

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Draft Transcripts of the Virtual Briefing of the Board of Trustees
Tuesday, August 20, 2020, 5:30pm

Briefing called to order at 5:33pm.

Full attendance listed in the meeting minutes.

Alex Nyerges: Well good. This was meant to be informal so I don't have a formal presentation other than to just greet everybody so since we decided, actually it came up as an idea from our Foundation leadership, that it would be nice to have a cocktail party. So we did that, we talked to Monroe and Monroe said, "Sounds like a great idea." He just sent his regrets a moment ago. He, as a surgeon, sometimes has things get in the way that are more important than having a cocktail with all of us, which is too bad. He and I met the day before yesterday at the museum over a glass of wine to catch up on things. He is [indecipherable] of all of this and then some. [Dog barking.] Somebody's got a dog. I love it. Hi Suzy. Suzy's joined us.

Suzy Szasz Palmer: Hi everybody.

Alex Nyerges: We last met, as those [indecipherable] used to be done on Saturday mornings at the movie theatre. We were closed. We've obviously opened. I have to say, the opening and being open, has been pretty successful. I'll give you the good parts and the bad parts. The good parts are that the Committee that was formed, that was created actually, was a brainchild of Kimberly, who runs HR, was called BeWell. It was a group of people from across the entire museum, all staff, all departments, all levels. It includes police officers and guards, visitor people, as well as curators and people in retail. They came up with all the protocols so if you've had, and I know that Carol Ann was there yesterday, if you've been to visit the museum, you know it's a safe, hospitable place as it always is, but it provides the protocols that makes our visitors feel comfortable.

We've had good visitation but I will tell you this, our visitation, which is about 35% of what we would normally expect at this time a year, is exactly what every other major art museum in America that's open is experiencing, actually a little better. Boston and Houston, Houston and Cleveland, both are seeing about a 1,000 people a day, 800 people a day. We, just this last week, we're averaging 1,100 and 1,200 people a day. But, as I say, normally with a big show like the Egyptian show and people on vacation, we'd see usually 2,000 or 3,000 people or more particularly, the larger numbers on the weekends. We are getting good numbers on the weekends but the rest of it is just, I think, a very clear indication that people are afraid to come out. At this point in time, we're doing everything we can do to make them comfortable. The restaurant's doing all of its proper physical distancing. Of course every visitor has to wear a mask. People are, for the most part, being pretty good about it. We have had only one or two incidences, and we had 20-some thousand visitors in the month of July, so it's a good number but normally a July like this we'd see 50,000 visitors at least, particularly since we opened the exhibition the first days of July, 1st, 2nd and 3rd for the members. We had about 3,500 members come on those three days we were open until 9 pm. Normally we see 3,000 or 4,000, even 5,000 people a day, on those particular but the people were not coming out in those usual numbers.

The staff, our frontline staff, our visitor services, our gallery associates, are feeling, some of them are feeling comfortable. Some of them are, quite frankly, concerned. I wandered around yesterday and the day before to talk to folks and most people are in pretty good spirits but there is this edge of

concern around the coronavirus and it's real. So we're doing everything we can do to make sure that they're comfortable and that we've taken every precaution possible. The enterprise, the cafe and the restaurant are doing reasonably well given the attendance. The shop is actually making money. People, even when we were closed, we were selling puzzles out the door with free shipping. One Friday we had \$30,000 in sales, online, in puzzles.

Yeah and then just last week, if you're looking for something that is extra special in terms of your food choices for tonight or any evening, we now have VMFA To Go, that was another brainchild of Kimberly's. So we package it up, we do curbside delivery. Kathryn and I, our dinner on Friday night was catfish and hush puppies. I'll say this, the best hush puppies I've ever had and I've had [indecipherable] way. Having lived in Mississippi, blackened catfish and I know each other very well. I make a pretty mean catfish to begin with but this was really, really good and a nice, nice piece of fish. But go online, you can order online and I tell you, it's definitely worth it. It's another way that we're trying to get creative and generate revenues and do something a little different to make up the difference.

Ticket sales, of course, for *Sunken Cities* reflect that 35% but here's an interesting fact. Normally with exhibitions, if this were last year, we would say we have 50,000 visitors and about a third of the visitors coming in would go see the special exhibition. Now it's actually more than 50% of the people are coming because of *Sunken Cities* or at least are seeing it while they're there. And that's unusual for us. The exhibit, I will say, and thanks to Michael Taylor who talked us into doing a double booking, eight months instead of four, I can tell you if we had done the usual four month booking, we'd all be crying in our beer, to say the least, because we'd be in deep, deep trouble. We would only have half of that four months because we were closed for the first six weeks. We learned that we're going to get booked for the cost of not being open from the fee. But the good news is that we have it for an extra four months into January. We've asked for an extension that we haven't had an answer yet and we probably won't get one until this fall sometime as they look to see how the expansion of the new Egyptian museum out in [indecipherable] is going. Apparently it's running behind. As much as I hate to wish a museum project to run behind, this is one we'd love to see be very late, like not open until next April or May or even later in February, because then we could keep the exhibit intact probably until the end of February, the first of March. So if you, if anybody knows any ancient Egyptian incantations, this would be the time to use it.

Development has been safest. Tom's not with us. He's gone to be with his father up in Ithaca. The development operation has been hitting it out of the park. We were [indecipherable] behind, in fact were looking at the last quarter of fiscal '20 as being a loss of 15% or more. We budgeted 15% less in fiscal '21 for memberships and contributions but we ended fiscal '20 with a surplus. We've begun fiscal '21, for the first six weeks, running way ahead of our budgeted numbers. So we actually carved more than a \$1 million out of fiscal '21's budget. The way Tom and all of our development people are going, we are going to make up that money and then some. If we have continued issues with attendance that's one way we're going to be able to mitigate that differential. Hopefully things will, things will get better.

Tuesday, we're going to be sending information out about this for everybody to tune in, we're going to be live, I think we're going to be using Facebook Live, but at 10:00 am on Tuesday, the Governor and First Lady are coming to the museum to announce the artist special fellowships, the Emergency Fellowships. We found that we had \$200,000 extra in our fellowship endowment funds so Michael

and I got together and then we got together with Hossein. Then Michael then marshalled his forces with Kimberly, excuse me, with Valerie – too many names with “y”s at the end, with Valerie and...

Kathryn Gray: It's an “ie”.

Alex Nyerges: It's an “ie”? See, I can't even spell. With Valerie and our statewide folks to be able to put together a special program. We had 400 applications from artists across Virginia. This is professional artists who make a living off of their art. They had to supply their vitae, their slides and then up to a 300-word essay of how the COVID virus and the economy have impacted them. Of course most of these have no income and haven't since March. So we're going to, the Governor and First Lady, are going to announce 40 grants of \$5,000 dollars each. The good news is the checks went out in the mail last Thursday. They were in the mailboxes of these 40 artists, all across Virginia. They come from Roanoke, from up in the Valley, from Northern Virginia, from the Eastern Shore, from Norfolk, from Virginia, from Richmond and then Southside Virginia. So we've made 40 households across the Commonwealth maybe not whole, but certainly something to celebrate because of our ability within a dedicated endowment that was started by John Lee Pratt in 1941. I know we give out regular fellowships annually, about \$200-\$250,000 worth, but this extra \$200,000 could not come at a better time and in a better, better way. So we'll send out that information, tune in. We unfortunately have to limit the crowd. We're setting a tent up in the garden in the Robbins Sculpture Garden but the Governor's asked us to limit it to 50 people or less. There are 40 artists, the Governor has an entourage of about ten people. Then there are also about ten or 12 from the media that Jan has been arranging. Then we'll have the artists but we invite everybody to join online. It's going to be a moment of celebration. I suspect we're going to be seeing some, you know, teary acceptances of these awards. I know that when Valerie was doing the judging, they were apparently brought to tears with many of the essays that the artists wrote. I read them all, all of the 40 winning essays. I did not read all 400 applications but I got to tell you there were some really heart breaking people who, for the last five months, have been putting all of their expenses on their credit cards, which are now maxed out, and they have no money. So the prospect of \$5,000 dollar, strings-free grant, there's no reporting requirements, nothing to do except cash the check and make your life a little better, that's going to be a special moment. Of course the Governor and First Lady are very excited about being able to help in that regard too.

Then the last thing I was going to touch on was all about external affairs. I think everybody will painfully remember the VMFA Reform group and their pronouncements on Instagram and YouTube and Facebook. They're still out there. I will say they've been very relatively quiet. They do occasionally post. They have virtually no new followers. They did bring to light a number of things that, of course, we had already known and been working on. They also brought to light things that aren't true and that they exaggerated by about a 1,000%. But, you know, we're in an era with all of the movements across the country against museums, with demands to virtually every major museum. I'll give you one anecdotal story from just the other day. The Museum for Contemporary Art in Chicago, which we partnered with on recently with an exhibition. Madeline, who's the director there is a seasoned veteran. They met with staff, their front-line visitor services staff, of which there are about 26 staff. Part-timers were complaining that, like in our VMFA Reform complaint, that the part-timers are being taken advantage of, they want full time jobs, and they want benefits because it's healthcare and all those things that they're interested in. Well, she met with their staff and that was the situation where it was not an anonymous group, said, “You know, this is reasonable.” They did their homework. They did all of the work they needed to do. They took those 26 part-time jobs and created eight full-time positions. Then they had a revolution, a revolt. The 26 part-timers were upset

that people are now going to lose their jobs because of what they asked for. Madeline said to me the other day, she said, "I stand on our decision. We're doing what we were asked to do. We're doing the right thing." We've done the same thing, I will tell you. We've moved 57 people from part-time jobs to full-time jobs in the last five years. That's at a cost of \$1.2 million dollars a year, every year because it's \$22,000 for employee for those benefits. But it's what our employees wanted and we've gotten certainly celebration from them. We didn't have a revolution. We're also very careful because there are a lot of our part-timers that don't want anything but part-time work. That is something we listened to and Kimberly's done a good job in the HR of making sure that we know who wants to be elevated to full-time versus who doesn't. So we're looking at that.

We're also doing a number of other things on the business of diversity, inclusion, accessibility. We brought in a consultant, Bill Cooper, who's going to be working with all of our departments and divisions doing anti-bias training, working with staff so that we can be the most hospitable place. We can be the best workplace. We can be an institution where all employees feel that they're equal on every level, they're treated that way and then we don't have the challenges. Mind you, as I told you in the past, it's not that we're without our challenges. We've had a couple of instances, one about eight months ago. We had one of our HVAC, one of our building engineers in charge of heating, cooling, and ventilation, who was painting racial epithets on equipment up on the fourth floor in a closed machine room that also happens to have camera surveillance. This is a fellow who had worked for us for 20-something years but we have zero tolerance for sexual harassment, racial harassment, anything and zero, zero tolerance at that. Kimberly did all the things that she normally does, conducted an investigation, brought people in to provide written testimony on every facet of it. Then when they brought the employee in to be fired, he quit and that was the end of that. But you know, that's not the only time. We had another situation with another one of our buildings and grounds crew who was making verbal comments about the Kehinde Wiley sculpture and was saying this to his colleagues, one of whom is Hispanic, another who is Black. Neither of them, obviously, were comfortable and felt threatened by it. We did a similar investigation, that employee was let go and again, a long-term employee, but with 700+ people, we're always going to have challenges. Our job is to take them all seriously, to act on them immediately and act on them fairly. We've had a couple of situations, where we had a police officer flirting with a person in the Cafe. Unfortunately it's not against the law to flirt. They were brought in though and told the seriousness of the charges, which are, you know, not terms to fire one, but we try to make sure that we make it the most comfortable place that everybody feels good about coming to work in the morning or in the evening because we obviously are there 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.

We're also engaging Moses Foster in the West Cary Group to do work with Jan on the communication side to help us tell our stories better. You know, the story about the 57 employees that are now full-time versus part-time? You know, we were, we were dinged for that because we weren't making that story as widely known. As you can look across the screen, our senior management team is 50% percent people of color. There is not another art museum in America of any consequence that is a comprehensive major art museum that has that kind of record. I'll give you one quick set of points. I hate to disparage a colleague and an institution but I think it's important to know why so many institutions are under fire. MOMA, the museum of Modern Art in New York has 850 employees. Of their 850 employees, 150 are Black. Of the 150 Black employees, 130 are guards. So 30 of the 850 employees that are black are in some job or another. They may be secretaries, they may be in the executive staff but I can tell, you knowing that museum, they just hired their first Black curator in years to add to the staff. They were all white curatorial staff prior to that.

So it's not that the art museum world is undeserving of the attacks, and the concerns and the cries. Again, we're not completely blameless but we're trying to be better. We're trying to be the best possible. I have to say, thanks to the credit of our senior management team, particularly to Kimberly and her staff, I think we're doing an outstanding job. We're just going to keep marching forward.

Woman's Voice: Board?

Alex Nyerges: Well, on the board representation, yeah, well that's a credit to all of the Trustees and the strategic plan. You know we're all about inclusivity and it is all about accessibility which is why we're open with free general admission, 365 days a year. And not like our colleagues say in Boston. Boston's closed now two or three days a week because they just they said they couldn't justify the hours for the lack of crowds. Well that's the reverse thinking of us. We want to have as many hours that we can be open to allow as many people to come when it's most convenient for them. So I'm going to stop talking because you know we've got lots to celebrate. At the same time, we've got lots to work on. [Indecipherable] I'm glad to now answer questions or comments. Since this is a cocktail party and now since I'm done talking talking, I'm going to have a glass of Virginia wine.

Kay Baker: Hi, this is Kay. I just want to suggest if I could that everyone, just so we don't have so much background noise just maybe be cognizant that your phone is on mute when you're not talking. We want to hear from you but just so that we can hear the person talking, it might be helpful to put your phone on mute.

Alex Nyerges: But do unmute yourself when you want to talk.

Kay Baker: Yes, please. Absolutely.

Anne Edwards: Can you tell me whether the artists who applied for a fellowship, whether it is a requirement for them to be members of the Virginia Museum, to have a membership?

Alex Nyerges: I don't believe so.

Michael Taylor: Can you hear me? No, it's not a requirement. We tried to have as few strings attached to this. We made it very easy to apply. Obviously our hope is that they do become members. Remember, these are artists following in the footsteps of Sally Mann and Cy Twombly, who were fellowship recipients. But no, we didn't have any stipulations like that. They just had to be visual artists and live in Virginia.

Alex Nyerges: You know, I'm going to turn that question around because you've given me an idea. You know one of the things we should think about doing is giving artists memberships. I can't think of a more loyal constituency and given the economy today, they can't afford it. I mean if we could be as generous as we are to our partners, as you all know for all of our partner museums, anybody belongs, for example to the Chrysler or to the Taubman, to the William King, if they're members there and since they're member partner institutions, we give every one of those members a complimentary Virginia Museum of Fine Arts membership with the magazine, with free admission, with the discounts. And it's because our job is to be Virginia's art [indecipherable]. So I like the question. We're going to look into about doing that because that may be one of the, thank you for asking. I don't even know who asked the question.

Anne Edwards: Anne Edwards.

Alex Nyerges: Anne. Well thanks for asking the question.

Anne Edwards: I have many friends who are artists in Virginia and the fellowships are revered. I have friends that apply over and over again. They, the artists that I know, already have a deep respect for the museum and its programs. I just thought because the Virginia Museum does such incredible outreach, especially in the field of education, that I think sometimes artists are happy to belong, proud to belong to a museum. It could be a reduced fee for artists. But at any rate, it's just a way of making their support, their connection with the museum that deeper, that more dear.

Alex Nyerges: Anne that may be the best idea. We offer a student membership for \$10 and we have 7,000 students. It's that idea of a nominal payment. It's less, it's half the cost of the special exhibition ticket.

Anne Edwards: Right.

Alex Nyerges: But if we do a \$10 artist membership, we're going to look into that. That's a great thought.

Meg Gottwald: Alex?

Alex Nyerges: Yes?

Meg Gottwald: Meg. Do we have any idea if there were any Virginia Museum employees that were COVID positive?

Alex Nyerges: I can answer that question because we have had just one employee. This is back the second week of March, who not only tested positive but was then hospitalized in an ICU for a couple of days. Let me tell you, I, let's see, Kimberly and Caprice and I and someone else downstairs ran into that person by happen stance on the first day we were closed, on March the 13th. This employee was not feeling poorly then but apparently in the next day or so got a sore throat. Then it went downhill from there. Luckily though, after hospitalization they recovered. Now all of us, by the way, when we found out that they had been, they got the virus, we all had to do 14 days of self-quarantine at home. I didn't, I mean I didn't leave my house, which was kind of an odd experience wasn't it? Yeah I was [indecipherable] up. So that's the only case we've had of anybody testing positive and obviously the only case of anybody actually be hospitalized. So we've been very fortunate. We are offering free screenings, free COVID tests, at there are nine different medical outlets where any employee, full-time and part-time, can go and it's free because we encourage people to be tested and be able to be feeling comfortable whether that's because it's coming to work or not. We want them to feel safe.

Meg Gottwald: Great, thank you.

Jeff Humber: Hey Alex. It's Jeff Humber.

Alex Nyerges: Hey Jeff. How are you?

Jeff Humber: I'm good. How you doing?

Alex Nyerges: I'm great.

Jeff Humber: Hey, listen I know the issues of diversity, inclusion are real personal commitment but do we have any issues, are you aware, around pay equity and some of the other issues beyond just representation?

Alex Nyerges: No. I mean the answer. Let me, I'm sorry, let me frame the answer properly. We don't have problems in that way. Let me give you kind of a thumbnail sketch why. One of the accusations that came up in this reform group was the fact that we don't pay our Black housekeepers as much as we pay our white housekeepers. But we don't have any white housekeepers. So that was error number one, minor detail. Error number two though was that, you know, we're a state agency. All of our housekeepers are subject to all of the Department of Human Resources' management rules. Now here's what really happens. Our housekeepers, who by the way, [undecipherable] person were angry that they were being used as an example to ends that they were not supportive of. Our housekeepers are paid 10% better on average than any other agency within the Commonwealth. On top of that, because they were working while we were closed, we also provided them with bonuses that started out at \$750 an employee and went up from there, including the managers who got much larger bonuses because they were putting in extra effort. That was Kimberly, who took over that division back in March. It's what we do but you know we subscribed to all of the rules. We make sure and we go through every position and that's whether it's a housekeeper, a curator, an educator, somebody in Amuse and we annually look at all the wages and all the salaries to see where we fit. We want to make sure that we not only pay our people, you know, on an average better, but much better and that includes everybody. So we don't, you know, on the basis of anything, obviously that would be illegal, it doesn't even come into question. But more importantly, we make it a practice that we treat our people the best way possible. Let me give you one other example. When the Governor announced that there was going to be a raise this past year and that would be up to 5%, it was only for full-time employees and only for people that were part of the general fund. Alright. Yeah, 700 employees. We also have 40 employees within that group that are members, that are employed by our Foundation. Well of the 700, a half, about half, a little more than half are part-timers. They were uncovered, non-general fund employees were not covered. We put up \$750,000 thanks to the Foundation funding that was the differential between everybody getting the 5% that was eligible and only then those that were in the general fund. So we put an extra \$750,000 dollars in the budget so every employee, and there were some there were some parameters like they had to be here for two years, but part-time, full time, state employees, Foundation employees all received the raise. We do that every time because we treat all employees fairly and equitably. So that when we see accusations about, you know, discrimination based on anything it's absolutely untrue.

Jeff Humber: Okay, listen. Total, total aside. Your name came up in conversation today and kind things were said, not necessarily by me. Alex, Al Carney sends you his best.

Alex Nyerges: Al was a former Trustee everybody and a former general counsel over at [undecipherable] and lives up in New York. He's also a good collector.

Jeff Number: He's a great guy.

Charlie Whitaker: I used to work with Al. Tell him hello next time you talk to him.

Jeff Humber: I will. I will, Charlie.

Alex Nyerges: Great guy. We miss Al. I haven't seen him awhile but of course I haven't been in New York in a while either so.

Jeff Humber: We're on the law school board together.

Alex Nyerges: Oh, great. Great. Yeah, I got a call him. Thanks, Jeff.

Charlie Whitaker: Alex, you may have covered this before I logged on very late but have you heard any more from the people who wrote that letter?

Alex Nyerges: Oh they...

Charlie Whitaker: You probably, you already covered it. You don't need to repeat.

Alex Nyerges: Oh no, no, actually I haven't touched on it, Charlie. The reform people are still out there. They are anonymous and of course, you know, I'm amused when they send me an email and say, "You haven't responded to our demands." It's like, I'm sorry, the FBI tells you not to respond to terrorists or kidnappers and we don't respond to anonymous demands. If someone were to come forward and say, "We want to sit down and talk about these things" sure. But they, but we've actually gone, I see Deb's on the call from the Attorney General's Office, but Cindy, who's our Senior Assistant Attorney General who's our General Counsel, wrote a letter to Instagram because they posted, and if you go on, you want to see yourself, go onto Instagram. Do the query for VMFA Reform. It pops right up. Look at what they posted. They posted a pair of photographs that showed a light-skinned Black man with a gun shooting a dark-skinned Black man who was in a chair and said, "If you have claims of racial discrimination, go to HR. This is what happens." First of all, obviously, acts of violence are not something that remotely would be possible. Second of all, this was a personal attack on Kimberly both from the standpoint of what, how she looks but also making an assumption that we discriminate against people who are darker skinned and you're going to be, you know, we're going resort to violence. I mean that's criminal, hateful harassment. So we've written a letter from the Attorney General's Office. We haven't gotten anything. It's still up there as of this afternoon. I happened to see it because they posted something new today. But they don't have anybody following them. They don't have any new people joining their cause. I mean, what's interesting, Charlie, and sad is we get a couple of, two or three comments, emails and calls from people saying, "I'm not going support the Virginia museum anymore until you stop harassing your employees." It's because they've read this on Instagram or Facebook and they believe it despite the fact that obviously, it's not true. Kimberly's on this call somewhere. I mean it breaks my heart for Kimberly to have to be attacked personally like that because obviously it's as untrue. I mean no one's done more to make HR the most well-honed, professional machine of any art museum in the country. She gets called by all kinds of institutions, large museums around the country, who want her to come consult with them because they know we do it well.

Charlie Whitaker: Good. Alright.

Carol Ann Bischoff: Alex? Hi. So great to see everybody. So I just wanted to echo what Alex said but from my own perspective as having visited the VMFA yesterday. I brought my younger daughter who's leaving for college next week. I'm high risk, I have a pulmonary issue. It was just so wonderful

to go somewhere and to feel like we were safe. There were hand sanitizers everywhere exactly as Alex said. The *Sunken Cities* exhibit is phenomenal. I saw it at the British Museum a number of years ago, as had my daughter, so we could compare and it was just beautifully, beautifully curated. Things weren't behind glass like they were at the British Museum and because of the social distancing, I mean one of the silver linings is, you know, you could really linger and enjoy everything that we were looking at. We had lunch at Amuse. It was delicious. It was absolutely delicious. We went to the gift shop and I'll do a little promo for the gift shop. [Put on VMFA face mask.] I got this for my husband.

Alex Nyerges: Oh, I love it.

Carol Ann: It's a Mondrain. I got Christmas presents. There are cute, they are VMFA ones and you can buy them online. I understand that they're going to be seasonal ones, so like probably Halloween ones. Then we did the Louis Draper exhibit and we also toured some of the permanent collections. It was delightful. So for anyone who can make the drive, I highly recommend it. It was just wonderful.

Alex Nyerges: Thank you, Carol Ann, for that wonderful ad. Well, you know, we are trying to do the best possible.

Suzy Szasz Palmer: Hi, this is Suzy. I wanted to say hi to everyone. Just following up on Carol Ann, I'm really glad that you were able to go. I am immunocompromised, as many of you may know. So I'm sadly not allowed to go in the museum or anywhere else. I wish I could but I'm so grateful that I live so close by and have been enjoying the gardens for these last many months. I'm looking forward to trying the VMFA To Go dining, that's going to be super. I don't actually think I need to take my car over, I think I can walk over. So it's also been really wonderful that we have all the online programming. I've heard from a number of my friends, not just in Richmond, not even just in Virginia, that people are logging in to some of those classes and lectures from across the country. They're asking whether they're going to continue once we lift all these precautions. I think it would be wonderful if they do continue perhaps not at the same scale, but they've really been great advertising in the best sense for the museum.

Alex Nyerges: Suzy, that's actually a fabulous point. I'm glad you brought it up. You know, I was asked the other day, "So, I mean, what good has come from the COVID-19 experience?" And actually, a lot. I mean, first of all Kathryn and I had dinner together for something like 165 days in a row, just the two of us, which has never happened in 25 years of being married. I know it's not going to last forever. But the fact is that, you know, we have had online programs for a long, long time and no one was taking advantage of them. Now we do. For example, Michael does a lecture and we get 1,000 people coming to the virtual lecture. It's unbelievable. So to answer your question in terms of hope, no, we, one of the great, great benefits of our experience is that people have discovered our online offerings, they're looking for them. We now have the weekly blast of what you can participate in. We're going to continue that, as we have since reopening. What we've done is that we've scaled back the Cocktails with the Curators from once a week to once a month, but we're never going to stop those programs. We have lots already scheduled for the rest of this year. We're going to continue those, as well as virtual classes and other kinds of programs that have a huge audience. And as you say, it's not just people in Richmond or in Virginia, it's people anywhere on the planet that tune into us. We're happy to have that audience and continue to promote that kind of content.

Caprice Bragg: Cammy, do you have a question?

Cammy Carleton: I may have missed something but is there an update on the Governor's budget and where we are with that?

Alex Nyerges: You know, I saw Katie on the line. I don't see her now.

Caprice Bragg: She had to step away.

Alex Nyerges: I can give you an update. I'm glad you asked. Actually there's two pieces of news. Obviously this is preliminary at the moment. On the operating side, we had a couple of new appropriations totaling \$400,000 that, along with all of the other \$2 billion of new appropriations, have been tabled. It appears to be they will probably all stay on the table until later in the year [indecipherable] revenues. And if they can find them, they will. I would not hold my breath. We don't know. The good news on the operating side is that the Secretary and Katie arranged for us to meet with Secretary Layne, the Secretary of Finance, a couple of weeks ago. He gave us a kind of a snapshot preview and he basically said at the time, the worst case scenario that he sees would be a 3-4% cut but it wouldn't be across the board. Now Aubrey, just on Monday, made a very different statement a couple of times, which is hugely encouraging. And he did not think that there would be cuts of any kind. If you start to examine the numbers, what you see is that \$2 billion of new funding requirements about matches the \$2 billion shortfall that is anticipated in the two fiscal years, fiscal '21 and fiscal '22 for the biennial. So if it is entirely possible, I won't say it's a given, but possible that we would not see a budget cut from the Commonwealth for our operating fund. That's going save us \$300,000 or \$400,000 of pain. Now, the better news is that on the capital side, the capital dollars that we were appropriated were in fiscal '19. Now those are still in play. They're approved at, only the capital dollars that were approved in fiscal '20 that are likely not to get funding. And so there are going be some capital projects that will not move forward but ours had already passed under the wire. So we have a \$125 of capital appropriations. The way that's divided up it's \$112 million in the first round and then later, as the building's being built, the fixtures, furniture and equipment, which are \$13 million of that amount, that would get appropriated later. Now Hossein sits on the Bonding Capacity Committee that he was appointed by the Governor. Hossein, give us a quick update on the bonding side because this was also good news from the ability of us to receive that money.

Hossein Sadid: Yes. Thank you, Alex. I think that was a great summation of where we stand with respect to the Commonwealth supporting budget. You know, as Alex pointed out, the Debt Capacity Advisory Board did not make any recommendations to the Governor for scaling back the allocation for bond capacity. Although as you know, the revenues are declining. They have gone down [indecipherable] and the bond capacity is related to the availability of the revenues but, you know, our board did not advance any recommendations to the Governor to limit the debt capacity that was allocated to on projects that Alex mentioned, had been already approved. Our capital support was included in the 2019 budget bill so we [indecipherable] any kind [indecipherable] way to get capacity impact on getting those capital projects funded. So it's really good for the museum where we stand on the budget situation at the state level.

Alex Nyerges: Thanks, Hossein. So I'm encouraged because obviously, and Tom's not here, but let me tell you that on the other side of the equation I mentioned how well we were doing on the operating side. In fiscal '21 into June 30th we raised \$21 million toward the capital campaign. The total, not counting state funds, is up to \$42 million, with the state appropriation at \$125 million.

That would put us up at a \$167 million dollars which, is about halfway toward the total of \$365 million. We also then have a couple of pending gifts from former board members that are actually up in the upper seven figures, in terms of approaching eight figures each, that the details are being worked on by our former board members as donors. They're part cash and part estate gifts but they're sizable. Then we have another \$100+ million in asks that have already been made and that are pending. So you know we could, depending on how the economy goes and particularly with the state approval, the carrot of being able to say, because the funding, the \$125 million, is predicated on us raising \$65 million dollars on a two-to-one match. So that's a very, very big carrot and very useful with donors. So we have been just, so you know, over the last five months with being closed and with the coronavirus around us, we've been very careful about how we approach the capital campaign. But our fundraising staff in the month of July, just our frontline officers, Tom, Caprice, and all of the people that work in the Foundation that are frontline, they made 600 donor calls. Just in the month of July. So they're doing their business to, doing stewardship, you know, connecting up with donors. We're now starting to line up visits again about the capital campaign beginning in late August, in early September where we're bringing people in for lunch and dinner, obviously observing all the right protocols, but being able to then start these conversations up in earnest about funding the capital campaign.

And we've promised everybody we were going try to wind this down by 6:15 pm and I realize we've gone a little over. I want to give anybody who has any other comment or question a chance to ask anything. But you know, I have to say that if you asked me six months ago in February, could we afford to be closed for three and a half months? Could we afford to have only 35% visitation once we are open again, I'd say, "Wow, I might want to put in my retirement papers now because that doesn't sound like a pretty picture." But let me just tell you. We are so much more fortunate than most of our colleagues. You know we have four pillars: the Commonwealth of Virginia with the state appropriation; the endowment; contributed income, which is our fundraising; and then our earned income. The only one of those four pillars that is actually hurting is earned income, particularly, obviously with special events which is at zero at the moment. But you know, we've got three legs instead of four. And now we have three half because we're, but you know, other institutions don't have that kind of resolve. We are so much better off. So thank you to all of you. Thanks to all your generosity. I can tell you we're going to weather the storm and then some. Thank you everybody. You all have a great evening.

Meeting adjourned at 6:27pm.

Transcribed by: Kay Baker
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