

Frontier Culture Museum Board of Trustees
Executive Committee – Administration Building Conference Room
Draft Minutes
August 26, 2026 2 p.m.

Members Attending: John Avoli, Ned Ruby, Peggy Sheets, Paul Vames

Members Absent: Katrina Callsen

Guests Attending:

Staff Attending: Robin von Seldeneck, Lydia Volskis, Eric Bryan

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Mrs. Peggy Sheets

Mrs. Sheets called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. She asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 2026 meeting. Mr. Ruby made a motion that the June 2026 minutes be approved as distributed. The motion was seconded by Mr. Avoli, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

II. Report on Executive Director's First 6 weeks

Mrs. Robin von Seldeneck

Mrs. von Seldeneck reported that her first two months have been busy; among other tasks, she is taking time to meet with individual staff members, and working on visitor's surveys to learn what our guests expect of us as a museum. This is based on Google Reports and will help with planning ahead for next year and beyond. She explained that an early revelation has been that while visitors enjoy their initial visit, many do not return, and the Museum will need to work on strategies to gain repeat visitors. She will also prepare some preliminary plans for future reorganization and staff placement.

She has also been reviewing policies and procedures, learning about the various state agencies and state leaders with whom the Museum interacts, met with some visitors and supporters and reviewing position descriptions of senior staff and others.

Mr. Vames asked when the survey was conducted and Mrs. von Seldeneck said that it was completed last Spring as a part of the American Alliance of Museums broader museum survey project. She said that she will review all the data before making any

decisions. She also reported that she will be visiting in Michigan next week on a pre-planned trip, and that she will visit the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, a well-known living history site.

Mr. Avoli asked what training needs the staff have and noted that some visitor center staff have not had a chance to go around the Museum site. Mrs. von Seldeneck said that everyone will get a chance to visit the site and spend some time getting to know the interpreters and learning about each exhibit. She also said that she has made some “anonymous” trips out onto the site to observe guests and hear staff interpretations. She said she has had a wonderful couple of months!

III. Current Board appointments

Mrs. Sheets

Mrs. Sheets reported that we have learned of four new Board of Trustees appointments, and are still awaiting news regarding the four remaining vacancies. Some discussion followed.

IV. Board Elections October

Mrs. Sheets

Mrs. Sheets reported that Mr. Ruby, as the last remaining member of the Nominations Committee due to Board turnover, will discuss Board nominations and elections before the meeting and convey the information to the Executive Committee. Mrs. Sheets also mentioned that there will be a cocktail party on the evening of Thursday October 1 – the night before the Friday Board meetings - for Members of both Boards.

V. Finance Discussions

Mr. Eric Bryan

A. Capital Budget Request

Eric Bryan reported that the Museum has submitted about 5.8 million worth of budget requests. These requests, after discussions with our Department of Planning and Budget analyst are presented as Phase II of the Crossing Gallery project. These projects include the move of the American Indian and West African sites, extending and enhancing the paths and roads connecting all parts of the site, and other items. The advantage to this is that the Museum could continue work with Kjellstrom and Lee rather than having to bid out these projects separately. He stated that we will know in December if these projects are approved.

B. Operational Budget Request

Mr. Bryan reported that the Museum is also working on three decision packages for our operations budget: funding for security and maintenance systems, salary adjustments as many staff are below the state median for their job code, and six additional positions to care for and utilize the new gallery building. Mr. Avoli asked if the Secretary of Education supports the request, and Mr. Bryan said that he is and will visit the Museum soon. Mr. Bryan also said that the Museum is working closely with Kate Maxlow, Deputy Secretary of Education.

C. Fiscal Director position

Mrs. Sheets and Mrs. von Seldeneck said that the Finance Director position will be advertised in the Fall with a goal of having the position filled by the first of next year. The position requirements will be heavily weighted towards someone with plenty of state fiscal experience. Mrs. von Seldeneck said that we will include an outside fiscal person from a local state agency on the interview panel. Some discussion followed. Mr. Ruby and Mr. Avoli asked that the Finance Director job description be sent to them.

Mrs. Sheets asked how the Mill project is progressing, and Mr. Bryan said that it is better than at this point last year. He had a meeting with the contractor yesterday to urge them along. He said that the current slowdown is mainly due to issues with subcontractors and possibly lack of staff. A possible completion date is November 20, 2026.

VI. Foundation Report

Senator Emmett Hanger

A. Capital Campaign

Mrs. Sheets reported that the Foundation was able to match the Mary Morton Parsons grant for a total of \$200,000. Foundation grantwriter Ann Rogan is now working on a match grant from the Cabell Foundation with Mrs. Sheets and Mrs. von Seldeneck. Mrs. Sheets said that she, Mrs. von Seldeneck and Senator Hanger will meet soon to discuss what the Foundation may look like in the future. The state agency will need to offer one, three and five year plans to assist in the Foundation planning.

B. Property Update

VII. Policy Development Moving Forward

Mrs. Sheets/Mrs. von Seldeneck

A. Accepting exhibits

Mrs. Sheets said that staff will prepare some new policies by the Spring 2027 Board of Trustees meeting for review and approval relating to accepting outside exhibits, rental agreements and admission pricing, and some operational and organizational changes. Mrs. Sheets continued that she and Mrs. von Seldeneck will travel to Richmond in November to attend the American Corners conference at the invitation of Mr. Tom Hand, a donor. She said that for future donations, the Board may need to accept larger private donations. Mrs. von Seldeneck said that at her previous position at the Woodrow Wilson Presidential library, their Board set a clear structure in place regulating both large donations and naming opportunities.

VIII. Strategic Plan Options

Mrs. Sheets

Mrs. Sheets said that the internal agency strategic plans should “dovetail” with the state’s strategic plans. Mrs. von Seldeneck said that the Museum should include ideas about what the community wants and expects from the Museum, and Mrs. Sheets also noted that there must be an emphasis on K-12 education. Mr. Avoli advised that the plan be able to be fluid and flexible as the Museum grows and circumstances change. Mrs. Sheets suggested that a draft might be ready in time for the April 2027 Board of Trustees meeting.

IV. Closed Session

Committee

At 1:40 Mr. Avoli said:

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

- 1. 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

2. *Discussion of the assignment, appointment, performance, salary, or resignation of a specific employee pursuant to the exemption in Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(1).*

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

At 1:50 p.m. Mr. Avoli said:

I move that the Committee enter open session.

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

Then Mrs. Sheets said:

Whereas, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia convened in closed meeting on August 26, 2026 pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act;

NOW BE IT RESOLVED, in accordance with Virginia Code § 2.2-3712, 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 Board of Trustees of the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia.*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Vames, there was no discussion, and each Member certified verbally that no other matters had been discussed.

IX. Adjournment

Mrs. Sheets

The next meeting date is TBD; the meeting was adjourned at 1:55 p.m.