

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Draft Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the
Strategic Planning Committee
Tuesday, August 20, 2020, 1:00pm

There were present:

Andy Lewis, Chair
Lynette Allston
Ken Dye
Sara O'Keefe
Denise Keane
Monroe Harris, Jr., Ex-officio
Jim Klaus, Ex-officio
Lilo Ukrop, Ex-officio

Absent:

By Invitation:

Alex Nyerges
Kay Baker
Candy Banks
Stephen Bonadies
Caprice Bragg
Stephanie Cooperstein
Rachel Crocker Ford, TDC
Jan Hatchette
Sam Linden, TDC
Deb Love, OAG
Susan Nelson, TDC
Katie Payne
Hossein Sadid
Michael Taylor
Kimberly Wilson

I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Andy Lewis welcomed the committee and guests and called the meeting to order at 1:03pm.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Lewis acknowledged that there were no public comments, and welcomed all guests.

III. STRATEGIC PLANNING DISCUSSION

Mr. Lewis turned the floor over to Mr. Alex Nyerges. Mr. Nyerges opened by commenting on the unique nature of this summer and the prudent decision to not extend the current 5-year plan (rather than adopt a new 5-year strategic plan in May and

June). He observed that the museum's attendance since reopening in July is important information for developing the next strategic plan. He commended the committee and Caprice Bragg on furthering the next plan.

At this point he introduced Chief Strategy Officer, Caprice Bragg to make introductions. Ms. Bragg introduced Susan Nelson, Executive Vice President of TDC, Rachel Crocker Ford, Vice President of TDC, and Sam Linden, Project Manager. She said that TDC has been in the consulting arena for over fifty years and have worked with many museums.

a. Planning Process and Roles

Ms. Crocker Ford initiated the presentation by reviewing the process for planning that that is being utilized for the 2025 Strategic Plan. The process began with the formulation of a hypothesis. The hypothesis for the plan was developed during discussions with the museum's senior leadership. Feedback based on comments from board leadership, staff leadership, and staff was then used to identify questions for resolution during planning deliberations. The deliberations will lead to a plan that will be synthesized with the organization's operations. The current stage in the process is one of analysis.

Ms. Crocker Ford outlined the planning roles and responsibilities. She stated that the main facilitators for the project are the TDC team and Caprice Bragg. The participants include all museum stakeholders for perspectives and input, however the senior leadership team and the Strategic Planning Committee are also there to provide feedback, propose strategy, and review financial implications.

Ms. Crocker Ford then transitioned into talking about TDC's methodology. She said that the planning hypothesis is predicated on sustaining the current path, identifying goals, and identifying core areas of each goal.

b. De-brief Stakeholder Responses

From there, Ms. Crocker Ford said the group took a three stakeholder group approach to gathering data for analysis. TDC conducted one on one interviews with some board members, the senior leadership team, and staff identified as subject matter experts. Ms. Bragg conducted focus group sessions with each division in the museum. During these sessions prompts were used to get to the root of how individuals viewed the organization such as asking what they like, what are their concerns, or has COVID changed their perspective on planning.

Ms. Crocker Ford noted that there was a consensus among board and staff leadership that strategic planning is a priority and as an important tool. Board leadership wanted ample time for their input, and staff leadership wanted to engage mid-level staff and the communities that VMFA serves. She summarized board feedback including the importance of understanding what was accomplished previously, the importance of longer planning perspectives (5-10 years), and the importance of direct language in using the hypothesis. Some staff and board members wanted more clarification on the phrase "curator led, visitor centric." Technology was also a notable theme in these conversations especially around the response to COVID and considered it a top priority.

There was support for diversity, equity, and inclusion as reflected in the hypothesis, and also a desire for more detail. Ms. Crocker Ford then began to discuss recurring topics that arose in relation to each of the main goals in the hypothesis. There was a general consensus on the museum's ability to achieve these goals, but there is also an interest in metrics and resolution of some operational items.

A discussion then ensued regarding the importance of positioning VMFA as a comprehensive art museum, and also collection priorities. Mr. Nyerges indicated that the museum's position as a comprehensive art museum is reflected in the museum's mission statement and across the events, enterprises, special exhibits, and permanent collection.

Ms. Bragg then discussed a summary of focus group discussions with staff. She noted the consistency with the responses from the board and staff leadership. She noted that many appreciated the continuity with the 2015-2020 plan. Other recommendations from staff related to diversity, equity and inclusion, communications, collection priorities, and the importance of employees/human resources.

c. Implications for Planning

Ms. Crocker Ford described how the team will address the open questions that emerged from the board and staff interviews, and focus groups. She then invited comments from the Strategic Planning Committee. Ms. Lilo Ukrop raised a concern if the plan's goals are audacious and big enough. Ms. Lynette Allston commented that as VMFA evolves, this new strategic plan may also evolve leading to a big goal, and that the organization needs to be flexible. Mr. Klaus responded saying that this process feels like a continuation of the last strategic plan and nothing feels new. He suggested focusing on a vision of the museum's place in the community. Mr. Monroe Harris also spoke about the "town square" concept for the strategic plan. Mr. Ken Dye suggested interviewing other external stakeholders. Mr. Lewis concluded this portion of the discussion by stating the last strategic plan did not feel exciting at the time but individuals built enthusiasm around it. He suggested taking the goals and linking them with a singular metaphor that can create excitement.

d. Next Steps

Ms. Crocker Ford then outlined what the next steps were for the committee. She said that next is to take this feedback and update the hypothesis, which will be presented at the September board meetings.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:39pm.

Recorded by: Stephanie Cooperstein
Administrative and Project Coordinator, Office of the Director