



**Board of Trustees Executive Committee
AGENDA
Friday, November 14, 2025, 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM
Virginia Museum of Natural History**

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| I. Welcome | Dr. Melany Clark |
| II. Approval of minutes from 8 August 2025 | Dr. Melany Clark |
| III. Chair's Report <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New board members, open seats• Virginia Economy looking ahead | Dr. Melany Clark |
| IV. Financial Report <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First quarter revenues and expenses• New endowment gift & priorities | Mr. Will Clemmens |
| V. Executive Director's Report <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operations• Search Committees• Capital projects• Strategic Plan 2025-2030<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Application of new resources | Dr. Joe Keiper |
| VI. Open Discussion | Dr. Melany Clark |
| VII. Adjourn | Dr. Melany Clark |



**Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees
Quarterly Meeting, Friday, August 9, 2025
Virginia Museum of Natural History
Executive Conference Room 236 with remote participation option**

Present In-person: Dr. Melany Clark (Chair)
Ms. Lauren Hall (Secretary)
Mr. Will Clements (Treasurer)
Ms. Lauren Coleman (AG Representative)
Dr. Joe Keiper (Ex Officio)
Ms. Jennifer Whitlow (Staff)

Present Remotely: Ms. Lisa Carter (Vice Chair)
Mr. Zach Ryder (Staff)

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Melany Clark called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM. Finding a quorum present, voting on action items and remote participation was allowed. No committee members were absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Ms. Lauren Hall and seconded by Ms. Lisa Carter to approve the 1.31.25 and 5.16.25 minutes. Motion approved unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Will Clements shared news of a very positive fourth quarter. Expenses remained within the budget and revenue exceeded expectations. Dr. Keiper added the museum had record setting revenue from Dino Festival and there were little to no negative comments about the increase in festival admission price.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dr. Keiper reported the AAM Site Visit Report was very positive. The review team urged continued work on Douglas Avenue to secure an appropriate storage environment.

Secretary Guidera approved our proposal requesting the Waynesboro project be moved to the capital construction pool. Project cost estimates and value engineering work are currently in the hands of an outside engineering firm. The work is expected to be concluded before the mid-October deadline.

Dr. Keiper thanked Ms. Hall and Dr. Clark for attending the Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion Ribbon Cutting event. The pavilion is being used, and additional exhibits are expected to be added.

Dr. Clark shared that the Dino festival provided numerous relevant experiences for visitors. She was very impressed with the crowd management and offered her thanks to all the staff for an impactful event.

Looking forward, Dr. Keiper noted the TJ 2026 events and exhibits are being developed with the help of a very generous donor.

VMNH is excited to participate in the August 21st ribbon cutting for the South River Preserve. Interpretive signage is being installed with additional signage to be created with leftover funds.

Dr. Clark noted the visitor experience at our festivals, not necessarily the amount of revenue is the most important part of running festivals.

Dr. Keiper provided a review of the Strategic Plan for the next steps. The goal of the committee is to have a meeting next month to identify quantifiable measures of success and establish a timeline. The Strategic Planning Committee will have a final wrap-up meeting in October. The Board will conduct a vote of adoption in November and very quickly the staff will create the final PDF before year end.

OLD BUSINESS

Dr. Clark recognized the work to bring Douglas Ave. back as well as a look forward to Starling Ave. expansion.

Dr. Clark also pointed out the multitude of positive VMNH articles recently found in the news.

Dr. Keiper stated the Waynesboro project is in a very good position as we have been contacted recently by elected officials to provide more information as they advocate for the project in Richmond.

Dr. Clark offered to draft a letter from her thanking donors for their contribution to the Pavilion.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Clark spoke about ongoing strategies to engage the existing and potential Board members. She praised Delegate Phillips and Senator Stanley for helping with pay increases for our lowest paid employees and now the effort has turned to employee retention.

Dr. Clark spoke about leveraging Board members' expertise and encouraging them to advocate for the museum. She plans to implement a different meeting structure to engage the board.

CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Hall made the following motion and was second by Mr. Clements.

I move that the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Natural History enter closed session to discuss the assignment, appointment, performance and salary of a specific employee, particularly to conduct the annual performance review of the Executive Director, pursuant to the personnel exemption in Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(1), and for consultation with legal counsel regarding the same pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(8).

OPEN SESSION

The committee returned to open session.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Hall read the closed session certification, and a roll call vote was held wherein all committee members certified the session as lawful.

Whereas, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Natural History convened in closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

Whereas, Virginia code §2.2-3712 requires certification by this Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law.

NOW BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Natural History hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge; (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under Virginia law and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OPEN DISCUSSION

No further announcements or discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, Dr. Clark adjourned the meeting at 4:39 PM.

Next Meeting of the Executive Committee
Friday, November 14, 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM
Virginia Museum of Natural History

First Quarter FY26 Financials

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First Quarter FY26 Summary

Through the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2026, staff across Event Planning, Advancement, Marketing, and Education continued working diligently to deliver mission-driven programming for both new and returning customers. Their coordinated efforts carried forward the strong momentum built in prior years, resulting in continued financial growth.

Overall, revenues met or exceeded projections. Admissions revenue led the way, finishing nearly 10% ahead of the prior year’s first quarter, driven largely by the success of Dino-Fest. Additionally, class and workshop revenues increased approximately 6% year-over-year, reflecting the museum’s continued ability to adapt programming to community demand and market trends.

These results demonstrate the museum’s strategic responsiveness. Following the board retreat, leadership identified a need to strengthen earned revenues. After evaluating multiple approaches, the administration determined that modest price adjustments represented the least risky and most efficient way to generate sustainable revenue growth requiring minimal staff time while maintaining accessibility for visitors.

In summary, the first quarter of FY26 reflects strong financial performance, disciplined spending, and measurable progress on strategic initiatives.

Virginia Museum of Natural History - Museum and Cultural Services (14500)

General Fund	\$3,578,220
Estimated Revenues	\$ 556,011

VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
MONTHLY STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSES
FOR THE PERIOD ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

NOTE	BUDGET	YTD	YTD%
=====			
SUPPORT & REVENUES			
Support:			
	Commonwealth	\$3,578,220	3,578,220 100%
1	Add: Appropriation	\$204,414	0 0%
	Central Accounts Distribution	\$0	0 0%

	Total Support	\$3,782,634	\$3,578,220 95%
=====			
Revenues:			
2	Admission to Museum	\$92,075	26,937 29%
	VMNH Publications	\$2,000	170 8%
	Receipts from City & County	\$37,890	37,890 100%
	Honorariums/Misc. Inc.	\$1,000	0 0%
	Restricted Gifts Foundation/Grants:Research&Education/Memberships	\$270,000	70,112 26%
	Rental of Museum Rooms	\$6,000	2,018 34%
	Exhibit Rentals	\$500	0 0%
	Souvenirs- Misc. Sales	\$72,800	27,858 38%
3	Classes, Workshops, Kit Rentals, Education Projects	\$50,000	21,028 42%
	Federal Funds Budgeted/Rec'd	\$0	0 0%
	Total FY2026 Budgeted Revenues	\$510,953	186,012 36%
	Special Funds Carryover FY25*	\$354,599	354,599 100%
	Federal Funds Carryover FY25*	\$6,561	6,561 100%

	Total Revenues and Carryover from FY2025	\$872,113	547,172 63%
=====			
TOTAL OPERATING FUNDS/APPROP		\$4,654,747	4,125,392 89%
=====			
EXPENSES:			
	Salaries	\$2,214,187	609,543 28%
	Payroll Benefits	\$961,261	288,008 30%
4	Contractual Services	\$336,944	178,104 53%
	Supplies	\$80,000	28,779 36%
	Equipment	\$50,000	6,234 12%
	Equipment Maintenance	\$37,703	5,890 16%
	Travel	\$60,000	8,327 14%
	Staff Training	\$14,000	2,955 21%
	Repairs/Construction	\$105,000	19,580 19%
	Subscriptions	\$1,000	0 0%
	Books	\$1,000	0 0%
5	Utilities	\$294,945	84,104 29%
	Telephone	\$15,000	4,552 30%
	Mailing	\$5,000	29 1%
	Insurance	\$23,000	0 0%
	Vehicle Maint./Fuel	\$18,000	2,515 14%
6	Organ. Memberships	\$20,000	8,050 40%
	Printing	\$5,000	350 7%
	Other:	\$5,000	0 0%
	Awards/Unem.Comp./Ind Cost	\$1,000	0 0%
	Exhibit & Equipment Rentals	\$40,000	10,798 27%
	Building Rentals	\$1,000	0 0%
7	Agency Service Charges	\$185,000	19,363 10%

TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES		\$4,474,039	1,277,182 29%
=====			
PERCENT SPENT OF YTD INCOME RECEIVED			

TOTAL INCOME BALANCE		\$180,708	2,848,210
=====			

*** Central accounts distribution includes payroll and health care adjustments.

** Memberships Income has been combined with Restricted Gifts Income.

* Numbers are subject to change due to end of year fiscal adjustments.

Revenues

1.) Additional Appropriation

At the start of Fiscal Year 2026, as is typical, the museum began the year operating in a deficit position. Later this fiscal year (projected for late fall or early spring), the museum will receive an allocation of \$204,414 from Central Accounts. These funds are designated to offset staff salary adjustments, property insurance premiums, increased health insurance costs, and property insurance premiums that took effect in July.

2.) Festivals

Admissions revenue through the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2026 was driven primarily by the success of Dino Fest, held in July. Looking ahead, Bonez and Booz on October 25 is expected to further strengthen revenue performance, continuing the positive trend established last fiscal year. It is worth noting that this quarter marked the first full implementation of the museum's new pricing matrix, which has contributed to improved revenue outcomes and positioned the museum for continued growth in subsequent quarters.

3.) Educational Programs

Educational programming entered another fiscal year operating at or near full capacity. The addition of new staff in the previous fiscal year has allowed revenues and program delivery to remain strong and consistent. Beyond core offerings, the Education team continues to oversee the Virginia Master Naturalist Program, collaborate with the Martinsville Tree Board, and participate in numerous community events. VMNH's educational impact now extends well beyond Martinsville, reaching audiences across the Commonwealth through both virtual instruction and in-person programs delivered hundreds of miles from the museum.

Expenses

4.) Contractual Services

Operating costs for the first quarter came in slightly higher than projected. This variance is primarily attributed to the completion and closeout of Preliminary Design work for the Waynesboro project, which represented a planned but concentrated expenditure early in the fiscal year.

5.) Utilities

Building and Grounds staff continue to navigate the challenges posed by aging facility equipment, Martinsville's aging infrastructure, and the impact of warmer-than-usual summer and fall conditions. Their diligence and adaptability have ensured that building operations remain consistent despite these ongoing variables.

6.) Memberships

Membership revenues may appear disproportionately high at this point in the fiscal year; however, this is largely a reflection of working with relatively small dollar amounts, where minor fluctuations can significantly impact percentage comparisons.

7.) Agency Service Charges

Agency service charges lag this fiscal year much like every year. Service charges for Payroll Service Bureau, Department of Engineering and Building, Department of Accounts and the Payment to Treasury for the ESCO project all fall near the end of the fiscal year.

First Quarter FY26 Capital Projects Summary

Capital Projects – Maintenance Reserve Funded

Douglas Renovation Project

Update:

Staff continue to work closely with the Department of General Services (DGS) to determine whether asbestos remediation should proceed as a standalone project. The Raymond team has taken the lead in evaluating next steps and coordinating required actions. Schematic Design documents have been submitted and are currently pending review. As this initiative falls under the Maintenance Reserve program, it does not carry the same level of urgency as a Capital New Construction Project, allowing for a more deliberate and methodical approach.

General:

The Museum has received approval from the Department of General Services (DGS) to proceed with an Architectural and Engineering (A/E) term contract, consolidating several smaller projects, including HVAC installation, into a single, efficiently managed initiative. The Purchasing Department reviewed and scored three proposals before awarding the contract to the selected vendor. The A/E firm, Raymond, P.C., has since executed the agreement and will begin work in accordance with project timelines and state procurement standards.

This bundled approach aims to save time and achieve marginal economies of scale, reducing costs. The project will address weatherization, plumbing, electrical, structural, and HVAC systems efficiently. **Total Costs:** Maintenance Reserve.

Waynesboro Trailer Renovation Project

Update:

Fiscal staff engaged three contractors through the formal bidding process to assess the condition of the museum's outreach trailer. Two firms withdrew after site visits and inspections, leaving SPEVCO as the final bidder. SPEVCO subsequently removed the trailer from the site for a full evaluation and determined that complete renovation was not feasible due to the trailer's condition. Staff requested that the company review all possible alternatives, resulting in a plan to maintain limited functionality to support general operations. The trailer will be returned to the site and remain in limited service until completion of the VMNH–Waynesboro satellite facility.

General:

The VMNH Exhibit Trailer, located in the City of Waynesboro adjacent to the municipal lot, is scheduled to undergo renovation over the next several months. The Purchasing Department issued an RFP to support inspection and scope development, and the

trailer has been temporarily removed from the site for evaluation. Project expenses will be funded through the Maintenance Reserve.

Capital Projects – Pool Funded

VMNH-Waynesboro – New Facility Construction

Budget and Legislative

Dr. Keiper submitted the museum's request to be added to the Capital Construction Pool. Working closely with Zack Jacobs (Assistant Secretary of Education), Hannah Hughson (Communications Advisor to the Secretary of Education), and Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera, museum staff received approval to formally request inclusion in the Governor's Budget. This version of the budget is typically released around December 15.

The project continues to have strong legislative support from Senator Chris Head and Delegate Ellen H. Campbell.

Cost Estimate

VMNH staff, under the direction of Scott Watchner from JMU, completed the cost estimation study. A comparison of the Independent Cost Estimate and the A/E's estimate produced the following results:

- Independent Cost Estimate: \$20,809,373
- Glave & Holmes (A/E Estimate): \$19,223,085
- Difference: \$1,586,288 (8.25%)

Because the difference is below DEB's 10% reconciliation threshold, no reconciliation is required. However, as a best practice, both firms will review each other's figures to identify and explain significant discrepancies. This process will be completed in the coming weeks.

- Cost to the Agency: \$26,739

Value Engineering Study

VMNH staff worked with Grace Hagan of Axias (Alexandria, Virginia) to complete the Value Engineering (VE) study. The process included a kickoff meeting, four full days of virtual workshops, and an exit meeting to summarize findings. The study reviewed 19 options, of which 6 cost-saving measures were adopted. All six measures reduce costs while fully meeting the mission requirements.

- Cost to the Agency: \$64,720

Project Scope and Timing

Glave & Holmes submitted the Preliminary Design documents to the Department of Engineering and Buildings (DEB). DEB returned the documents with comments, which were reviewed in a joint meeting attended by VMNH staff, Glave & Holmes, DEB, and Scott Watchner (JMU). The meeting provided clarity on required adjustments, which are now being addressed.

The next steps include:

- A formal cost review by Mike Gray, Director of Capital Outlay & Training Services.
- Final project approval from Mike Coppa, enabling the project to advance to working drawings.

With the continued support of the Board of Trustees and the VMNH Foundation, Dr. Keiper and museum staff have worked diligently with contract partners (Glave & Holmes and JMU) to ensure all submissions are timely and accurate. The goal is to position the project for inclusion in the Governor's December budget.

At this point, the decision rests with the Governor. Should the project not be included in the upcoming budget, VMNH will follow the clear next steps outlined by the City's consultant, Preston Bryant of McGuire Woods.

Additional Projects FY26

- **Reseal Front Patio:** Near completion.
- **Repair Concrete Roof Accent:** Near completion.
- **Window Film Installation:** Completed.
- **Library Compactors:** Contracted to be moved – December – January
- **Library Hallway Renovation:** Preliminary Discussion Stage
- **Exhibit Rails:** Complete

Fiscal Year 26: Virginia Museum of Natural History

SUCCESSFUL - FY26 Budget Amendment Request:

The Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH) requests a budget amendment to address salary alignment challenges and enhance staff retention. This funding will allow VMNH to establish competitive base salaries for educators and provide modest incentive increases to promote workforce stability. These efforts are critical to attracting and retaining skilled professionals, maintaining compliance with regulatory changes, and ensuring the museum’s ability to fulfill its mission of education, community engagement, and scientific research. This strategic investment will help VMNH remain competitive in the current job market while safeguarding its long-term operational capacity.

Total Request \$70,702

Program	Fund	Subobject	Definition	FY 2026 Dollars Increase Req
Museum and Cultural Services (14500)	01000	1111	Employer Retirement Contributions – VRS Defined Benefits program	\$8,317.00
Museum and Cultural Services (14500)	01000	1112	Federal Old-Age Insurance for Salaried State Employees (Salaried Social Security and Medicare)	\$3,680.00
Museum and Cultural Services (14500)	01000	1114	Group Life Insurance	\$699.00
Museum and Cultural Services (14500)	01000	1116	Retiree Health (Medical/Hospitalization) Insurance Credit Premium	\$666.00
Museum and Cultural Services (14500)	01000	1117	VSDP and Long-term Disability Insurance	\$295.00
Museum and Cultural Services (14500)	01000	1123	Salaries, Classified	\$57,045.00
			Total	\$70,702.00

DIRECTOR'S NARRATIVE FOR Board of Trustees
November 2025

Joe Keiper
VMNH Director

A transformational gift

The VMNH-Foundation received a transformational gift of \$4.5 million by the late Frank Mariels of Martinsville, bringing the endowment to \$5.7 million (\$5.35 unrestricted, \$0.35 restricted for Recent Invertebrates, the Pete Henika Memorial Fund, and the R&C special fund).

The Foundation's financial advisor has "parked" the funds in short-term CDs which will mature in early 2026 and then will be managed as part of the existing endowment.

The two areas of initial effort in the museum's transformation will be the Frank Mariels Young Explorer Center, and the Hooker Furniture *Petra* fossil gallery (each the former Library and the Discovery Reef, respectively). These projects will address Objectives 1.4, 1.7, and 2.4 of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. During the 2026-2027 work on these two projects, the Foundation will make all investment income available so results can be both visual and impactful within a short window of time. When these projects are completed, the Foundation will engage in a 5% spending strategy, with any income generated about the 5% return reinvested to grow the corpus.

Accomplishments

VMNH-Waynesboro: Detailed Design has been completed, and a request has been sent to the Governor's Office to move to the Capital Construction Pool in the 2026-2028 biennial budget (Objective 1.8).

VMNH Homeschool Science & Engineering Academy: Due to demand (and that Education is fully staffed), two homeschool sessions are being run this year (Objective 1.7).

Bonz & Boos: This festival saw over 1,800 participants, with more than 1,000 using the Museums for All program for attendance. Corporate partnerships doubled between 2024 and 2025 (Objective 2.3).

Future work

New Staff: A new exhibits manager has been selected and will begin mid-November. The search for a new Assistant Curator of Herpetology is underway. Interviews will take place late 2025 to early 2026, with a start date of late spring or early summer 2026 (Objective 2.5).

General Observations

- We are on the cusp of a new Strategic Plan which will be published and made public in December 2025.
- Moving forward, we are well-stocked with resources:
 - Growing endowment, with future gifts anticipated
 - Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab, Molecular Lab, and Microscopy Lab all active
 - Revenues from festivals still strong, and increased program fee structure receiving no pushback
 - Overall education programs at capacity, and offsite programs are well-used
 - New exhibits in the pipeline to succeed existing Dinosaurs exhibit, including one which can travel
 - VA 250 exhibit and program, with funding from Virginia Tourism and private individuals
- The collections continue to grow, with some recent examples:
 - New taxidermy from a private collector
 - Recent invertebrate collecting events in western VA, Texas, Paraguay, and Vietnam
 - Miscellaneous acquisitions from other agencies and collaborators
- New events recently completed or scheduled in the near future:
 - Natural History of Chocolate (October 2025)
 - VA 250 member's event (February 2025)
 - Science Saturday *Bug Day* (February 2025)
 - Bridgerton on Starling (March 2025)
- Cautionary note on budget: With general increase in costs to operate and curator promotions, our appropriation is nearing a point with little flexibility

Current Capital Projects

Overview of major VMNH projects



1) VMNH-Waynesboro Branch Campus

Construction of a 28,000 square foot museum facility with 20,000 square feet of public space in Waynesboro, Virginia. This will expand VMNH's reach, audience, and engagement. We are awaiting news about inclusion in the 2026-2027 budget.

2) Mobile Museum Renovation

The mobile museum is currently undergoing evaluation at a facility specializing in mobile museum trailer building and renovations. We are awaiting cost estimates for repair of the most vital aspects of the trailer. The mobile museum was given to VMNH from Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Depending on repair cost feasibility, the mobile unit will be used in Waynesboro during the engineering, design, and construction phases of Waynesboro Branch Campus project.

3) Douglas Avenue Facility Upgrades

We are currently renovating our prior museum building at 1001 Douglas Avenue to transform it into a collections storage facility. Recently completed projects include replacing the roof, and cleaning, with improving the HVAC system and asbestos abatement upcoming. Compactor shelving from the library at Starling Ave. will be removed and stored at Douglas Ave in December. Following completion of the asbestos abatement, the shelving will be repurposed for collections at Douglas Ave.

4) Young Explorer Center

Transforming the 1700 square foot VMNH former Library space into a hands-on learning gallery designed for our youngest visitors. This project includes refreshing the hallway leading to the Young Explorer Center.

5) Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion

With the completion of the Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion this summer, our education team is already taking full advantage of the unique space. Collaborative learning and community engagement opportunities abound for this three-season space.

Virginia Museum of Natural History Strategic Plan: 2025–2030

The Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH) is one of the Commonwealth’s most vital scientific and cultural resources. Its collections, research, and education programs connect Virginians to the deep history of our natural world. VMNH plays a critical role in providing citizens and decision makers with the data and tools needed to manage the Commonwealth’s natural and cultural resources. In providing resources statewide, VMNH also provides significant services (education, tourism draw, and event offerings) to the museum’s surrounding communities.

As Virginia approaches major milestones—most notably the 250th anniversary of the Commonwealth—VMNH stands ready to inspire, educate, and serve as a trusted leader in science communication. From the facilities in Martinsville and outreach programs in communities across the state, including planned expansion into the Shenandoah Valley, VMNH is positioned to reach more Virginians than ever before.

Yet to fully achieve our mission, we must continue to invest in people, spaces, and science education programs that connect natural history to some of today’s pressing issues: climate change, biodiversity loss, and science literacy.

The VMNH Strategic Plan 2025-2030 outlines clear, measurable actions that will:

- Modernize and expand our facilities, ensuring safe stewardship of collections and inspiring exhibits for the public.
- Tell the stories of our researchers and to reveal the significance of their collections-based discoveries.
- Deepen our educational impact by launching the Young Explorers Center, strengthening science festivals, and reaching every region of the state through mobile and traveling exhibits.
- Strengthen sustainability through new philanthropic support, enhanced endowment strategies, and stronger collaboration between our Boards.
- Recruit, retain, and support expert staff who bring science to life for Virginia’s citizens.

VMNH is uniquely positioned to blend rigorous scientific investigations with engaging storytelling, ensuring that natural history collections are not just preserved but actively shared. With the partnership of the Board of Trustees, the VMNH-Foundation Board of Directors, staff, the Secretary of Education, and myriad community partners, VMNH will continue to serve as a cornerstone of science, culture, and community in Virginia.

Together, we will ensure that the Virginia Museum of Natural History achieves great and sustainable impact while maintaining its leadership in scientific discovery and science literacy for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Virginia Museum of Natural History Strategic Plan: 2025–2030

Mission Alignment

The Virginia Museum of Natural History advances scientific discovery, education, and community engagement through research, collections, and exhibitions. This Strategic Plan establishes clear goals and measurable outcomes to ensure the museum fulfills its mission with sustainable impact.

Vision

Virginia Museum of Natural History serves as a leader in scientific discovery, education, and community engagement. Its research, collections, exhibits, and educational programs create opportunities where all Virginians have the opportunity to explore, understand, and celebrate the natural world.

Core Values

- **Scientific Integrity** – Uphold the highest standards of research, collections stewardship, and scholarship.
 - **Education & Curiosity** – Foster lifelong learning through exhibits, programs, and outreach that spark wonder.
 - **Community Engagement** – Connect people with nature and science through inclusive, accessible experiences.
 - **Stewardship** – Protect and preserve Virginia’s and the world’s natural and cultural heritage for future generations.
 - **Innovation** – Embrace creativity, and new approaches and technology applicable to our exhibits, research, and outreach.
 - **Collaboration** – Partner with communities, schools, and institutions.
 - **Sustainability** – Ensure responsible use of resources.
-

Strategic Priority 1: Achieving the Mission

Objective 1.1: Advance Douglas Avenue Rehabilitation

- Position newly renovated facility to both enhance museum collections storage and a new space for needs identified by staff and the community.
- **May 2026:** Receive approvals; contractors begin Phase I (upper level).
- **Late 2026:** Complete Phase I.
- **May 2027:** Submit preliminary documents for Phase II (lower level).
- **May 2028:** Receive approvals; begin Phase II.
- **October 2028:** Complete Phase II.
- **April 2030:** Address AAM reaccreditation report concerns regarding Douglas Avenue by submitting a progress report.

Objective 1.2: Plan for Future Space Needs

- Ongoing evaluation of collections growth (Science Administrator tracking).
- Continuous assessment of storage/expansion needs at Douglas Avenue vs. future Starling Avenue wing. Report as appropriate to R&C Committee.

Objective 1.3: Connect Research & Collections (R&C) to Contemporary Needs

- **Spring 2026:** Exhibits & Publications Manager interviews R&C staff.
- Leadership and curators conduct ongoing reviews of publications, exhibits, and public engagement outlets, identifying relevant connections.
- Ongoing use of the Pete Henika Memorial Fund to support student work benefitting the museum's collections while furthering our understanding of contemporary questions related to the Natural History of Virginia.
- Connect the Molecular Lab, STEM Lab, Microscopy Lab, and Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab to contemporary challenges such as climate change, land use patterns, endangered and invasive species, and other significant challenges.

Objective 1.4: Leverage Facilities for Strategic Uses

- Ongoing assessment of the Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion, Douglas Avenue, and facility tours. This facility will be positioned as a strategic tool to enhance education, community vitality, and organizational stability.
- Annual staff meeting dedicated to generating strategic use proposals, reported annually to the Boards.

Objective 1.5: Celebrate Virginia's 250th Anniversary (VA250)

- **Jan 2026:** Launch Thomas Jefferson exhibit featuring *Notes on the State of Virginia*.
- **Feb 2026:** Host members' VA250 celebration.
- **March 2026:** VMNH participates in Virginia Association of Museums annual conference.
- **2026:** Host author/artist event tied to Jefferson's travels.

Objective 1.6: Develop Traveling Exhibits

- **2027-2030:** Create a traveling exhibit, debut at VMNH for one year, then circulate to other museums.

Objective 1.7: Integrate R&C, Education, and Exhibits in Science Storytelling

- **Summer 2026:** Evaluate education programs to determine best practices for integrating VMNH stories into outreach.
- **2026-2030:** Apply "5 C's of Storytelling" framework in new exhibit development; integrate with Objective 1.3.
- **2027:** Use Discovery Reef space for Petra the Cave Cat story; work with Virginia Cave Conservancy to enhance the public experience.

Objective 1.8: Advance VMNH-Waynesboro Expansion

- **2026:** Rehabilitate Mobile Science Outreach trailer for use in the Shenandoah Valley.
- **2026-2028:** Use the Outreach trailer to support regional programming, and to complement educational programs and Wayne Theatre Lecture Series.
- **2026 & 2028:** Pursue Capital Construction Pool inclusion.

Objective 1.9: Explore New Wing Development

- **2027:** Begin preliminary work with architect.

- **2028:** Determine space needs with staff, Boards, stakeholders.
- **2029:** Receive report on location, capacity, and capabilities.

Objective 1.10: Strengthen Wilson Park Connections

- Evaluate feasibility of canopy walk in coordination with wing planning.
- **2026-2027:** Explore new ways of connecting to Wilson Park, including but not limited to a) crosswalk installation, b) establishment of dinosaur playground elements, and c) interpretive trail signs.

Strategic Priority 2: Great Sustainable Impact

Objective 2.1: Grow Philanthropic Support

- **2025-2030:** Review endowment investments with VMNH-Foundation quarterly.
- **2026:** Host cocktail event on planned giving for young professionals. Evaluate, modify as needed, and repeat as appropriate for the community.
- **2026-2027:** Use endowment revenues aggressively for transformational work (see Objectives 1.3, 1.6, 1.7, 1.10, and 2.4).
- **2027-2030:** Execute plan to spend the first 4% of endowment revenues on mission-based projects in Research, Collections, Education, and Exhibits. Reinvest any additional revenues into the General Endowment to support long-term growth.

Objective 2.2: Strengthen Board Collaboration

- Use strategic plan and endowment to guide BOT requests of VMNH-F.
- Establish mechanisms for BOT to request Foundation support for new opportunities.

Objective 2.3: Expand Public Festivals

- Offer 3–4 themed festivals per year (10,000 visitors annually).
- Explore offsite festival opportunities.

Objective 2.4: Develop Young Explorer’s Center

- **Fall 2026:** Relocate Library Compactors at Douglas Avenue.
- **2026:** Education staff develop content; acquisition of interactive elements
- Purchase interactive stations and open Center in late 2026 or early 2027.

Objective 2.5: Recruit and Retain High-Quality Staff

- Work with Secretary of Education for competitive compensation.
- Maintain VMNH-F staff enhancement fund.
- Provide professional development opportunities.
- Share staff experiences with both Boards.
- Annually request new FTEs as justified.

Objective 2.6: Develop Next 5-year Plan

- **2029-2030:** Begin process of gathering input from staff, Boards, and community regarding the 2030-2035 Strategic Plan.
- **December 2030:** Release next 5-year plan.

Accountability & Review

- Progress will be reviewed quarterly by leadership and reported regularly to the Boards of Trustees and VMNH-Foundation.
- Milestones with dates will serve as primary measures of success.
- Adjustments will be made as necessary in response to novel opportunities and challenges.