

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Minutes of the External Affairs Committee Meeting
Wednesday, January 13, 2021, 9:45am
Video Conference

There were present:

Ken Johnson, Chair
Carol Ann Bischoff
Cindy Conner
Ken Dye
Janet Geldzahler
Martha Glasser
Meg Gottwald
Sara O'Keefe
Pamela Reynolds
Pamela Royal
Charlie Whitaker
Monroe Harris, Trustee President, Ex-officio
Jim Klaus, Foundation Co-President, Ex-officio
Lilo Ukrop, Foundation Co-President, Ex-officio

Absent:

Gil Bland
Marland Buckner
Ankit Desai
Michele Petersen

By Invitation:

Alex Nyerges, Director and Chief Executive Officer
Kay Baker
Candy Banks
Stephen Bonadies
Caprice Bragg
Cammy Carleton, Council President
Stephanie Cooperstein
Kristine Craig
Maya Erhardt
Tom Gutenberger
Jan Hatchette
Ukay Jackson, Foundation Liaison
Karen McGill
Cindy Norwood, Office of the Attorney General
Katie Payne
Hossein Sadid
Jayne Shaw
Suzy Szasz Palmer
Michael Taylor
Kimberly Wilson

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ken Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:45am.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Johnson reported that there were no requests for public comment.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: proposed by Ms. Pamela Royal and seconded by Ms. Pamela Reynolds to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2020 External Affairs Committee meeting as distributed. Motion carried.

IV. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

Ms. Katie Payne, Director of Government Relations, reported that today marks the beginning of the new legislative session, with the House meeting virtually and the Senate in-person. She noted that for the first time Virginia will accept written public comments on bills during the session. She gave an update on the proposed budget Governor Northam introduced in December, noting it includes a \$10 million Reimagining Monument Avenue Initiative that the museum has been appointed to lead, \$125,000 to hire additional VMFA Facility Services Associates and Security Officers, and a \$5.8 million capital improvement project. Ms. Payne reported that the additional \$400,000 approved last session for upgrades and leasing art storage will not be allocated as the proposed budget has been modified to fund one-time only items, but added the funds may be approved in the future. She also reported that the proposed budget makes no changes to the expansion plan funding.

Ms. Carol Ann Bischoff attended a virtual town hall meeting with her legislator and used the opportunity to advocate for VMFA and to thank the legislators and Governor Northam for their support of the museum. Ms. Payne thanked Ms. Bischoff for her advocacy and encouraged others to follow suit with their legislators.

V. ADVANCEMENT AND MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Mr. Tom Gutenberger, Chief Development Officer and Deputy Director for Advancement, shared that Director of Development Jayne Shaw will retire at the end of the month. Mr. Gutenberger, Dr. Monroe Harris, and Committee members thanked Jayne for her years of service to the museum.

Mr. Gutenberger reported that the Capital Campaign is currently at \$181 million of its \$365 million goal. Of these funds, \$125 million is from public support and \$56 million from the private sector. Operating support is at \$25 million, unrestricted gifts and planned giving are at \$15 million each. Mr. Gutenberger reported that memberships are down 1.5% at about 35,000, leadership memberships are up 3%, and overall, membership is at \$6.6 million or 90% of its goal. He added that leadership and unrestricted is at \$2.8 million or 110% of its goal and endowment is at \$25 million. Mr. Gutenberger then led a discussion on exhibition

sponsorship strategies, which include a promotional video for the museum's upcoming exhibition, *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse*, curated by Valerie Cassel Oliver, VMFA's Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. Mr Gutenberg reported the video will be shared with potential sponsors as part of the fundraising campaign and encouraged those interested to contact him.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Ms. Jan Hatchette, Deputy Director for Communications, shared that VMFA was recently a site location for the filming of *Dopesick*, a Hulu series based on the non-fiction story about the opioid crisis. She reported that as of last Sunday, there were 62,673 visitors to *Sunken Cities*, which has one week remaining before closing. Ms. Hatchette discussed the media coverage of the exhibition, which includes a video showcasing the museum's safety protocols that reached over 460,800 viewers. Ms. Hatchette reviewed communications strategies to promote the museum's upcoming exhibitions, *Virginia Arcadia: The Natural Bridge in American Art*, curated by Dr. Christopher Oliver, Assistant Curator of American Art, and *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse*. She highlighted recent publications that featured the museum, its exhibitions, and the Reimagining Monument Avenue initiative, including *Art Daily*, *Art Fix*, and *The Washington Post*. Ms. Hatchette reported that the one-year anniversary of the installation of the *Rumors of War* sculpture was celebrated with an outdoor video commemorating the event projected on the side of the museum from December 10 - 12, 2020. She noted that the Communications team partnered with the Education Department to promote the distribution of 3,000 Chase VMFA at Home Kits to area students and that the museum's email communication, *Bringing the Art to You*, has nearly 150,000 subscribers. She reported that VMFA magazine's first digital version was recently released and well-received. Ms. Martha Glasser suggested coordinating *VMFA on the Road* with Virginia Beach's *Something in the Water* festival and other area events to introduce new audiences to VMFA and conduct membership drives. Ms. Pamela Reynolds recommended partnering with historical and preservation organizations to promote *Virginia Arcadia: The Natural Bridge in American Art* and VMFA.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Charles Whitaker inquired on the timeline and community engagement plan for the Reimagining Monument Avenue Initiative. Mr. Alex Nyerges, VMFA Director and Chief Executive Officer, shared that based on the Governor's proposal that VMFA lead the initiative, it will officially begin July 1 pending legislative approval. In the interim, the museum is creating a planning timetable and is participating in exploratory talks with a wide and inclusive range of individuals and organizations.

Mr. Johnson thanked Ms. Shaw for the many ways she has contributed to VMFA. Mr. Nyerges, Mr. Jim Klaus, VMFA Foundation Co-President, and Committee members concurred. Mr. Johnson also thanked Mr. Nyerges and the museum staff for keeping VMFA safe and open during the Pandemic.

There being no other business, Mr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 10:45am.

Recorded by: Kay Baker
Administrative Assistant and Receptionist, Office of the Director and Chief
Executive Officer