

SUFFOLK COUNTY VANDERBILT MUSEUM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Board of Trustees was held on September 6, 2001 in the Planetarium Lobby, Centerport, New York.

The following were in attendance:

Dr. Steven Gittelman – President
Gary C. Fischhoff – 1st Vice President
Dr. Anthony Pecorale – Treasurer
Marjorie Kossoy Fuhrmann – Secretary
Bertram E. Seides – Trustee
Edward J. Hahn – Trustee
Susan LeBow – Trustee
William Macchione – Trustee
J. Lance Mallamo – Executive Director
Rita Beckman – Staff
Elizabeth McQueeney – Staff
Mark McHugh – Staff
David Bush – Staff
Gail Freeman – Todd Shapiro Associates
Mary Talamo – Staff
Florence Ogg – Staff
Bill Dieck – Staff
Ann Marie Pastore – Stenographer

ABSENT:

Carl Luecke
R. Douglas Shaw
Donna deLuca Periconi
Robert LaBua
Michael Broxmeyer
William Rogers

(Dr. Steven Gittelman called the meeting to order at 8:55 p.m.)

DR. GITTELMAN:

This is a regular meeting of the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Board of Trustees. Do we have a list of attendees?

MS. PASTORE:

Yes.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Is there anybody who wishes to make comments or ask questions of the Board? Thank you for attending. Marge.

MS. FUHRMANN:

I move that the minutes of August 20, 2001 be accepted with three minor corrections. Somebody second please.

MR. HAHN:

Second.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Thank you. The first comment is you have listed Timothy Votapka as absent. He has submitted a letter of resignation to the Board, and he had submitted that letter prior to our August 20th meeting. So it's an opening, not an absentee. The second comment is on page 3, just for clarification, in the fourth paragraph from the bottom, "House" and "Distinction" are magazine names. It's unclear, and on page six, it's the fourth paragraph, I believe I said subsidized, not substitute. In other words, we're looking for them to pay the monies. Those are all my comments. Does anyone have any others?

DR. GITTELMAN:

Do I have a –

MS. FUHRMANN:

We already did that.

DR. GITTELMAN:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions?

MR. FISCHOFF:

I'm abstaining. I was late to that meeting, so I abstain.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Motion carries. (7/0/1/6 Abstained: Mr. Fischhoff. Absent: Mr. Luecke, Mr. Shaw, Ms. Periconi, Mr. LaBua, Mr. Broxmeyer & Mr. Rogers)

Public Relations' Report.

MS. FREEMAN:

In front of you, you have the monthly report from August. This is not as substantial as usual, but we did get a little bit from John Dobson. Since the Board Meeting, we haven't gotten that clip back yet, but we do have one from the Dino-Stars so if we have time, we could do that. We did get back some coverage from Channel 12 on the meteors. They were kind enough to give them some input on that from both Channel 12 and radio station, WLNG. We did get more coverage from Cole Porter and Dino-Stars. Dino-Stars will continue, obviously, through Halloween. We hope to get more on that. We're starting to get a little more advanced notice, which is helpful.

I do have some ideas that I will go over with Lance to drum up some ideas for the fall season. Every one of the major papers, such as "New York Times" and "Newsday," has received the fall schedule for the Planetarium and hopefully we will get more in the upcoming months. We'll do that, and if anyone has any ideas, after having so much going on for such a long period of time, we do have a time period where I think we ought to create some activity. Without further ado, the video.

Video Presentation: 9:00 – 9:05 p.m.

NEWS 12

DINO-STARS

LI NEWS

DINO-STARS

NY55

DINO-STARS

MS. FREEMAN:

I also have the photos from "Cocktails with Cole Porter."

MR. MALLAMO:

Oh, great. Thank you.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Can I possibly have a copy of that video? I'd like to give it to Bill Rogers.

MS. FREEMAN:

Sure.

MR. MALLAMO:

We're going to keep that. We can make a copy in house.

MS. FREEMAN:

Okay.

MR. MALLAMO:

Thank you.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Okay, thank you for that report. Education and Exhibits, Marge.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Thank you, Steve. Florence has asked me to remind everyone that the LIMA meeting is Monday, September 10th. You can call her as late as tomorrow at 854-5508 to express an interest in coming. She needs an exact count for the caterer so she needs to hear by tomorrow.

We would, at the top of this, like to thank Bert for his donation of a series of books on the Egyptian culture, including a hieroglyphic dictionary, which looks really exciting.

We would like to acknowledge that Fleet Bank's contribution of \$5,000 has been received and is in the process of being spent.

When Mr. Dobson was here last month for the talk at the Planetarium, he also took time to look at the two telescopes that are in the mansion. He is going to be sending us additional information for our files about these telescopes that he has.

The input of Past Perfect continues. It will continue for years. There is so much to enter.

Florence will be attending grant workshops from October 7th to the 13th, during archives week. Specifically she is going to be taking a workshop on how to promote performing arts. It seems that there was a musical written in 1906 called the "Vanderbilt Cup." She is looking for grant money to perhaps put on this production.

Next week Joel Snodgrass is coming to test paints for the drapery project.

Betsy reports that the reaccreditation work is going on. The self-study is in the process of being completed.

Fourteen thousand brochures were distributed to the local school districts, and we have been getting many calls and many bookings. For example, today there were 32 separate bookings to our shows based on the brochure.

Camp was successful, and we do have good numbers, which I hope I still have to pass around. I will look for them in a moment.

The Centerport Garden Club on October 1st is putting on their Northeast Regional Garden Show here. It will be four days, three days of exhibits and one day for set-up. They have graciously volunteered to do a lot of gardening work and "clean-up" prior to the show. It's going to draw many people, but as a side thing, it may affect our school attendance for the early part of October because they are going to be using some of the public's bases that are used for school groups.

The Rosie O'Donnell grant for the "For Kids Foundation," which we reported last month had been turned down as not within their scope, is being reworked with Doug Shaw's help. We're going to be resubmitting it.

The lighting for the ceiling and the cabinets for the invertebrates are being rethought. The whole room is in the process of being redesigned, trying to bring it back to as it was when Mr. Vanderbilt lived here. There is a missing center case. To replace it we may move the Alva model, which is now on the stairwell into the room. The floor diagram that we're working with is based on a 1936 plan.

Stephanie is going off site to visit our life science exhibits that have been sent out to schools' libraries, etc. This is necessary for reaccreditation.

The Dobson coverage and our attendance was very good. We were very pleased.

Mark would like everyone to notice that there is a new bulletin board display up. He is going to be changing it monthly, I believe, he said, keeping it up to date with events that are going on in the sky and in the news.

If you look over to where "Weight of the World" used to be, he is putting up a new exhibit in this area. There are two panels, I believe, already up. Each panel discusses a specific planet. He will have one panel for each of the planets.

Our last bit of news, our most important bit of news, is that Mark got married last week to Jennifer. We all say congratulations, and it's about

time. They were engaged for two years. That's the end of my report, unless anyone has a question.

DR. GITTELMAN:

It's a great report.

MS. FUHRMANN:

It was short.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I spoke to Carl and he said to me that they did not have a Development Report. So unless anyone else has something to say, we will skip that report. Finance Committee, Tony.

DR. PECORALE:

Yes, each Trustee has a copy of the January 31st through December 31st financial statements. This was accepted by the Board previously, but you haven't received your copies of the report. Now you have them. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to let us know and we will get a response for you.

The Treasurer's report for the period ending the end of July is in your folders. Our funding to this point, we must be very careful. Our cash flow is very tight, but we have one area where our funding has increased, and that's with site use. That's been good and continues to be on the upswing. If anyone has any questions about the report that's in your folder, we'll be happy to try to answer them.

DR. GITTELMAN:

One of the things that I notice is that none of the revenue or the traffic or Dino-Stars is being considered as part of our revenue or as part of our traffic. Yes, we are partners in that exhibit, and I wonder if we should not be considering how that should be treated.

MR. MALLAMO:

I think we will do that when we have – we have been looking to get the exact figures. I think when the exhibit is complete, we will make that entry into this.

DR. PECORALE:

We should note that we did receive a check today from the college for material for the gift shop. We will be sending additional things over there for their staff. So that check is in. It's not reflective in this report because we only received it today.

DR. GITTELMAN:

And you're going to be speaking to – would you be able to speak to the college about other payables that might be due us?

DR. PECORALE:

I will make it a point of getting over to the college and speaking with them to see if we can expedite some additional payments to us.

DR. GITTELMAN:

That would be great. Okay, Personnel Committee.

MR. FISCHOFF:

Are we passing this around?

MS. FUHRMANN:

Yes, I'm sorry.

MR. FISCHOFF:

Personnel Committee met last week. I'm happy to advise that Lance has made an offer, which has been accepted, for a Development Director. The gentleman has roots in Huntington and is moving back here. His name is Zachary – Lance, help me with the last name.

MR. MALLAMO:

Studenroth.

MR. FISCHOFF:

His name is Zachary Studenroth. He'll be starting in the near future, and we look forward to a long and prosperous relationship with him and the Museum.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Excuse me, could we just have Lance spell the last name for the stenographer.

MR. MALLAMO:

S-T-U-D-E-N-R-O-T-H.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Thank you.

MR. FISCHOFF:

I think he'll be starting in November. Is that it, Lance?

MR. MALLAMO:

We believe so, yes.

MR. FISCHOFF:

So we look forward to him joining our team in the near future. That's it for Personnel. I don't know if this is part of Personnel, but we also need a resolution to authorize the County Legislature and the County Executive to process a resolution to authorize funding by the County to make an offer and hopefully purchase Normandy Manor. I would propose that the Board – I would like to put the resolution on the table that the Board authorize the County Executive and the Legislature to authorize the purchase of that property subject to their approving the funding.

MS. FUHRMANN:

I'll second that.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I think we might be better off saying that we, as Trustees, request that Suffolk County consider the purchase of –

MR. FISCHOFF:

Fine, we don't want to tell them what to do, but on the other hand we would like them to assist us in this endeavor.

MS. FUHRMANN:

And I'll still second it.

DR. GITTELMAN:

All in favor? Lance, you will send the appropriate letter?

MS. FUHRMANN:

You have to say opposed.

DR. GITTELMAN:

All right. Opposed? Abstained? I'm covered. **(Vote: 8/0/0/6 Absent: Mr. Luecke, Mr. Shaw, Ms. Periconi, Mr. LaBua, Mr. Broxmeyer & Mr. Rogers)**

MR. FISCHOFF:

It looks like it was unanimous.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Doug Shaw is not here. Is there any Membership Committee report that you know about?

MR. MALLAMO:

No, but I do know that Doug has been meeting with our membership person. Our membership is up according to our count. It continues to be good, which we're pleased about. It apparently is not – I was concerned

that increasing our membership and allowing free admission was going to effect our admissions in some way, and apparently that is not the case. Our admissions appear to be up over last year also. It's seems to be a win-win situation for us.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Great. Anything else on that report? Okay, Dinosaur Committee, Ed.

MR. HAHN:

Yes, the Dinosaur Committee met today at the exhibit along with Steve Gittelman and Anthony Pecorale. We met with Ray Ann Havacy to basically go through the exhibit and have some questions that were raised at the last meeting answered.

Basically the exhibit is probably about a mile off of the Southern State Parkway going north, close to the new court complex. It's readily accessible off the Southern State, and it's very easy to get back on the Southern State from the exhibit. It's not located -- if you're looking on the NYIT campus board, it would be hard to find because it's kind of to the side of the campus. But if you use that guide by going by the courthouse route, it's readily accessible.

DR. GITTELMAN:

It's adjacent to the student union.

MR. HAHN:

I didn't know that.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Yes, that building next to us.

MR. HAHN:

Okay, then it's accessible to the students at NYIT.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Yes.

MR. HAHN:

Just to recap, it opened July 20th. It's open seven days a week, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. It's in a bubble tent, I guess what commonly would be described as a tent that covers a tennis court, so it's quite large. I believe it's about 7,000 square feet. There are 26 dinosaur fossil exhibits. Most of them are full size exhibits. There are a number of skulls also. There are a number of exhibits also that show the fossils as they might be discovered in the wild or nature, not completely unearthed, so it gives you an

appreciation for what exactly dinosaur hunting is about. They don't come assembled the way that you see them there.

There are also fourteen interactive exhibits of varying degrees of complexity ranging from what does a dinosaur's vision look like through the computer terminals.

Ray Ann Havacy is staffing the exhibit seven days a week from opening to closing presently, at least prior to school having started. During the week there are two assistants who basically go through helping people with the interactive exhibits answering questions. On the weekends, there are five assistants with the anticipated increase in volume.

Going through the exhibit, it ends with the gift shop, which I found to be very well stocked with things that I would never have imagined being in a gift shop for dinosaurs, such as backpacks full of hunting equipment and flashlights and things like that, that elementary school children I think would go for in a big way.

The average time through the exhibit, according to Ray Ann Havacy, is about one hour and a half. There has been a request by several school districts that this be extended for two weeks beyond the October 31 deadline, so that they can fit it into their schedules to get their students there. It looks like that will happen.

In terms of financially, the exhibit is anticipated to turn the corner and start in the black come October 1st. With that extension of time to the additional two weeks into November, it's anticipated that a reasonable profit will be realized.

There also has been discussion about linking the Vanderbilt Museum with this exhibit in terms of people visiting here at the Vanderbilt being giving some type of rebate or discount for visiting the dinosaur exhibit and vice versa. That's something that we will be exploring in terms of how to get better access and perhaps even discounts to students at schools so they can go see the exhibit. That concludes my report.

DR. GITTTELMAN:

Thank you. Any questions? Lance.

MR. MALLAMO:

I'd just like to thank the staff for the wonderful job they did over the summer. We had a great summer here at the Museum with the crowds that we had and the camp groups that we had. I think we all eagerly await the fall program for educational groups. We have some special surprises planned for the holiday season.

As Marjorie mentioned, we are making some changes in the lighting capital project in the invertebrate's galley. I think these will more closely reflect the room as Mr. Vanderbilt had the room exhibited. This was a wonderful detective story on the part of and initiated by the staff. I know Florence Ogg and Stephanie Gress came up with the plans, and then we went down and measured the room off and found that in fact that is the way the room was set up. We had no photo or documentation of that. So they're all just continuing their work as a great team to bring this institution back to where it should rightly be.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Okay, I guess it's up to me. Is there anything else? Any comments? I welcome the appointment of Zachary Studenroth. I know Zach. I think he will be a wonderful addition to the staff. I think we will find that he will work well with just about everybody. He is a great lover of history and historic places on Long Island. He has his roots deeply placed here on Long Island.

In addition to that, when he left, I think all of us were shocked. It was kind of like seeing someone who was a part of the place and invested a lot in the place. So his coming back, I think, is real positive, and I think his coming here is very meaningful.

Any unfinished business?

MS. FUHRMANN:

There has been a request by some Trustees that we go over the meeting schedule for the rest of the year. There seems to be some questions about dates.

MS. LEBOW:

Well, the question was, I know that we try to have a meeting a month, but this last time the meeting was changed I think twice from the original meeting date. It is a hardship for some of us to have a date changed, then we make changes of everything, and then that date changes. I ask you whenever possible, please try not to do that to us too often.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Honestly, in the last meeting, I did request one of the two changes. The second one was not requested by me.

MS. LEBOW:

I'm not focusing on you particularly. I'm saying that I don't know if the people who make these changes are aware that for some of us it is a very big deal to rearrange a schedule for a change date and then to rearrange

it yet a second time. I couldn't make this meeting the last time because I had redone my calendar and then there was just no option anymore. So wherever possible, could we stay with the date that we have because we all build our calendars around those dates?

DR. GITTELMAN:

I agree, and I will tell you that if I could have changed tonight's date, I would have changed tonight's date because I was due in Chicago two hours ago.

MS. LEBOW:

I appreciate that.

DR. GITTELMAN:

And now I will be due for a nine o'clock meeting in Chicago tomorrow morning.

MS. LEBOW:

Well, thank you.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I do make – not every date is convenient for me.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Anyway, I just thought I would give the three dates for the remainder of the year.

MR. FISCHOFF:

In the eight years or so I've been here, I don't think you've missed a day. So we'll allow you one in the next eight years. You could have gone to Chicago, and we would have struggled without you.

DR. GITTELMAN:

It's not that I feel that you wouldn't. Actually from my entire tenure as a Trustee I haven't missed a meeting, to my knowledge. It's something like an old tradition for me. I'm trying to hold it together.

MS. LEBOW:

But I don't want to miss them either.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Can I –

DR. GITTELMAN:

If you have proposed dates – what are the currently scheduled dates?

MS. FUHRMANN:

The currently scheduled dates are October 9th, which is a Tuesday, the day after Columbus Day, November 14th, a Wednesday, and December 6th, which is a Thursday.

MR. FISCHOFF:

Were these all on the prior schedule that was sent out to us?

MS. FUHRMANN:

Yes, they were all sent out.

MR. FISCHOFF:

I don't have a diary for those, but I'm sure they're in my diary.

MS. FUHRMANN:

As you may recall, at the end of last year, Lance sent us all a memo giving all the dates from January through December as he does every year since he has become Director.

MS. LEBOW:

Now it may be difficult to project an entire year with any degree of accuracy. Do you want to do it for six months and then do another one for six months, which might give us some leeway with things that are coming up rather than plan a whole year's meeting?

DR. GITTELMAN:

If it would be all right, let's just leave the three months as scheduled.

MR. LEBOW:

I'm not talking about these three months. I'm addressing what she just said about another calendar for next year.

DR. GITTELMAN:

The way that we did it this year and Lance prepares the calendar, sends it out, and then we make modifications on it at the beginning of the year. If we can repeat that, that would be fine with me.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Such as one of these was originally scheduled for – I think it was actually the September meeting was scheduled for the first night of Rosh Hashanah.

MR. FISCHOFF:

And we couldn't change Rosh Hashanah, so we had to change the meeting.

MS. LEBOW:

You couldn't?

MS. FUHRMANN:

Actually it's Shemini Eretz, if anybody cares.

DR. GITTELMAN:

If someone does, let us know.

DR. PECORALE:

What was that?

MS. FUHRMANN:

It's Shemini Eretz. It's the day before Shimchas Torah.

MS. LEBOW:

Those are two things he doesn't know what you're talking about.

MR. FISCHOFF:

I bet he does.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I think he does.

MS. FUHRMANN:

He was a teacher for many years and a school administrator, so I'm sure he knows about these things. If not, I'll enlighten him in the car on the way home.

MR. FISCHOFF:

But I don't think he knew about the day before.

DR. GITTELMAN:

May I move to unfinished business? Is there any?

MS. FUHRMANN:

That was unfinished.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Okay. New business?

MS. LEBOW:

I just want to ask a question. Lance, did anything ever come of that person I put you in touch with for looking into a chess exhibit with chess in the Vanderbilt era?

MR. MALLAMO:

Actually, I had an appointment scheduled with him, and I had to cancel it due to a family problem. My son's apartment was burglarized that day. But I will follow up again and reschedule that with him.

MS. FUHRMANN:

That sounds like an interesting exhibit.

MS. LEBOW:

He has what is known as the Long Island Chess Museum. He has the largest individual collection.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Is that in Huntington?

MS. LEBOW:

Commack. He has the largest individual collection of chess sets in the country. He may have some very interesting ones that would relate to the Vanderbilt era. I just thought that might make a very interesting exhibit.

MR. MALLAMO:

The day I was going to go, Florence couldn't make it. I was hoping she would join me to see those, so I will re-contact him, and we'll try to reschedule and set that up again.

MS. LEBOW:

Good. It just sounded to me like to it might be a very jazzy and fun experience.

MR. FISCHOFF:

And I bet he's dying to show off his collection.

MS. LEBOW:

Always, any day.

MR. MALLAMO:

He had a Vanderbilt set somewhere.

MS. LEBOW:

You know people like that.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Okay, there has been no new business proposed, and there has been no request for an executive session. Do I have a motion to adjourn?

MS. FUHRMANN:

Yes, motion.

MR. FISCHOFF:

Second.

DR. GITTELMAN:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstained? **We're adjourned. (Vote: 8/0/0/6
Absent: Mr. Luecke, Mr. Shaw, Ms. Periconi, Mr. LaBua, Mr.
Broxmeyer & Mr. Rogers)**

(Dr. Gittelman adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.)

SG/ap