

**Waynesboro Advocacy Committee
Virginia Museum of Natural History
Tuesday, September 1, 2026, 1 PM
Waynesboro Office of Economic Development**



AGENDA

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Welcome | Dr. Tom Benzing |
| Approval of Minutes | Dr. Benzing |
| • August 4, 2026 | |
| Community Connections | |
| • Advocacy | |
| ○ Dept. of Education | Dr. Joe Keiper |
| • Trailer | |
| ○ Visitors served | |
| ○ Volunteer feedback | |
| ○ Electric hookup appointment | |
| • Events | Dr. Benzing |
| ○ Fall lecture series (Sept. 8) | |
| ○ Fall Foliage Festival (Oct. 10-11) | |
| • Open Discussion | |
| • Adjournment | Dr. Benzing |

**Board of Trustees
Waynesboro Advocacy Committee
Tuesday, August 4, 2026
Virginia Museum of Natural History**



MINUTES

The Waynesboro Advocacy Committee of the Virginia Museum of Natural History Board of Trustees held their monthly meeting at 1:00 PM at the Waynesboro Office of Economic Development.

Members Present:	Ms. Ann Peltier	Mr. Dick Bratcher
	Mr. Len Poulin	Mr. Greg Hitchin
	Dr. Joe Keiper (ex officio)	Mr. Jonathan Martin (staff)

Present Remote:	Dr. Carole Nash	Dr. John Almarode
	Dr. Christine May	Dr. Steve Powers
	Mr. Ryan Barber (staff)	

WELCOME

Dr. Keiper welcomed all to the meeting at 1:00 PM. It was determined by general consensus that Dr. Keiper would moderate the meeting. A quorum was determined to be present. New Board of Trustees member, Dr. John Almarode introduced himself and as a resident of Waynesboro is particularly interested in the project.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Len Poulin made a motion to approve the July 7, 2026, meeting minutes. Dr. Carole Nash seconded and all approved unanimously.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Advocacy

State budget - Mr. Martin reported he continues to work with the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget in requesting the funds necessary to build the Waynesboro campus building. This is the standard timing and procedure for large capital projects. In the meantime, we are also asking for approximately 2.9 million dollars to complete working drawings to move the project closer to the full appropriations phase.

Mr. Martin reported that all feedback from various state offices has been very positive. It was noted that the timing is typical for this type of project; often taking many years from concept to completion.

STEM - Dr. Keiper noted the need for additional conversation about STEM career pathways and opportunities for ESL learners of all ages.

Trailer

Visitors - Mr. Poulin reported a robust number of visitors each Saturday with the majority of them first time visitors and not from Waynesboro City limits. Most visitors gladly submit the online comment card to the Governor's Office as they are leaving the trailer. It was noted the use of consistent verbiage may be beneficial toward the cause.

Volunteer coverage remains strong even through the heat of the summer. Additionally, volunteers greatly appreciated the added professional atmosphere generated due to the polo shirts and name badges.

Electric Hook-up - Mr. Bratcher reported that the process of getting electricity to the trailer begins with creating an online profile and setting up an onsite meeting. There were general discussions and consensus that an April 2027 electric hook-up goal is attainable. More information and discussion are needed to investigate possible stand-alone air conditioning.

Events

Lecture Series – The fall lecture series will begin on Sept. 8, 2026, at 7 PM at the Wayne Theatre with the topic of – “Northern Bobwhite Quail and Managing Land for Wildlife” This popular series has a full lineup of speakers for the fall and only a few spaces left for the spring.

Fall Foliage Festival – Upcoming with VMNH participation

OPEN DISCUSSION

Long time supporter and committee member, Maggie Van Huss will be stepping away from the Advocacy Committee. Committee members expressed gratitude for her support through the years.

It was suggested that local business owner, Kim Arehart be approached as a possible replacement for Dr. Van Huss.

Dr. Keiper mentioned that at the request of the Virginia Secretary of Education, staff have a standing monthly meeting with one of his assistant secretaries, Dr. Kate Maxlow. As follow-up we have requested that our Board Chair meet with the Secretary with the priority being to advocate for an increase in funding for ongoing expenses and for the Waynesboro project.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.