

**Waynesboro Advocacy Committee  
Virginia Museum of Natural History  
Tuesday, October 6, 2026, 1 PM  
Waynesboro Office of Economic Development**



**AGENDA**

Welcome

Dr. Tom Benzing

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Benzing

- [September 1, 2026](#)

Community Connections

Dr. Joe Keiper

- Advocacy
  - Department of Education
  - VMNH – W ROI
- Trailer
  - Visitors served
  - Volunteer feedback
  - Electric hook-up status
- Events
  - Virginia Chili, Blues & Brews Recap (Sept. 11 - 12)
  - Virginia Fall Foliage Festival Art Show (Oct. 10 - 11)
  - Fall science lecture series (Oct. 13)
- Open Discussion
  - November meeting cancelled (Nov 3) due to Election Day holiday for state agencies.
  - New chair for WAC
- Adjournment

**Board of Trustees**  
**Waynesboro Advocacy Committee**  
**Tuesday, September 1, 2026**  
**Virginia Museum of Natural History**



**MINUTES**

The Waynesboro Advocacy Committee of the Virginia Museum of Natural History Board of Trustees held their monthly meeting at 1:00 PM at the Waynesboro Office of Economic Development.

**Members Present:**

Dr. Tom Benzing (Chair)  
Mr. Greg Hitchin

Mr. Dick Bratcher  
Ms. Ann Peltier

**Present Remote:**

Dr. Carole Nash (distance)  
Mr. Len Poulin  
Mr. Urbie Nash  
Dr. Joe Keiper (ex officio)  
Mr. Jonathan Martin

Mr. Rick Kane  
Ms. Faye Cooper  
Ms. Jennifer Whitlow  
Mr. Ryan Barber  
Mr. Zach Ryder

**WELCOME**

Dr. Tom Benzing called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM with a welcome to all in attendance. It was determined that a quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Greg Hitchin made a motion to approve the August 4, 2026 minutes with Mr. Bratcher seconding. The motion carried unanimously.

**COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

Advocacy – Dr. Benzing began by expressing sincere gratitude for the volunteers who work the trailer each weekend. Volunteers were recognized at the August Board of Trustees meeting. An appreciation luncheon will be held in Waynesboro on October 6<sup>th</sup>. All committee members are invited to attend.

- Department of Education – Dr. Keiper reported he had a virtual meeting with Secretary Smith and the Secretary's staff to discuss the Waynesboro project. Working drawing funding is the next step needed. An executive summary outlining a comparison between the Martinsville facility and the Waynesboro project as well as Chumura data of economic return was presented to Sec. Smith at his request. Dr. Keiper reiterated that the funding has been requested timely for inclusion in the next General Assembly short session budget considerations.
- Staunton Montessori School – Dr. Keiper visited the new facility and manned a table with specimens and information about Waynesboro last Saturday.

Trailer – The trailer has been open each weekend this summer and volunteers continue to ask visitors to submit their support for the project to the Governor's Office. Mr. Poulin asked if there was a way to

know if the support messages are getting to the appropriate office. He also mentioned that many visitors do not know their legislative representatives. It was suggested to add a QR code linking directly to the “find my legislator” website for garnering additional support through widespread regional districts and to better represent the draw of regional visitors.

- So far, the trailer has seen more than 2400 visitors this season. Visitor feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with some declaring the Science trailer as their primary reason for visiting the Waynesboro area.
- The appropriate site visit paperwork has been submitted to Dominion Power for electric hookup.

#### Events –

- The fall lecture series at the Wayne Theatre is set to begin on Tuesday, September 8 with a talk about quail habitats and conservation. Speakers for October and November have been secured. The spring series is already fully planned with the exception of April.
- Dr. Benzing will represent the Waynesboro building project informally at the Virginia Chili Blues and Brews Festival in Waynesboro on Sept. 11 and 12.
- The Fall Foliage Festival in Waynesboro is October 10 and 11. Museum personnel and Waynesboro volunteers will staff a table at the festival.

#### **OPEN DISCUSSION**

- Waynesboro councilman, Mr. Wood was recently briefed about the status and next steps of the project.
- Mr. Poulin mentioned presenting the Return on Investment (ROI) as a percentage on promotional materials.
- Suggestion was made to investigate a cost sharing agreement between Department of Education and Commerce and Trade to help get project over finish line.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business or discussion, Dr. Benzing adjourned the meeting at 1:47 PM.

The next meeting of WAC will be held on Tuesday, October 6, 2026, at 1 PM at the Waynesboro Office of Economic Development.