

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Minutes of the External Affairs Committee Meeting
Wednesday, December 4, 2024, 11:15am
Founders Conference Room (Lower Level)

There were present:

Ken Dye, Chair
Gil Bland
Cindy Conner
Janet Geldzahler, *virtual (medical-caregiver)*
Ann Goettman
Bill Keyes
Sara O'Keefe
Pam Royal
Christina Shin
Michel Zajur
Lynette Allston, Ex-officio

Absent:

Brian Ball
Rooz Dadabhoy
Marcia Gilliam

By Invitation:

Alex Nyerges, Director and CEO
Dayal Baxani
Nan Boyd
Sarah Burgess
David Cary
Nicole Chakeris
Jasmonn Coleman
Stephanie Cooperstein
Kristine Craig
Betty Crutcher
Erin Elder
Tom Gutenberger
Andrew Harris
Jan Hatchette
Ukay Jackson, Foundation Liason
Marianne Littel
Deb Love, Office of the Attorney General
Sally Marvin
Whitney Murphy
Lizzie Oliver
Marie Royce
Anne Smith
Michael Taylor

I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Ken Dye called the meeting to order at 11:16am.

II. MINUTES APPROVAL

Motion: Proposed by Bill Keyes and seconded by Ann Goettman to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2024 External Affairs Committee meeting as distributed. Motion carried.

III. ADVANCEMENT AND MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Tom Gutenberger, Chief Development Officer and Deputy Director for Advancement, presented the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) fundraising and membership figures as of October 31, 2024, noting a good trajectory. Campaign fundraising is ahead of schedule, with positive conversations ongoing with potential donors regarding gifts. Gutenberger then reviewed the increase in membership compared to the previous year, crediting Kristine Craig, Director of Membership, for spearheading efforts to reach and convert new audiences. Keyes requested detail about the large total gifts figure of \$18,588,504, which is up \$10.8 million from FY24. Gutenberger noted this was primarily the result of a large \$13 million gift and a \$1.5 million commitment.

Gutenberger reviewed campaign fundraising progress, sharing that capital projects have been a priority in order to maximize the state match, and that there has also been a very positive outcome for endowment. He shared the timeline for the public launch of the campaign, anticipated in Fall 2025.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS

Jan Hatchette, Deputy Director for Communications and Marketing and Chief Communications Officer, presented a communications update, reviewing attendance and run dates, and digital marketing campaign images for both *American, born Hungary* and *A Long Arc*. She noted that a 51% open rate for member emails compared to the 20% industry standard, and a 34% open rate for non-member email subscribers. Hatchette then reviewed several strategic marketing areas, including owned media on social media, the upcoming fall issue of the VMFA Magazine, and digital paid media.

For the upcoming exhibition, *Frida Kahlo: Beyond the Myth*, Hatchette reviewed run dates and an attendance projection of 165,000 visitors. Hatchette noted the opportunity to engage audiences, and the features of the exhibition that should deepen knowledge about less-known biographical details about Frida Kahlo to demonstrate the depth and interest of the exhibition and billing it as a “rare encounter” as the only east coast venue, drawing visitors from the Washington, DC area. Hatchette showed the visual identity plan created by VMFA’s in-house graphic design team and reviewed the ticket sales plan timeline. Advance priority booking will be offered to VMFA members. She then reviewed the communication timeline with consideration to the exhibition’s longer run and reviewed potential sponsorship and partnership opportunities. Hatchette concluded her report by noting

VMFA's rating at #11 in a recent *Washington Post* article ranking American art museums.

V. OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURNMENT

Nan Boyd, Council of VMFA President, recognized the success of the 2024 Fine Arts and Flowers event, noting that there were 25,000 visitors and that all ticketed programming sold out.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was proposed, seconded, and approved by the committee at 12:04pm.

Recorded by: Nicole Chakeris,
Executive Administrator to the COO/CHRO and Assistant Deputy Director for
Enterprise Operations