

Draft Minutes
Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees Meeting
September 10, 2010 9:00 a.m. - Lecture Hall

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Mr. T.E. Beck Jr., Mr. Michael DiGrassie, Mr. Bill Card, Delegate Dickie Bell, Mr. William F. Sibert, Mr. Paul P. Vames, Ms. Lynne Mitchell, Mr. Emmett toms, Dr. Gabrielle Lanier, Mr. Ophie Kier, Mr. Frank McDonough, Mr. Rhodes Ritenour, Delegate Kenneth Plum, Mr. Thomas Sheets, Ms. Judy Wyatt (representing delegate Steve Landes), Dr. Pamela Fox, Mr. George Dygert, Dr. Nwachukwa Anakwenze

MEMBERS ABSENT

Delegate Beverly Sherwood, Senator Emmett W. Hanger Jr., Senator Edward Houck, Mr. Scott MacMillan, Delegate Benjamin Cline, Senator Wm. Roscoe Reynolds, Dr. Cheryl Talley

GUESTS ATTENDING

Mrs. Maricia Capps, President, American Frontier Culture foundation and Foundation Board Members Mr. Alex MacAllister, Mr. Ronald Capps, Mr. Robert Fonger, Mr. Jay Russell, Mr. Ned Ruby, Mr. John B. Dod, Mr. Bill and Bowman. Also attending Ms. Ann Rogan, Ms. Jessica _____(Marketing intern), Mr. Jake Beleu, Office of the Attorney General, Ms. Gail S. Nardi

STAFF ATTENDING

Mr. G. John Avoli, Executive Director, Mr. Eric Bryan, Deputy Director, Ms. Lydia Volskis, Museum Operations Manager, Mr. Mike Sutton, Marketing Director, Ms. Donna Parker, Fiscal Director, Mr. Mark Gatewood, General Administration Manager, Mr. David Puckett, Curator, Mr. Alex Tillen, Interpretive Supervisor, Mrs. Merritt Schoonover, Fiscal Technician Senior, Ms. Fran Carrington, Foundation manager, Ms, Judith Andrews, Foundation Assistant,

I. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice-Chair Mr. Paul Vames called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and asked each person to introduce themselves and give a brief overview of their own family's immigrant history. Mr. Dygert made a motion, seconded by Mr. McDonough that the minutes of the April 2010 meeting be approved as distributed. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Sheets stated that the Executive Committee, which also serves as the Nominating Committee, offered the slate of Board Officers as follows: Mr. Paul P. Vames for Chair, replacing Ms, Gail Nardi, and Mr. Frank McDonough for Vice-Chair, replacing Mr. Paul P. Vames. Mr. Beck made a motion, seconded by Dr. Fox that the Board approve the nominations. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Vames then resumed his duties chairing the meeting, now as Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Mr. Vames presented outgoing Trustees Chair Ms. Gail S. Nardi with a framed resolution commending her for her service to the Museum over the past several years, and the Board applauded her work. Ms. Nardi thanked those assembled and recounted the Museum's expansion and progress during the past several years. She also thanked the staff and the American Frontier Culture Foundation (Foundation) for their support and work.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director gave an overview of Museum activity since the last meeting and especially commended several other Trustees rotating off the Board; Mr. John O. Marsh, Jr., Dr. John Bunch, and Senator R. Creigh Deeds.

He thanked Mrs. Maricia Capps and the Foundation for their generous support of the museum during the recent state budget crisis and noted that the Foundation's one-time emergency monetary gift had allowed the Museum to avoid further staff layoffs; especially in light of an extra, surprise budget reduction at the very end of Fiscal Year 2010. He commended the staff members who have gone "above and beyond the call of duty" in their work and the volunteers who together gave the Museum over 10,000 hours of service during Fiscal Year 2010.

He continued that the Museum is continuing to experience troublesome, time-consuming and expensive computer and technology issues as the result of the ineptitude of VITA (Virginia Information Technology Agency), with whom the Museum is mandated as a state agency to do business for all computer needs. The Museum is currently working to transfer the parcels of land in the development property to the Foundation, once the paperwork is complete the Deed of Transfer will be recorded and the Foundation will assume ownership of the property. He thanked the Members of the General Assembly and the Governor's staff for their assistance in adding language to the recent budget bill to facilitate the transfer.

In news from the Museum site he reported that the Shuler Schoolhouse is complete and that a number of schools have made reservations for SOL related programs within the space. The infrastructure project adding utility lines from the Dairy Barn to the New World sites is complete, the loop roads were resurfaced in the Spring, and the Foundation raised funds for and erected the new Steve Dod Amphitheater behind the Irish Farm, The Amphitheater has already been used for a number of successful events. Summer camps were successful and the Museum has offered a series of Festivals and special events throughout the warm season. He reviewed details for the upcoming Igbo/West African Site dedication weekend and reported on the visit of Nick Fischer, a teenager from Hordt Germany who visited Staunton and worked as a volunteer for several weeks this summer.

Mr. Vames stated that the Museum's staff and volunteers have done an excellent job of making progress and enjoyable programs with less staff and funds than ever; the Museum's two Boards are working hard and collegially together as well and he especially complimented the leadership of Executive Director John Avoli. He noted that people respond in a positive way – staff, volunteers and the community – to something worth responding to and to a positive attitude and a "can-do" approach.

A. Budget and Finance

1. FY2010 Operating Budget update 2. State Budget Reductions 3. Revenue 4. Miscellaneous budget items
Fiscal Director Donna Parker presented the Finance Report. She first reviewed the Museum's expenditure report, which includes payroll (part-time and fulltime), operating expense (contractual services, materials and supply, transfer payments, continuous charges, site improvement and miscellaneous and equipment), Capitol projects, maintenance reserve, Dairy Barn renovation balance, infrastructure expenses and available cash with the State Treasury. She stated that the gate receipts "roll-over" from FY2010 into FY 2011 was \$13,936.

She reviewed the revenue report for the Museum, and explained several charts and graphs comparing FY2010 revenue and other figures to previous fiscal years. She especially noted that in FY2010 visitation income increased by 3% and total income by 7% over the previous year, and reviewed the difference between revenue and visitor head count.

B. Information Technology

Ms. Parker also presented the Information Technology report, noting that the Museum's computer technology situation has not changed much for the better since the April 2010 Board meeting report. One of the Museum's aging servers has been replaced due to total failure, and the Museum has been hit with an \$85,000 bill for VITA's sorely lacking services; the Museum previously paid \$32,000 for the same "services". She stated that the Museum had been repeatedly promised that VITA would absorb IT costs for small agencies, and that some agencies pay nothing. She has not received an adequate explanation for this or the poor quality of service and has difficulty contacting, and receiving return calls from VITA staff. Data storage and band width problems continue to severely hamper Museum staff ability to do their jobs and

depend on the work systems. The Museum currently operates over 30 computers on the same band width as an updated home system, and staff regularly must take work home to be able to complete their tasks. VITA repeatedly has refused to upgrade the Museum's systems and to respond to concerns. Mr. Beck asked for an estimate of wasted time due to these problems; Ms. Parker gave one example of an 8MB file which now takes 3-4 hours to download at the Museum takes about 7-8 minutes on a home system. Delegate Plum asked about VITA's response; Ms. Parker stated they generally respond with "We'll get back to you on that" or a similar remark. He stated that he would be glad to assist in working with VITA to resolve the Museum's basic system needs., and asked for a one-page summary of the Museum's concerns and issues.

C. Capital Projects 1. Infrastructure Improvements, 2. Maintenance Reserve

Mr. Mark Gatewood reported that a drinking fountain and shuttle rest stop have been installed near the Bowman Site to increase the comfort of guests visiting the New World complex; a visitor restroom will be installed shortly allowing for the removal of the unsightly Porta -John currently located near the American farmsites. He thanked several Board Members for their assistance in gathering the materials and expertise to build the new enhancements. He explained that maintenance reserve accounts from the state are intended to preserve and maintain existing structures, and noted that in the past year the Museum has repaired snow damage to roofs, resurfaced the loop roads, relocated the pole barn and repaired the HVAC system in the Visitors center.

D. Education and Interpretation

Deputy Director Eric Bryan reported that in FY 2010 school field trips welcomed 14, 935 students and teachers, or about 233 schools. This year to date (since July 1) the Museum has received about 3,527 reservations. The Museum will market its programs and outreaches to public, private and home school groups and will host the Home Educators Association of Virginia on October 21. He stated that Museum staff have also worked to establish communications with district social studies coordinators across the state. Te West African Site has been the location of five programs – 3 secondary and 3 college – this Spring and currently 17 programs are booked for Fall, as well as 9 schoolhouse programs.

Mr. Alex Tillen reported that summer camps for both younger and older elementary children were filled and successfully, and described changes planned by the staff for next summer's programs. He reported that the John Lewis Society, the volunteer group for 12-16 year olds had a record 38 students this year, who offered 2195 volunteer hours in FY2010. Mr. Vames asked about the progress of the Charles Fund for underprivileged schools; Ms. Carrington replied that this planned giving fund benefited about 5,000 students last year and accounted for almost 25% of all school visits. The fund pays for transportation, fee and lunch, or some combination thereof for title I, or schools with a very high percentage of free or reduced lunch students. Many of these students would have no other way to attend a field trip were it not for the generosity of the Charles Fund.

E. Visitor Experience and Satisfaction

Mr. Bryan reviewed a recent visitor report card that praised the Museum in all areas, such as price, customer service and quality of interpretation. He noted that each customer receives a blank report card upon arrival, and that while only a small percentage return the cards they are overwhelmingly positive. . During the last quarter, 345 cards were received with 99% of the respondents rating their museum experience as good or excellent.

F. Marketing 1. Visitation 2. Special Events 3. Agency Productivity Measure 4. Plan for Remaining FY
Marketing Director Mike Sutton reviewed Museum visitation numbers from FY2010, as well as the previous two fiscal years. He noted that the swine flu season, the economic downturn and a winter with numerous snow days and cancellations all caused a negative impact on Museum visits. He reviewed a slide depicting a pie chart of the marketing budget expenditures for the past year.

Mr. Sutton presented updates on marketing plans for FY2011, which include television and radio ads for special events, and advertizing to Northern Virginia, Richmond, Tidewater and the mid-Atlantic region. Visitor tracking statistics show that the majority of visitors come to the Museum from these areas. He also plans to increase regional internet presence, website updates and virtual Museum tours via a new tool called Virtual Rabbit.

Mr. Sutton reiterated the remarks of Fiscal Director and IT Manager Donna Parker, and expressed his frustration that the Museum is not able to fully manage and expand its marketing efforts due to lack of basic computer support and capability. He also cited a lack of response from VITA on issues related to the mission of the Museum to communicate to its public online and with current marketing tactics; progress is stalled due to VITA's ineptitude.

Mr. Vames asked about outreach programs' progress; Mr. Sutton responded that the staff presented a few programs this past year reaching about 800 students, but that staff were also preparing four new programs to add to the two already offered. He noted that bad weather and low staffing have affected the Museum's ability to offer outreach programs on a large scale.

G. Closed Session (if required)

IV. REPORT FROM THE FOUNDATION

Foundation President Maricia Capps stated that while economic times are difficult and the Foundation struggles with fundraising just as most similar foundations, the Foundation has had success this year in providing funds for school programs, Museum support and other needs. The annual fund raised about 70% of the goal this year, and special event income was slightly decreased. She reported that Foundation event planners will examine each event when planning for next year, to ensure that the event is not just "for fun" but garners a significant amount of funds for the Museum; multiple events which exhaust the staff and sponsors but which ultimately do not generate much income may be cancelled or placed on hiatus. She reported that the Foundation raised \$43,397 for the Dod Amphitheater, \$42,000 for the West African Farm and had in-kind gifts of about \$54,000. She was highly complimentary of the Museum's volunteers - who gave over 10,000 hours during FY2010 - and noted that the Foundation supports the volunteer program with shirts and sweatshirts, a summer picnic, Christmas party and volunteer of the quarter and year awards. She reviewed the responsibilities of all of the Foundation's standing committees, and reported on upcoming events and programs. Foundation Board member Ron Capps thanked Trustees and Foundation Board Members who have contributed to the annual fund and to various events at the Museum. He stated the need for Board Members to support the Museum financially, attend events and programs, learn about planned giving, and especially to attend a November 18 dinner at which the foundation will host Members of the Virginia State Senate Finance Committee.

V. OLD BUSINESS

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Ratification Items

Addendum to the Resolution of Transfer of development Property from Commonwealth of Virginia to the American Frontier Culture Foundation.

Mr. Avoli explained that although four parcels of land were eligible for transfer to the Foundation, only three were transferred by the Board of Trustees at the April 2010 meeting. The fourth parcel was Cochran Parkway, and it was not transferred at the time as it is an institutional road of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) would not maintain the road after a transfer. However, about 75% of the proposed AWASAW artisan's center would be located within the 600 foot right of way attached to the Parkway. When the transfer of the fourth parcel is complete from the State to the Foundation, the Foundation will then transfer the roadway and a smaller 25 foot right of way to the City of

Staunton road system, resulting in a net gain of 13 acres of property to the foundation. Mr. Sibert made a motion that the Board of trustees adopt the addendum to the 4/10 Resolution as presented in the meeting packets. Mr. Beck seconded the motion; there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. It is anticipated that the Board of Directors of the American Frontier Culture Foundation will accept the parcel at its meeting later in the day.

Collections deaccessioning

Curator David Puckett reviewed the deaccession list noting that the Board of Trustees must approve any deaccessioning. He also reviewed steps taken to contact original donors for their approval. Of special interest in the Plains Indian dress donated by Justice and Mrs. George Cochran; the dress is quite valuable but does not fit within the Museum's mission or collecting scope. Justice and Mrs. Cochran agreed that the Museum should sell the dress through a specialized auction house and that the proceeds should go towards construction of the Native American Exhibit at the Museum. The Cochran's signed a notarized letter outlining this agreement.

Mr. Sheets made a motion, seconded by Mr. Dygert, that the Board adopt the deaccessioning proposal. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

B. West African Site dedication

Mr. Avoli recognized new Trustee member Dr. Nwachukwu Anakwenze and asked him to speak about the upcoming opening of the Igbo Site. Dr. Anakwenze stated that the exhibit has been well received by the Igbo community in America and Nigeria, and that many families are excited about attending the opening. He noted that the opening would be only the first of many positive and educational events which will occur surrounding the new exhibit. He thanked the Museum and Foundation for recognizing the Igbo culture and contributions to the melting pot of American culture.

Mr. Avoli reminded all Board Members to RSVP for the dedication and luncheon, and reviewed the schedule of events for the weekend. He also emphasized the importance of the Friday evening gathering of elder's ceremony and the newly formed collaboration with the Staunton African American Festival.

VII. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is set for April 15, 2011 at 9 a.m. in the Lecture Hall.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Sibert made a motion, seconded by Mr. Sheets that the meeting be adjourned. here was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.