

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Transcription of the External Affairs Committee Meeting
Thursday, September 17, 2020, 9:00am
Video Conference

Meeting called to order at 9:00am.

Ken Johnson: I want to welcome everybody to the meeting this morning and glad to see you are looking healthy and safe and hope your families are well. And then I know this has been tough times. I hope you're doing okay emotionally and physically and persevering. Alright. I know it's been challenging for some, but we're going to get through this. I'd like to get started. Do we have anyone here to speak?

Caprice Bragg: We do not.

Ken Johnson: Well, if that's the case then I'd like to move forward, Caprice. If I can and ask for approval of minutes, is there motion for approval of minutes?

Pam Royal: So moved.

Michelle Peterson: Second.

Ken Johnson: Okay. So moved and properly seconded the minutes. Can I have a vote?

Committee: Aye.

Ken Johnson: Alright. So the minutes have been approved from the previous meeting I'd like to get started now and move to Tom Gutenberger, but before we do that, I would also like to request if you don't mind placing your phones on mute or your computers on mute. So we don't get the background noise during our presentation. We have a lot to cover and a great group of people in the meeting this morning. So I think this is terrific. Tom, do you wanna get started with the Advancement and Membership report?

Tom Gutenberger: Sure. Thanks. Thanks a lot, Ken. And I'll try to be pretty quick. What I was going to do is give an update on the campaign and then overall fundraising, how we made up the year. And then just a couple of comments on some of the programs that we've tried to do to engage our donors and members virtually. So, if you want to go to the first slide? So overall with the campaign we ended the year, the end of June at \$42 million. If you remember, the campaign is seven years, and we are gonna have three years of a silent or leadership phase and then four years of public. Last year was the first year of the silent or leadership phase of the campaign. If you remember, we started out the campaign from change capital and the strategic planning priority fundraising that happened for the previous couple years with \$21 million, so we were able to double that to \$42 million at the end of last year. So a hundred percent increase.

And then I've got really good news that, as of yesterday, were we topped \$50 million. So we're making really good progress on the campaign. And as you can see, we've got a really great committee. I'm starting with our honorary co-chairs and then, of course, with Jill and Monroe and

Elizabeth and John as our Co chairs, and then you can see the committee members who've signed on and have done a lot of great work for us, and that's one of the reasons we had a really good year last year was that our committee really worked very hard and stayed in touch with folks. And I'll talk a little bit about that as I talk about the end of the year, but I want to thank all the folks you see up on the screen for their leadership and for what they've done for the campaign. If you wanna go to the next slide? And we received for the campaign last year, twenty nine commitments of \$100,000 or more. And again, I want to thank the folks that you see up on the screen for making those early commitments to the campaign. And that's one of the reasons we had success last year, both annual fundraising as well as towards the campaign goals because people really stepped up early. And in fact, we actually had gifts while we were closed that were seven figure gifts. And so we had great help and support from folks and so I do want to say, thank you to all the people up on the screen right there.

If you want to move to the next slide, and then we received six commitments to name spaces for the expansion and renovation projects and remember if, I know Katie is going to talk in a few minutes, but remember that the plan is for the state to have a two to one match. For every dollar we raise the bill will give us two. And so the folks that you see up there on the screen, all of their gifts have then resulted in a two for one match if the state follows through. And so, I just want to say, thanks to Birch for naming the private dining room, the Frables for the Works on Paper Gallery and Monroe and Jill for naming a gallery within the modern contemporary for African African American Art and Jill, Hiter, and Tyler for naming the 21st Century Gallery Bridge, of course, the Klaus family, which was one of the first gifts in for the campaign for the Main Entry and then the first gift actually for the expansion from Diana and John and O'Connor. So, that was...that's great support. Thank you. And then remember part of the, you know, campaign is a building project as well as an endowment for education, exhibitions and conservation. And so I want to say, thanks to Anne and Gus for their gift to education and Birch also split his gift up a little bit. In addition to naming the private dining room, he's gonna name an exhibition endowment for us. Which, so I just want to say, thank you to all the folks up there for their support.

Do you want to go to the next slide? And then overall fundraising for the year, if you remember back in the spring, what we thought is, we would probably have a 15% decline in FY20, because when we spoke to our consultant, as well as a number of other museums around the country, most museums were predicting a 10-20% decline in fundraising. And in fact, most of those saw that during the fiscal year, and so the Smithsonian was looking at least a 10% decline last year and probably 20% decline this fiscal year. So we split it and said, well, we thought last year we would after COVID hit that we would probably be down 15%. But as you can see, we actually had some really good success. And so overall, fundraising was up by 40%, almost \$15 million. Exhibition fundraising was \$2.3 million or 69% over the previous year. Unrestricted which was incredibly important to feeding the budget up nine percent.

Membership...Actually being closed we were up two percent in terms of members last year. And the good news is that we saw increases really in our leadership society membership. And so people really stuck with us and continued to make gifts. And then if you recall from last year, we created a new giving society, because Commonwealth Society was our top society at \$20,000. We created the Director's Society with a \$50,000 level, and we ended up with twenty five people who joined at that

level, which is fantastic. And I know that Alex had said that a couple of years ago they were going to create this level. And Jim McGlothlin said, if he could get nine people, Jim would be the tenth. And so the nice thing was Alex was able to call Jim and say, "We've got twenty four. Now, you can be the twenty fifth." And so that was really good news for us so just really a lot of thanks to our volunteers for really helping out and making sure that we were successful last year. And our gift officers did just incredible work in staying in touch with people while we were closed. And then we had two unique fundraising opportunities, which many of you participated in: getting the Wiley *Rumors of War* installation and then the COVID-19 Relief Fund. I'll talk about that in just a second. Do you want to go forward? *Rumors of War* and just incredible support raised over \$800,000 and again, thanks to many of the board members for your support for *Rumors of War*. And it was just a great fundraising campaign for us. And as, you know, just an incredible project. Next slide. And then the COVID Relief Fund. I really have to say, thank you to Tom and Carolyn Garner for putting forward a challenge when we closed. And so we built our entire annual fund effort around the COVID Relief Fund, and we typically raise about \$225,000 for our annual fund effort. And as you can see, we raised over \$800,000 due to focusing on the COVID Relief Funding. That was really for us to open and with strength and to help to cover many of the deficits that we had from being closed and the revenue shortfalls. And so again, thank you to Tom and Carolyn for their support, and really getting that jump started and our gift officers, as I mentioned earlier, just spent an incredible amount of time on the phone and emailing, staying in touch with people while we were closed. And as you can see, we had almost 1,500 contacts made by the development staff with donors and members while we were closed from March 16 and so, you know, the reason that we were successful and continue to have people participate was because they continue to reach out as well, as we had a lot of volunteers that were staying in touch with folks. So, again, thanks. And it was just a, that was a great effort, and really helped the budget this year.

And next slide. And so, one of the things that we really needed to do, and it was really a learning experience for us, was how to develop and how to stay in touch with our donors and members virtually while we're closed. And so we've developed some really great content with Michael and his team, and Cocktails with Curators has been incredibly successful for us. So, what we're doing is continuing to deliver member benefits, obviously they're virtual, but we had opened to all members. Peter spoke, and we had over one thousand people logged on to see Peter and then typically, for our upper level member programs, we get about two hundred people. So, we continue to develop with our partners around the museum virtual content. And then one of the things that we've done that some of you actually have already participated in, we went ahead and we've got a tent that we've put up in the garden. That'll be up through the end of November, so that we can have some programming in person. So people can be outdoors, socially distance, everything appropriate, but people told us they'd be more comfortable if we were to do some programming and events outside, rather than in the museum. And so just look to some of that programming that will take place under the tent. That's right...it's adjacent to Pauley. So, I think we'll continue to reach out. Our gift officers will really rely on our volunteers to reach out to folks, and also developing our virtual content and making sure that we stick to what we're supposed to do, which is delivering content to our members and, so, we're gonna fulfill our promises for the membership benefits again through virtual programming, but now, with the tent we will be able to do some programming in person. And we've actually had about six or seven events underneath the tent already everything from about seven people to about forty. So, please just keep that in mind as you think about bringing people in

museum that we have that opportunity. And then finally, one thing we've done is taken the furniture out of Alex's conference room in his office, and turn that into a very small dining room where we can have about six people, socially distance, and have a lunch. And we've already we had the first one a couple of days ago up in his office, so we're just trying to do some things differently and adapt and it seems like it's working. And so far fundraising is going well for this year. So I promised I keep it to ten minutes. I'm happy to answer any questions if anybody has any, but Ken I'll turn it back to you if there aren't any questions.

Ken Johnson: Thank you. Tom. Well, done you all haven't missed a beat. Great job. Do we have any questions for Tom?

Tom Gutenberger: And I will get my hair cut tomorrow. I promise.

Ken Johnson: That's okay.

Tom Gutenberger: Six months.

Ken Johnson: If you have questions, you might be muted and may not know it, but any questions at all for Tom. Oh, wow. That's impressive, Tom. Great job. There you have it. Moving forward Government Relations. We have Katie Payne, and Katie I know that the General Assembly is in session, and you've been busy on virtual meetings or are in virtual meetings as well as participating, I'm sure at the Segal Center in the different activities with the General Assembly. You have the floor, Katie.

Katie Payne: Thank you. Yes, this is the never ending special session. We started at the midpoint of August, and we're still going with no apparent end in sight. For those of you not familiar special sessions are usually called very rarely for very succinct purposes. Usually one or two bills are heard and discussed. Very rarely, is the budget on the table and usually they last just a day or two. So this is very unusual. This special session is focusing on the budget because we have had a revenue reforecast since the budget was finalized and signed back in the spring. So the governor put forward a new budget proposal based on the revised forecast. And for us, what his proposal did was it maintained the capital projects that we had gotten approved in the spring. So, we have already received the money for the sculpture garden capital project and then the expansion, of course, is on track. Nothing has changed with that so far. So, that's all very positive news. You might remember from the spring that we did receive an additional four hundred thousand dollars in our operating budget. That was to cover IT upgrades and leasing art storage space. That was un-allotted and paused back in spring when Coronavirus hit, and it has been removed in the proposed budget going forward as was all new operational spending for every entity. So that, of course is disappointing. But we had come to expect that from discussions with the secretary. But we're very fortunate that our capital projects are still in the budget and are proceeding on time because several projects that were just approved in this past session, we're nixed all together. So we're very lucky that our project was approved in the last cycle and is on track and still in the queue. Now of course the House and Senate can both make amendments to the proposed budget. The House is pretty far through that process. Now they supposedly have their budget almost ready to go, but it has not been publicly released yet. But from what I've seen and heard downtown, there won't be any changes to what the governor proposed with the exception of one possible good change, which is, we may get some additional CARES funding. We were given the opportunity to ask for more funding last week and Hossein and

the team helped me come up very quickly with a new list of appropriate reimbursement requests under the CARES Act. So we're very hopeful that some of that operational money that was paused will be offset by some additional CARES funding. The Senate on the other hand has not done anything with the budget so far, at least not publicly. They have not taken any budget amendments. The members have not proposed any amendments, and the committee has not discussed the budget at all. So, it's gonna be very interesting in the next few weeks to see how they play out this process. Because at this point, they've dealt with most of the bills. And I'm sure you guys have been reading in the paper lots of topics, but mostly Coronavirus related, about the Governor's executive orders during an emergency about police reforms. Most of those issues are kind of near the end of their cycle. But the budget is a big outstanding issue. So, I would estimate, we probably have another two or three weeks, at least to be in session and we were, of course, hoping to give you at this meeting a final definitive answer on the budget for this past year. But it looks like we'll have to wait a little longer, and the only other thing I'll add is we are going ahead, and even though the state has not reached this point yet, of thinking about the budget cycle which will start at the January regular session. This is the time of the year where we normally prepare this request and optimistically, we're gonna go ahead and prepare some requests for their consideration. But with the knowledge that revenues are down, we may not be given a chance to make new requests. But we would like to be prepared and ready to go if we're given that opportunity. So that's the update. And I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Ken Johnson: So, do we have any questions for Katie.

Carol Ann Bischoff: I do. Great job, Katie as always, and this might be a longer term kind of thing to just to think about. I'm on the education committee and anybody else who's on this meeting. I was blown away yesterday by what they've done in such a short period of time. And I also was thrilled to see what they've got going. And we're gonna talk about I assume, at the new meeting in the strategic plan for the next five years. And we are a gem, the Education Department, and its emphasis on Pre-K is an absolute gem. The content that has 6,000 years of history. So, and there's a lot of talk and I know there's a lot of collaboration. But I would hope that some of what they're doing, you know, and I assume when time permits is being shown to the Secretary, because Pre-K, in addition to Pre-K in particular is really near and dear to the First Lady's heart. And I was on a call two days ago and the Governor was talking about, he's still committed to try and get fifty million dollars in public-private partnership for broadband. He's working with the Co-ops because the schools in rural Virginia are really affected by all of this. And so, you know, if we're there with, you know, some solution. That helps us, I think, be first in line and trying to get that IT money back in the budget. I know that IT money isn't necessarily the distance learning money. But I do know that IT money is what would help everyone at VMFA perform their jobs better. So I just wanted to throw that out there.

Katie Payne: Yes, thank you. That is a very good point. And we do always make sure to emphasize that with any requests we bring forward because it is so important one, but two, it really resonates with the legislators. They love to hear about that. So we do bring it up frequently. We do monthly reports to the Secretary of Education where we outlined these different initiatives that you're talking about from the meeting. And in addition this year, we always create a one pager for the legislature for the regular session that shows our progress over the past year. And especially with all these new

online initiatives, we've kind of reformatted that to show the growth in that area and how much it's being utilized across the Commonwealth. But thank you. We will continue to do that. It's a very good point.

Carol Ann Bischoff: Thanks, Katie. Thanks very much.

Ken Johnson: Thanks, Carol Ann. Any other questions for Katie?

Alex Nyerges: Mr. Chair, I would just like to weigh-in on two things. One, when you look across the landscapes of art museums in America today, Tom's report is out against what most of our colleagues are experiencing, but I think that is a testimony to Tom and all the people that work in Development. They have done an extraordinary job. Our membership office they have kept things moving and alive and have been busy. And at the same time, we've kept the Campaign going despite the fact that we have a pandemic and we were closed for three and a half months. So Kudos to Tom and the leadership and Caprice and everybody else who has been working really hard and all of the people on the Board who have been involved and have given. So that's huge. And then the other piece, and Carol Ann your points are well taken we sell and we don't have to do much selling as Katie mentions education and the distance learning and the Artmobile to our members of the General Assembly. But I've got to tell you in my time here, I've never seen as much support across the General Assembly and the administration on every level as I have in this period. And particularly with the challenge of the budget, Katie, since we met last, Katie arranged to have the Secretary meet with us. Secretary Lane, the Secretary of Finance, and walk us through what might be happening. The fact that there is a high likelihood that we will only lose new money, the \$400,000, but not possibly have a budget cut, and I'm knocking on wood because that's not the prediction I gave three months ago. It's not the prediction I would have given before, but the fortunes of the Commonwealth are improving. The tax collections have been up. There are possibilities of more money from Washington. And then, at the same time Hossein's been working on a couple of appropriations that come from the federal level related to the Coronavirus. That would make us even more stable than we already are. But Katie's worked really hard. The fact that in this time, the two good pieces of news one, the capital campaign money, the \$125 million for the expansion is all but locked up. But then there's also \$2.5 million that Hossein worked on, that Katie made sure they kept there to do renovations in the garden. And then there were a couple of other projects on the capital side as well. So, we're actually in fairly good...we're in excellent condition when it comes to the Commonwealth stuff. Katie, thank you and Hossein and everybody else that's been working on the folks downtown.

Ken Johnson: Thank you Alex. Actually, I was going to say the same. Katie, great report. Nice job and thank you for your hard work. During this time, I know this would normally be vacation time with time for you to spend with your children. So, I appreciate your putting in the extra time and hours. And for the rest of us, if you see Secretary Lane, please, or the Governor or his wife, please acknowledge and express our deep appreciation to them for the support of Secretary Lane a couple of times over. He is a huge fan of the museum and a huge fan of Katie of course. So I thank you again, Katie for your hard work. Jan, a busy lady.

Jan Hatchett: Good morning. It's so good to see everyone even if it is virtually. So, we'll go ahead and get started with the Communications update if you can advance the next slide. So, I want to talk

about PR highlights. We have the announcement of course, from the Governor around the artist grants that we gave out. Forty artist grants on August 25, I believe it was, we had an event, a press event at the VMFA, and it was very well attended by our artists. And we received so much good media coverage locally as well as in each of the different areas that the artists represented. As I mentioned, this was such excellent news to be out there, being able to say that the VMFA was giving away \$200,000 to artists in need, and it was a diverse population of artists. Thanks to Michael and Jeffrey, Natasha and Valerie for selecting these great artists. And for the Governor for helping us promote this event. I would say we probably exceeded around 25 million as far as reach was concerned just around that announcement alone. Another great announcement was with Chase and their partnership, and I'll talk a little more about that shortly, but we see a lot of good coverage around our relationship and sponsorship. The money underwritten by Chase for some programming. We've also had some good national coverage. Of course, when the museum reopened we received news locally, but then the Washington Post also covered us as well. Around the reopening of the museum and *Rumors of War*. It continues to still be extremely popular. We're still talking about it. Of course, most significantly around conversations around the monuments. So we have a feature. In the New York Times there was also a feature and the Washington Post and so lots of good national coverage. We had an article in Smithsonian Magazine just around how arts are doing in this time, and also the Wall Street Journal so really good coverage across the board locally and nationally on some of the great things that the VMFA is doing next slide please.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about what you see over on the far left of the screen is the logo for our new combined programming that was underwritten by Chase. It's called the VMFA after Five, Friday's after five, and with this partnership Chase is helping us get the word out about our Friday night events. So we have, we're working with Education and Robert Phanord on Friday night events as well as our audience development and community engagement team. So our Summer Breeze events that we have on Friday nights, all of this has been happening virtually, and we're receiving good attendance numbers and we'll continue to promote those things. Also with the Chase partnership we are...they have helped us by funding different projects, like African American Read-In that will take place in February along with RVA Community Makers. There's a project with Girls for Change with youth workshops and internships. There's also a program with the Boys and Girls Club, and we also gave away three thousand VMFA at Home art activities. This was a project that education and audience development worked on together and gave kits out to school age children in Richmond City Public Schools as well as Boys and Girls Club and Peter Paul development.

Next slide please. To Bringing the Art to You. We've had to come up with different ways to get the word out about all the great things that we're doing virtually. So we created a weekly newsletter to keep folks informed. We've been doing this since I think it was maybe two weeks after COVID hit. We started this newsletter, and it's been so successful. Our open rates are thirty eight ranging around thirty eight to forty percent. That is unheard of. Traditionally somewhere if you're doing good, you're somewhere in the twenty percent rate. So our open rates on this publication have been fantastic. People are truly engaged. They're spending time on the articles. When we look at sort of our highest performance, because what we want to do is serve up information, but serve it up in a way that is compelling to our audiences and that we're seeing people actually engage and spend time with. So, every week, every time we send this out, we do a report after the fact and see, okay what's performing well? What's not performing so well? And just try to continue to serve up that

information that people are enjoying and of course our highest performance links are around *Sunken Cities*. We're serving up a lot of video content with that, and people are engaging with that. They're also extremely engaged with our virtual events and classes and then even with our VMFA 2 Go. We found that people are really taking an interest in that and spending time checking out that feature as well. Next slide. Please. Okay, so I wanted to talk a little bit about *Working Together: The Kamoinge Workshop* exhibition. We are at... I do have a number that's a little more up to date than that. 26,525, I believe, was the number as of September, early September. So, September 6 so we're doing pretty well with attendance as far as that goes. I think we have maybe about six weeks left for this exhibition. Next slide. This is just talking about sort of our reach around 280 million people as far as reach with public relations. So, we've received a lot of good media coverage, and some of the publications that you see here. A lot of local coverage, but national coverage aren't specific publication coverage. It's just been really, really popular. And now that we have the symposium going on those attendance numbers, for people attending those events have been doing extremely well as well, next slide. This just shows you sort of what we've been doing from a social media perspective. Folks are really engaging when we put out content around some of the different art. You know, we find that when we have a significant...meaning when I say significant significant in size, when we post up something that is all about the art that's of course, where we have the most engagement. People just enjoy just looking at beautiful art. And so we have a lot of that. And so social media has been doing extremely well around this particular exhibition. People are really engaging with that content. They are commenting. They're posting about it. So that's always what we wanna see. Next slide. *Treasures of Ancient Egypt: Sunken Cities*. So the number that we're at about now is 26,081. I think that number is as of September 6 so a little more updated than what you see on the screen. We still have a long run to go, nineteen more weeks.

Next slide. And we've been promoting it, and we've had to do a lot of changes with sort of what we have planned to do with *Sunken Cities* and what we're doing now. So we are doing an extensive amount of just reaching out to media, actually doing a lot of pitching to the different publications locally, specifically in the Washington area because we're trying to get folks to come down for day trips and whatnot. And also in the Hampton roads area and in Charlottesville, pushing the information out to those editors, and trying to get them to write stories. We'll continue to do that through the run of the exhibition, next slide. And then we've been trying to do some reach with different ads. Trying to expand our reach so over to the left there, we did a run with KISS FM and the radio personality, his name is King Tutt, and he actually did an interview with Peter and Courtney and shared that information with their viewers on KISS FM. And so we're continuing to do more of that kind of expansion of our normal reach, next slide. And that is the sort of update that I have from Communications and Marketing. I will add just a couple of more things around the advertising front. So, we did have to do a sort of reset. We had so much planned, but had to just rethink some things. Due to COVID some of the normal things that we would do...I mean, we're still, we've still got our billboards out there. We're still staying in touch with the airport, and they're starting to see an increase in people moving through the airport. So we're still doing advertising there. We were going to sort of paint the town with *Sunken Cities* with banners. We sort of scaled that back. We had a whole sort of line up of banners, going downtown, but we decided that that just wasn't a good idea. After I, and several members of the team went to just move around town, and we saw that there wasn't a lot of traffic. So, we've had to make some adjustments to our spin, and we found that people are spending a lot of time online. So we're using those channels. We've got a

lot of digital ads going on. We've got TV spots going on, radio spots, but it's just a matter of, you know, sort of this is where we are. How do we sort of change it up and really make sure that we're spending our money wisely? And because people are spending so much on time we are doing lots of work with search engine optimization and seeing folks that are spending time searching for things that are in sort of the subject matter as the *Sunken Cities* exhibition. When they're looking for that kind of content, then we're serving up ads to those targeted groups of people. So, just being very thoughtful and targeted and making sure that we're spending our money wisely. During this pandemic, we also did look at and are continuing to look at what the flu season might do. So we are trying to spend more during peak times. Like, now when people we know for sure can get out. And then we may sort of ease up a little bit if things get leery again and people are not moving around or things are starting to close up. So that is the Communications update and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Ken Johnson: No questions for Jan? See the benefit of a virtual call, Jan?

Alex Nyerges: I'd like to weigh-in again. Jan and her people have done a really great job. Because, obviously, when you look at our overall attendance, if you think about what we should be seeing as you saw those numbers, we're only at about thirty five percent. To put that in context there's been a couple of national studies of art museums and performing arts as well, and basically the range is between fifteen percent and thirty seven percent of what is normal. So, the fact that we're at, about thirty five percent actually, pretty much on the high end. And she has been judicious about how to spend, or not spend the money. Okay. She just mentioned, which is, which is really important. We don't want to just pour the money out there when people are clearly still afraid about coming out. The fact that we're getting people to come to the museum and have had fifty, sixty thousand people since we've reopened is a good thing. It's not what we would normally expect. We are still waiting to hear from the Egyptian government. We've appealed to them twice. The head of the Supreme Council, the Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Egyptian Antiquities came to visit about three, four weeks ago, and we pitched again and it all hinges on whether or not the new museum...The Egyptian museum out in Giza is going to open, as he hopes it to as they planned for February. Now, if it doesn't open in February, they may then delay the return. Because currently the show ends in the middle of January. We would like to have it to the end of February, because we lost six weeks at the beginning of the show, which are obviously instrumental. And of course, the other piece of this is what happens during the holidays. Our biggest attendance days are between Thanksgiving and the New Year, and at this point, you know, they may be better than what we have but clearly, if things don't change, they won't be what they normally would be at that time of year. So, Jan's folks have been very responsive. The fact that our online programs are off the charts is a testimony to our education people, our statewide people. The Artmobile is out there running around all over the state and getting crowds for it. So, we're doing well, but my only caveat is that it's a third of what it would normally be, which is such a shame, cause if you haven't seen the *Sunken Cities* exhibition, it is spectacular.

Ken Johnson: Great, thank you. Thank you, Alex for those comments, and we do encourage all to come out and if you have an opportunity to see the *Sunken Cities* exhibit. I do have a couple of thoughts, Alex. I'd like to...I lost my train of thought earlier when you hopped in, after Katie spoke, but before I go there...Jan, great job and really appreciate the fact as Alex mentioned the pivot that

your group has made and to make us more visible online and to encourage folks to engage with us online. You all have done a fantastic job in that space and we really appreciate your leadership there. Katie one question I had for you, any idea when we think the General Assembly ends?

Katie Payne: Well, no, I think if I had to guess, it'll be two or three weeks, but they could go on kind of indefinitely. Right now they're just having pro-forma sessions to keep the session open, but they're not generally meeting every day. The Senate met all day yesterday. And then they won't come back until Thursday of next week. So, you know, it could wrap up quickly if internally they can come to an agreement on what to do with the budget. But from what I'm hearing right now, that just hasn't happened there's not much communication happening between the two bodies.

Ken Johnson: Got it excellent, thank you Katie. So, Alex and Jan, would either of you care to share before we close out the meeting your strategy, or what's been happening around the employees and the communication strategy to your place around working with the employees and addressing the issue with some of the folks that were posting things online and all that stuff.

Alex Nyerges: Well, in fact, I'm glad you brought it up because we're saving the best for last because obviously it's a constant source of attention. And I'm gonna let Jan talk about some of the things. We are back on social media, which obviously helps with regard to attendance. The VMFA reform group is still out there, but quite frankly, and I know Cindy's on the call here somewhere. We have ramped up our response through them. Cindy, who is, you know, is the Senior Assistant Attorney General has written to the folks at one of the sites to take it down.

Jan Hatchett: Instagram.

Alex Nyerges: Instagram. Thank you. And because they have put on a couple of different postings, and the postings have included violence essentially alluding to the fact that Kimberly Wilson and the HR people are prone to violence and we're talking violence with guns. Obviously not true and not even a pleasant thought when one puts it in relationship to our people, and the HR department works hard. And they also have posted graphics about stealing and damaging our, you know, taking Chihuly Reeds, taking your choice of an Easter Egg obviously referring to the eggs in our Faberge Galleries and for all of this we've actually taken it, bumped it up to our Secretary, and asked for their assistance to bring in special aid. In this case, from the state police, and we've been assigned two senior investigators who are working on the case now, and they believe it to be criminally liable, because they're inciting both violence and theft and damage and all of those things are obviously probably nothing more than a lot of hot air. But in response to that, we have upped our patrols. We have upped our coverage. We've beefed up the number of police officers who are on duty, particularly after hours, and taking every precaution. And then, of course, on the HR side, we moved ahead and I'm gonna have Jan, talk about the PR piece. We moved ahead on two fronts. One, bringing in Bill Cooper, who is a consultant to talk about diversity equity, inclusion, accessibility, and do training for staff. We've been doing training. We're ramping that up and upping our game. So that we cover everybody on every possible issue and make sure that we deal with issues swiftly. You know, we've been accused of a number of things, but I can tell you the HR department when they act, and I'm gonna tell you a story that has culminated in a termination. But one of our police officers went into the control booth, said something that was extremely off color and this was a white officer my age and said this to his supervisor, who is a long-time, extremely competent

supervisor who is an African American guy. Worked for us all the time I've been here. In fact, he transferred over from the firm that used to do security for us before I arrived, and he was confronted. There were witnesses and our HR department and security department in conclusion acted swiftly. Because what it was was a racist act. He tried to make light of it, and we have no tolerance. So, you know, our record in terms of the particulars demonstrates that we live by what we say, and we do well, but in addition to the DEI side of the equation we're also increasing what we're doing to basically tell our story. So, Jan pick up that thread if you would and talk about what we're doing.

Jan Hatchett: Okay. So, as Alex mentioned, the reform group sort of mentioned some things around things that just aren't true. And so what that says to me, as a communications person is that obviously they don't know VMFA and they're not telling accurate stories. So what we're going to do is...we're engaging with West Cary Group to help us come up with a strategy on how to get our messages out there more about all the great things that we're doing. So we will be embarking upon figuring out ways that we can engage the community, engage our different constituencies out there and make sure that everyone is hearing about the great work that we're doing putting information out there about these artist grants. I mean, that was such a highlight for us, and there is so much more that we're doing from an education, Carol Ann, you mentioned all the great things that we're doing from an education standpoint. Yes. Amazing work. And so it's just, we need to tell the story more, and how do we get that message out there? So we are working on a communications strategy to figure out how do we tap in to get the word out? We thought we were doing a really good job, but apparently, if people have all of these misperceptions, then there's definitely more that we can be doing just, you know, even break things around just our leadership team, and the fact that we have fifty percent people of color on our leadership team. That's unheard of in the museum field. So, what is it that we need to be doing to make sure that our story is out there for people to hear?

Ken Johnson: Great. Thank you all for that update. I know that y'all have been doing a lot of work on that space, and I'm not sure that everyone has been privy to that and I want to make sure that you had an opportunity to share that. And I really appreciate that. Two quick thoughts. One I misspoke earlier and I said the Governor's wife, and I should have said Pam Northam, and so I apologize for that again. And I'm very conscious of that. And I thought about it after I said it. Secondly, Suzy you had a good question in the chat room.

Suzy Palmer: I did and I, my question was many of...you know I live very close by and I walk around frequently in the evenings in the sculpture gardens, and I don't think I'm imagining it that it is significantly busier than a year ago. And so, and I realize it's a lovely place, and people are enjoying those gardens, but are we doing anything extra to try to engage those people into the building?

Jan Hatchett: It is a great question and something we need to think about. I think it's one of those things that there's definitely opportunity there, so if we have some folks from our maybe our advancement team, our folks from communications, maybe there's some sort of giveaways that we can be doing out in the sculpture gardens around tickets for *Sunken Cities* to try to move people from outside the museum. So Suzy, I think that's a great idea. Tom, and I can talk about it along with

some other folks on the leadership team, to think about other ideas that we might be able to engage folks with and move them from the outside to the inside.

Ken Johnson: Thank you, Suzy that's a good point. Jan, just to offer a thought on that as well, which you may want to continue doing is placing a very large, tasteful banner on the backside of the building. You know, we have them on the front side, but I think a really nice, tasteful banner, inviting folks to come in some way. Your creative team can come up with something really nice and tasteful. That may help. Say we are open or something on the backside. Anyway just a thought and again, Suzy, thank you for that question. That was great. Any other questions or thoughts before we close out the meeting? Man, you are so excited today and excited the meeting that's gonna take place this afternoon. Alex. Well, thank you.

Carol Ann Bischoff: Yes, please. Can I ask a quickie, Ken and Alex and Jan? Is there any thought to board members receiving DEI training to show the efforts of the museum?

Alex Nyerges: Great question. Actually, yes. In fact, we are going to be doing board DEI workshops for both the Foundation Board members, and that was at request as well Jim and Lilo asked that. And we will be doing the same for all the Trustees. It will very likely because of the timing of our meetings, and we will be doing it in small, either WebEx or zoom groups. Because our consultant Bill Cooper likes to keep it small and focused. So, but I'm glad you asked that question, because absolutely yes. And we're gonna be doing it for every single employee. And in some cases, we're gonna be doing some more in depth things as well.

Ken Johnson: Sounds great and also, Carol Ann one of the recommendations I had a couple of months back was that we also consider offering DEI tips in our newsletters to our patrons because oftentimes patrons come into the museum and not necessarily are culturally sensitive to other folks. And alter their behavior, and I think often little tips here and there in our newsletter would probably be helpful as well.

Alex Nyerges: Yeah. And Ken we do get regular complaints from our gallery associates. For example, people doing the most unbelievable things. And I say that unkindly, because it just and unthinkingly, I will say, for the most part, I mean, we have very few people that do what I would consider deliberate acts, and I will also tell everybody the good news is that with our regulations and protocols around the Coronavirus, we've not had any problems with people being required to wear masks, physical distancing, and any of the regulations around food service areas. So we're quite fortunate.

Ken Johnson: Great, great.

Jan Hatchett: Also, I wanted to thank Carol Ann. She put a note in the chat about the *Sunken Cities* flex form ad that we did recently in the Washington Post Sunday Magazine that was an issue that was devoted to museums. So if you haven't seen it, it's awesome. Check it out. It features Hapy.

Ken Johnson: Great. Well, again, thank you all for your presentations today. Well, done and very thorough and all sorts of thanks all of you for participating on the call this morning and then I'd like to know. If there's no other business, I'll take it from you, Ken Dye, if you want.

Ken Dye: So moved.

Ken Johnson: A second?

Charlie Whitaker: Second.

Ken Johnson: All in favor?

Committee: Aye

Ken Johnson: Have a great weekend. I look forward to seeing you later take care.

Meeting adjourned at 9:55am.

Transcribed by: Stephanie Cooperstein
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