of Virginia and neighboring states with highlights showing where many schools are located that visit the Museum, and also the location of schools visiting under the Charles Fund grant.

He introduced Tiffany Fisk, the Museum’s new Director of Interpretation, and welcomed her to her first Trustees meeting.

He described the Museum’s involvement in the VA 250th planning group.

Mrs. Sheets reminded all that due to staffing challenges, one or two sites around the Museum may be unstaffed on a busy day; thus the reason the Museum has asked for extra positions once the new gallery is completed.

VI. Finance Report

Mr. Chase Chandler

Director of Finance Chase Chandler gave the finance report, first reviewing revenues with a three-year comparison of FY23, FY24, and FY25. He showed a slide depicting the distribution of special revenue, also in a three-year comparison format.

He reviewed first Quarter revenue comparisons between FY25 and this year FY26.

Mr. Chandler reviewed an expenditures chat with a three-year comparison of FY23, FY24 and FY25.

He also noted that maintenance reserve funds can be used for some collections management needs, and to maintain the outdoor exhibits.

He also reviewed first Quarter operational and capital expenditures.

VII. Standing Committee Reports

Mrs. Sheets

Mrs. Sheets described the October Marketing Committee meeting and said that the group will be focusing on ways to increase visitation and revenue over the next 12 to 24 months.

The content development and gallery committee meets regularly and as needed and carries out long-term planning for the new gallery and exhibits.

Mrs. Sheets reminded the Board to shop in the gift shop and buy fudge to support operations.

VIII. Foundation Report

Senator Hanger

Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Foundation President, reported on the Foundations recent activities. He said that he is working with several potential development companies for the DeJarnette property.

The Golf Tournament raised about \$40,000 and was played in honor of Tom Sheets.

This year's annual fund goal is \$80,000 and requests have been mailed.

The Trailblazers school field trip fund is subsidizing over 30% of all field trip visits.

He gave an overview of recent grants received and grant proposals which have been submitted.

Senator Hanger said that thre capital campaign has raised \$2, 492,000 of its 5 million goal so far, including some grant support.

Mrs. Sheets thanked the Foundation for its support of the Museum.

IX. Old Business

Mrs. Sheets

Mrs. Sheets reported that longtime Trustee Ron Capps has resigned as he and his wife have moved to Atlanta Georgia to be closer to family. She asked for a motion to accept a resolution prepared for Mr. Capps to honor his long service on the Board. Mr. Avoli made a motion that the Board approve the resolution as presented; the motion was seconded by Ms. Hughes, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. Museum staff will ensure that the resolution is sent to Mr. Capps.

Mrs. Sheets also reported ta

hat after Mr. Capps resignation, the Executive Committee has asked Mr. Landes to be the interim Vice-Chair, and he has accepted. Ms. Hughes made a motion that the Board accept Mr. Landes as the interim Vice-Chair, the motion was seconded by Mr. Vames, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

- X. New Business Mrs. Sheets
 - A. Code of Ethics signature

Mrs. Sheets asked each Member to sign the Code of Ethics form and drop off with Ms. Volskis for the records.

- XI. Ratifications Mrs. Sheets
 - A. Deaccessioning collections Items
 - B. Collections policy updates
 - C. Rental fee structure
 - D. Electronic meetings policy

- A. Mr. David Puckett, Curator of Collections, explained the items he has proposed for de-accessioning from the Museum's collection. Mr. Avoli made a motion, seconded by Mr. Runion, that the Board approve the de-accession list. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.
- B. Mr. Puckett continued and described the updates made to the Museum Collections Policy. Mr. Toms made a motion, seconded by Mr. Avoli, that the Board approve the updates to the Collections policy. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.
- C. Mr. Edwards explained the proposed new rental fees, elaborating on what the renter will get for the money, and noting that even with the changes, the Museum is still a bargain compared to other local and regional venues. The new arrangement means that the renter gets the full Octagonal Barn for Friday and Saturday for \$5,000 with an option to rent on Sunday for an additional \$1,000. Mr. Avoli made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Runion, that the Board approve the new rental fees. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.
- D. Ms. Lauren Coleman of the Office of the Attorney General reviewed the new electronic meetings policy which the Board will review and approve at its next meeting.

- XII. Closed Session (if needed) Mrs. Sheets

No closed session was required.

- XIII. Public Comment Mrs. Sheets

There was no public comment

- XIV. Next Meeting Date (April 19, 2026) Mrs. Sheets

The next meeting is April 19, 2026 at 9 a.m. in the lower Octagonal Barn

- XV. Adjournment Mrs. Sheets

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.