

**Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees**

**Executive Committee**

**Draft Minutes**

**November 10, 2016 9 a.m.**

**Members Attending:**

Richard Bell, Clifford Garstang, William Sibert, Peggy Sheets, Paul Vames, Kenneth Venable

**Members Absent:**

Pamela Fox, Emmett Hanger

**Guests Attending:**

Ned Ruby, President, American Frontier Culture Foundation

**Staff Attending:**

John Avoli, Executive Director, Eric Bryan, Deputy Director, Merritt Schoonover, Director of Administration, Andrew Richardson, Director of Education, Lydia Volskis, Sr. Administrative Coordinator, Joe Herget, Marketing Director, Justin Reiter, Executive Director, American Frontier Culture Foundation

**Call to Order and Welcome**

Paul Vames called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

**Approval of October 2016 Minutes**

The minutes of the October meeting were approved as distributed.

**Executive Director's Report**

**A. Education and Interpretation**

Mr. Avoli reported that recently "Pickles" the large hog who resides on the 1820's Farm, escaped from her enclosure and that it required a number of staff to capture and return her to the pen. The pen has been reinforced. In other animal news, an older farm horse who is friendly and enjoys interacting with people has arrived at the Museum, and is completing a successful two-week trial period. "Willie" was donated by a local family, and will reside primarily on the 1850's farm.

Mr. Bryan reported that visitation decreased by 5% in October, noting that the school admissions total listed only reflects those schools that visited and paid for their trip. Other schools came to the Museum on field trips in October but have not yet sent payment. These payments will likely be reflected in November's reports. Overall, school group visitation has increased over last year.

Mr. Richardson said that school group visitation has increased by about 700 students over last year at the same time. Between November 1 and December 31 about 6,000 students are scheduled to visit and more may yet make reservations before the end of the year. There are about 5,000 students with field trip reservations between January 1 and June 30, 2017 and that number is likely to increase in the Spring.

In December, the Museum will offer a new specialized tour focusing on historic foodways. The cost will be \$25 per person and participants will be able to help cook as well as eat the dishes they prepare.

The Holiday children's workshops are set for December 3 and 10<sup>th</sup> from 1-4 in the afternoon; the recent Halloween workshop was a success.

The Museum recently hosted a James Madison University student group tour which focused on cultural universals; a second group of students will visit in the Spring.

Mr. Richardson said that the Museum is in discussions with the Skyline Girl Scout Council to conduct some of our watershed science programs for Scout groups in the Spring.

Holiday Lantern Tours preparation is underway with scripts completed and casts being assembled; some sites are already beginning rehearsals.

## **B. Finance**

Director of Administrative Services Merritt Schoonover reviewed the Statement of Appropriations, Allotments, Expenditures and Revenues for all funds, the FH17 Revenue Status report as of 10/31/16, the Breakdown of Revenue by percentage pie chart and the Comparison of Monthly Revenue by Fiscal Year as of 10/31/16. She also reviewed the state-mandated cost savings plans of 5% for FY17 and 7.5% FY18 which the Museum has submitted.

Delegate Bell said that there is a great deal of uncertainty now as to the state of the budge, but that things may be clarified in December when the Governor makes his budget presentations to the Legislative money committees.

Mr. Bryan said that due to changes in the Fair Labor Standards Act regarding the salary level limit for employees to be "exempt" (the salary level for exemption has been nearly doubled), about eight Museum employees will revert to being non-exempt. This means that they work a forty hour week, are eligible for overtime leave or pay. This may curtail some future programming decisions due to less employee availability. The new regulations go into effect December 1, 2016.

Mr. Sibert stated that this is why funding for part-time positions is so important, and said that the Museum may fall short of its potential with constant reductions in funding for staff. The Museum may seek assistance from the Foundation if it becomes necessary.

Mr. Vames asked how the Museum's staffing levels compare to those of a year ago. Mr. Bryan responded that we have about the same total staff, but that this year we have several more fulltime. He noted that with less overall staff, the quality level of the staff is important. The Museum has recently experimented with adding some guided tours on weekends and with special focused program and workshops. Mrs. Schoonover said that we have fourteen fulltime interpreters, fourteen fulltime other positions, and three Foundation positions plus a variety of part-time positions. We have not replaced several part-time staff who left over the summer, and applied the funds to our cost savings plans. Mr. Bryan also said that we have a number of volunteers who work on the sites both in costume and as non-costumed greeters. Mr. Avoli also pointed out that the Museum has added a number of exhibits over the past several years and the number of staff has not increased to cover the added sites.

### **C. Marketing**

Director of Marketing Joe Herget reviewed the visitation report and the visitation breakdown report as of the end of October. He noted that bad weather which affects one event might cause a decrease in overall visitation in what might have otherwise been a strong visitation month. He reviewed a chart comparing annual pass usage to that of a year ago. He noted that annual pass revenue is down slightly for this year; this may be due to last year being our highest sales total yet for annual passes or a reaction to the price increase of the passes. He will continue to monitor pass sales for trends which might need intervention.

Mr. Herget gave a special events update, with reports on the rainy Oktoberfest, the upcoming Christmas markets, the children's holiday workshops, the evenings of Christmas traditions, Holiday Lantern Tours and the informational meetings for prospective John Lewis Society Members.

### **Foundation Report**

American Frontier Culture Foundation President Ned Ruby reported that new financial accounting standards rules (FASB) will take effect on July 1, 2018, but that the Foundation's Executive Director and Finance Committee have decided to implement the new rules as of July 1, 2017; they will meet with the Foundation auditors to make plans.

The Foundation Executive Committee has elected Development Committee Co-chair Christine Van Pelt to the Executive Committee.

The Annual Fund mailing "kicked off" last week and has already raised about \$15,000. The Annual Fund fundraising campaign runs through June, 2017.

Foundation Executive Director Justin Reiter showed the Committee a draft of the new Annual Fund booklet which features photographs and information about how the Fund supports the museum. He met recently with Joe Herget and Andrew Richardson to understand more fully how the school programs work and what challenges teachers face in planning field trips. He is working on an in-depth article for the Spring newsletter on this subject.

He described large charitable gift funds, such as the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund, and the difficulty a small Foundation faces in trying to determine what funds may be available from the Fund which they could apply for.

Mr. Reiter said that fundraising in an election year is notoriously difficult, but the Foundation has raised about \$186,000 during the past year, including \$10,000 for the English Barn and \$100,000 from the Charles Fund. The Foundation has received three new grants recently; from Wells-Fargo, Hershey Corporate and \_\_\_\_\_.

New Year's Eve Gala sponsorships have been slow this year and stand at about \$5600, but about twenty-eight rooms have been reserved at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel for the evening.

Mr. Ruby reported that there has been some discussion in the Foundation's Executive Committee about renting the Dice's space for a specified period to a particular client, but that no decision has been made.

Mr. Reiter said that the Foundation's Finance Committee has decided to invest about 5% of its Davenport portfolio in American International Funds, as these seem poised for a surge in the near future.

## **New Business**

At 10 a.m. Mr. Sibert said:

*I move that the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia enter closed session for:*

*Discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business' or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community, pursuant to the exemption in Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(5), and related to the potential sale or lease of real property conveyed by the Museum to the American Frontier Culture Foundation,*

***and***

*For discussion of personnel matters pursuant to the exemption in Va Code Chapter 2.2-3711(A) (1) pertaining to the appointment and performance of the Executive Director.*

Mr. Sibert's motion was seconded by Mr. Garstang, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. Foundation President Mr. Ruby was invited to remain. All other attendees left the room.

At 10:15 a.m. Mr. Sibert said:

*I move that the Executive Committee of the Board enter open session.*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Garstang, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Sibert said:

*Whereas, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia convened in closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and*

*Whereas, Virginia Code § 2.2-3712 requires a certification by this Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;*

***NOW, BE IT RESOLVED*** *that the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge:*

*(1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under Virginia law, and  
(2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia.*

Each Member affirmed verbally by roll call vote that no other matters had been discussed.

**Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be Wednesday December 14th at 9 a.m.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.