

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Minutes of the External Affairs Committee Meeting
Friday, March 26, 2021, 9:45am
Electronic Meeting

There were present:

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

Absent:

Gil Bland
Marland Buckner
Ankit Desai

By Invitation:

Alex Nyerges, Director and Chief Executive Officer
Kay Baker
Candy Banks
Stephen Bonadies
Caprice Bragg
Cammy Carleton, Council President
Matt Cooper
Stephanie Cooperstein
Kristine Craig
Birch Douglass
Maya Erhardt
Tom Gutenberger
Jan Hatchette
Sarah Hendricks
Ukay Jackson, Foundation Liaison
Jim Klaus, Foundation Co-President
Karen McGill
Cindy Norwood, Office of the Attorney General
Katie Payne
Hubert Phipps
Hossein Sadid
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 Mr. Charlie Whitaker and seconded by Dr. Pamela Royal to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2021 External Affairs Committee meeting as distributed. Motion carried.

IV. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

Ms. Katie Payne, Director of Government Relations, reported that First Lady of Virginia Pamela Northam was photographed wearing a VMFA mask while receiving her COVID-19 vaccination. She next discussed a draft land acknowledgment that recognizes the Indigenous peoples who occupied the land where the museum is located. During discussion, it was decided that a Sub-committee, consisting of Ms. Carol Ann Bischoff, Ms. Janet Geldzahler, Dr. Pamela Royal, and Mr. Charlie Whitaker, be formed to review the draft and recommend it to the Committee for approval. Once approved, the Committee will recommend the letter to the full Board of Trustees at its June meeting for final approval.

Ms. Payne then reported that the General Assembly's regular session adjourned at the end of February, with its passed proposed budget now ready for review by Governor Northam. She noted the following VMFA requests in the proposed budget: \$400,000 in operating funds for IT upgrades and the leasing of storage space; \$115,000 a year for temporary wage positions throughout the remainder of the Pandemic; a modified Reimagining Monument Avenue funding timeline, with \$250,000 immediately after the budget is signed, \$750,000 in July 2021, and additional funds possible in 2022. Ms. Payne reported that on the capital side, there was no change to funding for the expansion and that \$5.8 million has been allocated for new HVAC units and re-roofing on the main museum building. She also reported that the proposed \$1,500 bonus for State employees has been converted into a 5% raise. Ms. Payne said the General Assembly will reconvene on April 7, 2021 for a one-day session to review the Governor's amendments to the legislation that was passed and the budget. She ended her report by noting the potential impact the recently passed Federal stimulus package might have on the current, but most likely, the next biennial budget.

V. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Ms. Jan Hatchette, Deputy Director for Communications, shared a diversity communication plan that her team developed with West Cary Group. This new strategy's focus is to have the community view VMFA as an all-inclusive space that reflects who they are, regardless of age,

race, or background; be a preeminent source of engagement and inspiration; increase the number and diversity of future visitors and members; and personalize VMFA. These overarching themes culminate in the tagline, "See Yourself Here." Ms. Hatchette presented the three phase process of the plan's roll-out, which would begin with on-display discussions and shared perspectives through current programming, such as *Cocktails with a Curator*. This would be followed by a phase of news, upcoming exhibitions, and conversation starters. The final phase would incorporate curated VMFA experiences and virtual visitor communications. Ms. Hatchette noted that this is a proactive plan that will utilize all digital and print channels. Discussion followed about local community members to highlight in the plan. Dr. Pamela Royal recommended that Board members be included to promote leadership and diversity. Dr. Monroe Harris recommended featuring artist Hamilton Glass. Mr. Johnson asked Ms. Hatchette to discuss how the efficacy of this strategy would be measured. She noted that surveys will be done to gauge the reaction of audiences, the results of which would then be compared to those taken in the past. Mr. Johnson agreed, but emphasized his desire that audience understanding of sentiment be measured.

VI. ADVANCEMENT AND MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Chief Development Officer and Deputy Director of Advancement Tom Gutenberger reported that the Campaign, at \$183 million, is at 50% of its goal. Of these funds, \$58 million is from private support, which has had a 38% increase since the beginning of the year. In addition, Mr. Gutenberger noted that there are currently more than 12 active gift proposals pending. He thanked Committee members who are also Campaign Committee members. Mr. Gutenberger shared that overall cash and pledges for the year is at \$7.8 million or 106%. He noted that the great challenge is in maintaining general membership which is down by 2,800. Mr. Gutenberger reported that sponsorships for *The Dirty South* exhibition, having nearly reached \$1,100,000 million, have surpassed its \$900,000 goal. Nearly \$250,000 of these funds can be attributed to the volunteer-hosted Zoom fundraising events for the exhibition. He then outlined the various ways that Advancement has shifted programming to continue connecting with donors, highlighting virtual programs, such as *Cocktails with a Curator*, and hybrid programs which feature a live-streamed virtual event for a small, in-person audience outdoors and under a tent.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, Mr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 10:44am.

Recorded by: Stephanie Cooperstein
Executive Administrator to the Chief Strategy Officer and
Deputy Director for Strategic Planning, Government & Board Relations