

**Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees**  
**Executive Committee – Lower Octagonal Barn**  
**Draft Minutes**  
**January 14, 2 p.m.**

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

Members Absent: Katrina Callsen

Guests Attending: None

Staff Attending: Butch Smiley, Lydia Volskis, Eric Bryan, Dorette Sobolewski, Cliff Edwards

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

Board and Committee Chair Peggy Sheets called the meeting to order at 2 p.m.

**II. Approve December 2025 Minutes** Mrs. Sheets

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

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

Agency Head Mr. Smiley reported that two of our budget proposals were not approved to move forward in this year's state budget process, the salary adjustments and the new positions for the new building. Our state budget analyst said that it is likely that budget planners will be conservative during the first two years of the administration, our request for budget language allowing the Foundation to support the salary of the Executive Director did move forward.

Mr. Avoli asked if the agency received feedback on this, and Mr. Smiley said that we were urged to keep trying as possibly it was deemed that we were not yet at the stage of needing new staff.

Mr. Landes said that it is possible for legislators to put some of these requests into their budget submissions and noted that moving quickly would be important.

Mr. Smiley continued that visitation is down about 2,500 from last year but noted that we have offered a "sale" on annual passes and have gathered 330 new passholders.

**IV. Foundation Report**

Mrs. Sheets gave the report on behalf of Senator Hanger, and said that Kelly Sheely and Ann Rogan, the Foundation staff, will mostly work out of office, with Kelly in the office occasionally.

The two have signed new contracts with the Foundation so their paychecks will no longer run through the state system. The Foundation received the \$100,000 Mary Morton Parsons grant and has one year to match the amount. She also mentioned several other pending grant opportunities. The Foundation has agreed to an extension of terms through March 31 with the company interested in purchasing the DeJarnette property.

**V. Old Business**

A. Mr. Bryan reported that the mill project has been slowly moving along and will be “put to bed” for the winter. He said that many of the interior parts are being built in the shop of Millwright Ben Hassett. There was some discussion.

Mr. Edwards said that the maintenance building is 25% complete and should be finished in about six months. About 50% of the steel is up for the gallery building, and the old Visitors Center has been turned over to Kjellstrom and Lee for renovation. The sewer and water lines are already installed, and the overall remodel will take 8-10 months to complete.

B. Ms. Sobolewski reported that the scholars who are reviewing the plans for content in the permanent gallery have been very complimentary; she shared some of their comments. She also thanked Trustee Rob Orrison for his help, as well as Trustee Steven Wilson. She said that we have received design firm PRD’s final package and must respond by mid-February. She said that there are over 200 prof pages which must be approved. She continued that we have engaged a firm in Boston to manufacture the exhibit panels. The Trustees must approve the finals, and Mr. Avoli asked if the Executive Committee can approve them and then have the full Board do so at its next meeting. He asked for an executive summary. Ms. Sobolewski said that she would send this in a day or two. Mr. Avoli asked for clarification of exactly what the Committee was approving. Mr. Smiley said that the Committee is approving the continued work on the exhibit and the work of the scholars. Mr. Avoli asked if the new Secretary of Education is aware of our work, and Mr. Smiley said that we would invite the Secretary and staff to come for a visit.

Mr. Ruby asked when the new building will be ready to install the exhibit, and Mr. Edwards said in January 2027. Mr. Ruby asked if AI would be used in any part of the exhibit, Ms. Sobolewski said that it will not, as funding, staff skill sets and other issues will mean that AI will not be included. There was some discussion about how and when the different parts of the building will be opened to the public.

C. Mrs. Sheets reported that it may be possible to “hire” a temporary exhibit to start with, and possibly in future use Museum collections. Some discussion followed.

**IX. Next Meeting**

Mrs. Sheets

The next meeting date is Wednesday February 11 at 2 p.m.

**X. Adjournment**

Mrs. Sheets

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.