

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Draft Transcript Minutes of the Electronic Meeting of the
Trustees Executive & Governance Committee
Tuesday, December 15, 2020; 3:00pm

Meeting called to order at 3:04pm.

Full attendance listed in the meeting minutes.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: In consideration of everybody's time, and happy holidays first of all, let's get started. Caprice, would you please do a roll call?

Roll call of the Board of Trustees Executive & Governance Committee meeting taken by Caprice Bragg.

Monroe Harris: As always, please stay muted unless you are involved in discussion or voting. When you speak, please state your name. If you experience any technical difficulties, please contact Caprice or Stephanie. In accordance with requirements of virtual meetings, we offered a public comment period. There were no requests for public comment, so let's proceed. Before we turn to the agenda, Alex do you want to talk a little bit about the good news we got last week?

Alex Nyerges: I do, Monroe, on two levels. Obviously having the Governor ask us to lead the effort to re-envision Monument Avenue is an extraordinary achievement. By the way, Jim, did you see the thing from *National Geographic* where I am quoted and your, the whole business of healing which is now added to my list of three words? They used that as a central focus on the quote, so thank you. I think it is a very appropriate thing.

Jim Klaus: I did see that.

Alex Nyerges: This is also an apology though to all of the board members because when the Chief of Staff approached me and in fact, Michael Maul before that, they said, "You cannot talk to anyone about this at all." And so I broke that silence only last week beforehand with Monroe Harris as the President of the Board of Trustees and a gubernatorial appointed Board member responsible to the Governor, and then Jim Klaus and Lilo Ukrop later in the week. That was not necessarily a choice I would make, but that was the request from downtown. I did not think anybody would be upset that we would take on the charge of what promises to be one of the more important efforts that we are going to undertake in the coming five years, because it is going to be a multi-year project. My other comment would be that I would love for everybody to provide ideas about specific people or the kinds of organizations that we want to have involved. If there is a singular word that is going to embody this effort that we are going to lead, it is going to be inclusive. When I say inclusive, I mean it in every possible sense of the word. Let me give you one real-life example. Monument Avenue itself is populated by a large number of people who are glad to see the monuments go, and who are also glad to see something different coming down the road. Then there are people who are still suing the state, who are not happy. We are going to include people that cover both sides of the street literally and figuratively. I would encourage folks to send your ideas to me or to Michael Taylor, or to both of us, because in terms of structural, though we have not set anything up, Michael is, as our Deputy Director and Chief Curator, is going to lead the effort, obviously leaning heavily on our Contemporary curatorial folks, particularly Valerie Cassel Oliver. I will close by saying this, not only

are we inclusive but at this moment we are absolutely a blank page. We do not have a set of preconceived notions about what Monument Avenue should be or will be. It has to be the product of the collective minds of so many [indecipherable] people in Richmond, across Virginia, across the country and quite frankly, I have said a couple of times, across the globe. We also want to make sure in the inclusivity that we give voice to the people who feel like they have not had voices. This morning I was on the phone with Mark Reuben, who does mediation and is very involved with Monument Avenue, and doing the mediation for people from July 1 who were arrested. Some of the protestors will be very helpful and some of the protestors will not, but we need to be inclusive. This is an opportunity that I think if there is anything that is an exclamation point after the words, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, this is it. To have the Governor and the Commonwealth ask us to do this is a really wonderful thing. It is not going to be without its [indecipherable], hardships and pains, I guarantee you that. But if we can do Kehinde Wiley, and we did that extraordinarily perfectly, we can do anything. So, glad to answer questions you all might have. Normally, obviously, we would be talking about this before we have the Governor making announcements, so my apologies on that regard.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: Any questions for Alex?

Lilo Ukrop: The only comment I have, since we have been talking so heavily about the strategic plan and that is coming into play, I think it is important that we continue to reiterate to all of our stakeholders that the Monument Avenue re-envisioning is totally part of our strategic plan. It checks a lot of the boxes that we set out to do, but somehow weave it into the plan so it is not a one-off project and a distraction.

Alex Nyerges: Absolutely, absolutely. I will reiterate too, and I do not remember which session it was in as there were four different breakout groups between the Trustees and the Foundation, but one of the questions that came up for me was, "What are you going to do about staffing?" The \$750,000 is about the planning phase, and that is going to include a couple of staff people. We are going to hire a Project Director and then another senior person. The Project Director will report to Michael. It will be akin to a senior curatorial experienced post. That is the approach we are going to take. Our entire senior management team is going to be involved as this has to do with planning, it has to do with conservation and the kinds of logistics that Stephen is involved with. It obviously has to do with money. The good news, too, is we have the \$750,000 and not the \$500,000 that we were going to be offered, so we are fairly whole there. This is going to be a pan-institutional kind of project. I have high hopes for what it can do for Richmond and Virginia.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: It goes without saying that those staff positions, we need to be very considerate of looking for diverse individuals to fill those positions. I think it sends the right message.

Alex Nyerges: Oh yeah.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: We are just fortunate to be in a position to be able to take the lead on this monumental, pardon the pun, endeavor to re-visualize and re-envision the history and the artistry on Monument Avenue. It is kudos to everybody in the room and beyond.

Alex Nyerges: Yes. This is a statement, Monroe, and I am glad you said it that way. This is a statement of the position of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts as we close out 2020 in a way that we

are respected, we are trusted and we are revered. This was not handed to a committee, but to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: Yes, that is good. Anybody else? If not, thanks a lot, Alex. Thank you. At this point I move that the Executive and Governance Committee go into closed session to discuss the performance of a specific employee, particularly to discuss the Director's annual performance. The relevant exemption is Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Code of Virginia. May I have a second?

David Goode: Seconded.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: All in favor?

Committee Members: Aye.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: All right, we will see you guys.

Alex Nyerges: If I do not see some of you before Christmas and New Year's, everybody stay happy and healthy. I look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

At 3:13pm the meeting went into closed session.

At 3:19pm the meeting resumed in open session.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: I move that the Executive and Governance Committee certify that the closed session just had was conducted in compliance with the Code of Virginia as set forth in the ratification resolution distributed. May I have a second?

Ken Johnson: Second.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: All in favor? Please say your name.

David Goode: David Goode. Aye.

Meg Gottwald: Meg Gottwald. Aye.

Ken Johnson: Ken Johnson. Aye.

Caprice Bragg: And Monroe, I think we need you on the record.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: Okay. Monroe Harris. Aye.

Caprice Bragg: Cindy, I believe that meets the requirements. There were no opposed.

Cindy Norwood: Yes, that is fine.

Caprice Bragg: Alright so Monroe, I think you just need to move to ratify the motion in open session.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: I move to ratify what was discussed in closed session. May I have second?

Ken Johnson: Second.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: All in favor?

Cindy Norwood: Sir, do not forget you are going to request that the motion be what you all talked about.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: Okay, what was discussed in closed session was that we would give the maximum budgeted amount to Alex Nyerges for his bonus. May I have a second please?

Ken Johnson: Second.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: All in favor.

Committee: Aye.

Cindy Norwood: I would take a roll call, please.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: Yes, thanks.

Roll call of the Board of Trustees Executive & Governance Committee meeting taken by Caprice Bragg.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: So we are now official. Cindy, correct?

Cindy Norwood: That is correct, sir.

Monroe Harris, Jr.: All right, very good. Thank you so much, and thanks everybody. Thanks for your time and again, happy holidays. I hope you have a blessed holiday and please stay safe until we get the vaccine which is coming right around the corner.

At 3:21pm the meeting adjourned.

Transcribed by: Kay Baker, Administrative Assistant and Receptionist
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