

SUFFOLK COUNTY VANDERBILT MUSEUM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Board of Trustees was held on August 15, 2007 in the Planetarium Lobby, Centerport, New York.

The following were in attendance:

Dr. Steven Gittelman - President
David D'Orazio - Secretary
Maria Figalora - Trustee
Marjorie Kossoy Fuhrmann - Trustee
Susan LeBow - Trustee
Dr. William Rogers - Trustee
Dr. Anthony Pecorale - Trustee
Carol Hart - Acting Executive Director
John Pokorny - Staff
Ann Marie Pastore - Stenographer

Absent:

Daniel Olivieri - 1st Vice President
Gretchen Oldrin-Mones - 2nd Vice President
Michael B. DeLuise - Treasurer
William Macchione - Trustee
Ronald Parr - Trustee
Matthew Swinson - Trustee

(Dr. Gittelman called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M.)

DR. GITTELMAN:

This is a regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Vanderbilt Museum. There doesn't appear to be any guests in attendance, so I guess we can dispense with having a list.

May I have a motion to approve the minutes?

MR. D'ORAZIO:

Motion.

DR. ROGERS:

Second.

MS. FUHRMANN:

I just have one comment. On page five, first paragraph, eighth line, the word should be "automotive" not "automative."

MS. LEBOW:

God bless you.

MS. FUHRMANN:

I'm sure it was my mistake. I'm sure I wasn't clear when I spoke.

DR. GITTELMAN:

All in favor? Opposed? **Motion carries. (Vote: 7/0/0/8 Absent: Mr. Olivieri, Ms. Oldrin-Mones, Mr. DeLuise, Mr. Macchione, Mr. Parr & Mr. Swinson. Two vacant positions.)**

Todd Shapiro is not here. In terms of a Public Relations Report, anecdotally I can tell you that I saw three articles in the past month. One was approximately on page three or four in *Newsday* where they talked about the Vanderbilt as cool. They were speaking in particular about our air conditioning system. The other article that I saw was a front page article in *Suffolk Life*, which was very nice. It was a very nice article. I got a couple of comments from a few Legislators on that. Then there was a recent article in Section G in the Sunday *Newsday*, which spoke to the issue of Lance, his accomplishments, the Board's relationship with the County, and Lance leaving. I imagine there were others that I didn't see. Do you know of any, Carol?

MS. HART:

Yes, we had some press coverage on our Alex Torres concert. It appeared in several local papers, as well as some of our other ongoing events.

DR. GITTELMAN:

We will try to catch up by having some kind of clippings available for the next meeting, if we can, if anything comes out between the two meetings. We will say that's our Public Relations Report.

Bill Macchione is not here tonight. Buildings and Grounds Committee, I guess there is no report, unless you have something to add, Carol.

MS. HART:

No.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Development Committee, David.

MR. D’ORAZIO:

We had the Alex Torres night. It was a success. Everybody that went had a great time. We are now focusing on the “Night at El Morocco” gala. We have had several committee meetings of the actual Gala Committee in the last month.

Maria came tonight with raffles for the event. She surprised us immensely. We started going through them, and I can’t thank her enough. Every year she comes through. You only have to ask once and things just start showing up. We’re off to a great start with the raffles. We had a lot of commitment and a lot of stuff has started coming in for us. We’re not going to be too concerned about that.

We’re working on some new sponsorships that look like they might come to fruition. We’ll have invitations this week, so we can send them out immediately. We just have to approve the final design. We do have a copy to pass around, so we can all take a look at that. The envelope is not the actual envelope for the invitation. I just put it in there so we could pass it around.

Everything is basically in place. Event Pros knows what they have to do. It’s all outlined. I don’t want to tell you all the surprises that we have, but it looks like it’s going to be an exciting night. We have a strong committee to sell the tickets. We’re going to hopefully have a meeting next week to see what everybody has done and then we’ll shame them into selling more.

That’s pretty much where we stand on it. We’re in good shape right now.

MS. FUHRMANN:

My name is misspelled. You’ve got to be kidding me. After all these years.

MR. D’ORAZIO:

It hasn’t been run off yet. We’ll get that corrected.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Anything else under the Development Committee?

MR. D’ORAZIO:

No.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Are you sure?

MR. D’ORAZIO:

Yes, that’s it.

MS. LEBOW:

David, to whom do we give the gifts if we want to donate something?

MS. FUHRMANN:

To me.

MS. LEBOW:

To you, Marge?

MS. FUHRMANN:

Yes.

MS. LEBOW:

Okay.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Marge, Education and Exhibits.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Education and Exhibits has not met since the previous Board Meeting. We are meeting on Tuesday morning at 10:30. Therefore, there is no report at this time, unless, Carol, you have anything you would like to add.

MS. HART:

I will just add that the school brochure went to the post office today.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Thank you very much.

MS. HART:

So that was sent out.

MS. FUHRMANN:

We're pleased to hear that.

MS. HART:

Staff has been working really hard in the last few days collating that. Also, the taxidermists for the whale-shark were here last month for three days, and they're going to be here next week for three days. We're very excited about the work they're doing in the habitat area on the whale-shark, as well as work within the dioramas. They anticipate coming back another three days the end of September and possibly finishing up at that point. There's been a lot of progress on that. We're very excited about that.

DR. PECORALE:

Do you have a potential day to sort of reopen it?

MS. HART:

Well, I would love it to be the gala, but Stephanie feels that might be a little optimistic. I think by the gala we'll certainly be able to open it and see where they are. If not then, then possibly our October Fall Festival. We look forward to that.

MS. FUHRMANN:

We're really trying for the gala. The rest of the place is open. It's just the whale-shark that's not open.

DR. GITTELMAN:

The dioramas have been –

MS. FUHRMANN:

They have been open all summer.

DR. GITTELMAN:

The whale-shark still has a ways to go. Anything else?

MS. FUHRMANN:

No.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Finance Committee, Michael DeLuise is not here. I will report that we have been deluged by requests from the County for all kinds of information that they are seeking in a rush for their budgetary process, both from the County Executive's Office and from the Legislative Budget Review. The requests are extensive, and the deadlines are short. Carol will have to dig her heels in and do her best to fulfill. We only have in one case nine days to answer the County Executive. I don't know how long we have for Budget Review's request, but I hope that they are patient. It does appear as if these requests have been at our doorstep for well over a month and a half. It's something that we have to act on. We kind of got caught in the transition of things.

Refresh my memory, because I forget. Who are the other members of the Audit Committee? It wasn't just Dan alone.

DR. PECORALE:

It wasn't me.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Everybody is saying, no.

MS. FUHRMANN:

What?

DR. GITTELMAN:

The members of the Audit Committee.

DR. PECORALE:

It had to be Mike and –

DR. GITTELMAN:

No, it can't be Mike because the Treasurer and the President are now by law prevented from being on that committee.

MS. FUHRMANN:

The Audit Committee is Dan and isn't it Gretchen?

DR. PECORALE:

I think it was Gretchen.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Wasn't that it?

DR. GITTELMAN:

Just Dan and Gretchen?

MS. FUHRMANN:

I believe that's what you did.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Well Dan and Gretchen – I understand a draft of the audit is available. Unfortunately, Dan is away on vacation, and so is Gretchen. We are under pressure to get it done and in to the County.

DR. PECORALE:

Are we going to go with the same premise as last year?

DR. GITTELMAN:

Which is what?

DR. PECORALE:

I can't even remember which one of the two ways we said we were.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Do you mean whether we were public or – the new rules require us to go as a public institution.

Okay, we'll go to the Interim Director's Report. Carol, do you have a report? Actually, before Carol makes that report – I'm sorry, Carol – there is a missing committee here, and that would be the Search Committee. We have to make that a regular report. The Search Committee is Dan, Gretchen and Matt Swinson. I asked Matt to chair it. My understanding is that they did put together a job description, and they have placed advertisements. I cannot report to you as to where they placed them, but maybe you can.

MS. FUHRMANN:

I don't know if they did, but they did contact me and asked me for some on-line sites that I was familiar with that has high traffic for resume perusals, and I gave them to them.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I was under the impression that they had placed an ad. Do you know differently?

MS. HART:

I know they were talking about the AAM, which was the first and obvious place to put it.

MS. FUHRMANN:

I suggested the AAM as well as gave them some on-line sites.

DR. GITTELMAN:

We all suggested that. That was done within two weeks of the last meeting. Carol, go ahead.

MS. HART:

It's an honor to be here. I am looking forward to working with all of you. I've had an opportunity in the past to work with some of you and in recent days with the Development Committee. I'm very excited about the many, many opportunities that are here at the Vanderbilt Museum.

In the most recent days, I've been really focusing on getting a handle on a lot of our management issues and the finances. The finances is really what I'm going to be focusing on now and even just getting a strong feel for where the information is. That's some of what we've been dealing with today, just finding out how things are filed and where they are. I've been talking to many different people at the County and building those relationships. I thank everyone for the help they've been giving. People at the County have been wonderful in assisting me. I look forward to all the hard work that's coming in the upcoming months.

I'm particularly excited about the gala. As we all know, it's really a critical event for us, particularly at this time. I know I'll be working hard on that, especially with getting sponsorships. If anyone has any leads or would like me to meet with someone or go with them to meet with someone, I would be happy to do that.

In addition, once we get the invitations, I'll probably be mailing out some envelopes and some packets to you. If you have people, it's always helpful for you to hand-write and maybe write a little note, "I'd like to see you there." There, too, if you need any help, or even if you just want to give me some addresses and names, we can send them out from my office.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Anything else?

MS. HART:

No, I think that's it for now.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Now I get to my report. I think we're off to a start. I'm surprised at the deluge of things that have to be dealt with from the County. I wish they hadn't all come at once and all now. Carol will have to focus in the near term over the next week. We must fulfill the requests from the County Executive and Budget Review. I would ask to give her peace until next Friday to get what needs to be done.

From my standpoint, I'm glad to work with Carol. I look forward to the relationship. I feel that transitions are always tough, and this one is probably no exception. There is a lot going on.

One of the things that apparently went on was that Florence Ogg has resigned. She has retired.

DR. PECORALE:

Florence Ogg has retired?

DR. GITTELMAN:

Yes.

MS. HART:

Effective September 14.

DR. PECORALE:

But not effective yet?

MS. HART:

No.

DR. GITTELMAN:

But she's on vacation.

MS. HART:

Actually she's been in. She will be taking off a week or so coming up. Shortly after the last Board Meeting she put in her letter saying that she intended to retire.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I think that there's a lot to focus on and a lot to focus on at the same time. I don't want the County's demands to get lost in the shuffle. I'm also very concerned that the gala doesn't get lost in the shuffle as well. We have the beginning of the school year coming soon. Carol has her hands full. It could be a very rugged few months, and I want you all to be aware of that.

I have also spoken to the County and want to make sure that their requests – I wanted to hear what their requests were, why they were making the requests and what the history of the requests were. The impression I got from them was that they felt Carol had responded very well to their questions. It will take some work to get through it. That's all.

MS. FIGALORA:

When were these requests submitted?

MS. LEBOW:

They were lost for a month and a half?

DR. GITTELMAN:

They just didn't get acted on. They didn't come to us, and they didn't get acted on. Any old business? New business?

DR. PECORALE:

Steve?

DR. GITTELMAN:

I'd like to have the minutes reflect that the Board of Education extends its best wishes to Florence Ogg on the occasion of her retirement and –

MS. FUHRMANN:

No, the Board of Trustees.

DR. PECORALE:

Yes, the Board of Trustees, and that we wish her well on her retirement and that we thank her for her many years of outstanding service to the museum.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I'll second that. I should add to that. I have spent many hours speaking to Florence about Willie K., or K, or II whatever you want to call him. She was quite a treasure trove of information. She did a fine job of overseeing the archives. She does deserve quite a bit of credit for having organized our paper records the way they are. It will make whoever is overseeing them in the future a lot easier. I think it will be a very smooth transition. I agree with you.

DR. PECORALE:

I move that the motion be made unanimous.

DR. GITTELMAN:

So moved. Okay, any new business? We have not established the need for an executive session; therefore, there will be none. Just as a reminder, we are now on a monthly business meeting schedule.

MS. LEBOW:

The next meeting is –

DR. GITTELMAN:

The third Wednesday of the month.

MS. LEBOW:

Which would be the 19th of September.

DR. PECORALE:

Could we get together the calendar so we know what they are?

MS. LEBOW:

Well, then it would be October 17, then November 21 and December 19.

MS. FUHRMANN:

Do you want to do it so close to Christmas?

MS. LEBOW:

Do you want to do it the week before?

DR. GITTELMAN:

Maybe we can deal with that when we get closer.

MS. HART:

I should just also mention that September 19 we're having a networking meeting of the Melville/East Farmingdale Chamber of Commerce.

DR. GITTELMAN:

So we'll meet in the other office.

MS. HART:

Not in this building but out in the courtyard, but part of our excitement about having them come was the opportunity maybe to do some networking. I believe they're coming 6:30 to 9:00. Maybe we could move this meeting a little earlier or a little later, so maybe we could do a little networking.

DR. PECORALE:

Make it the week before or the week after.

MS. LEBOW:

The week before is Rosh Hashanah.

DR. GITTELMAN:

We can't do that. And the week after?

MS. D'ORAZIO:

What about having it the night of and actually anybody who wanted to go could network after the meeting?

MS. LEBOW:

We could meet in the building.

DR. GITTELMAN:

We could still meet here and then walk over there. Let's do that.

MS. HART:

I was just wondering if you could move this meeting like a half hour earlier? Maybe we could start the meeting a little bit earlier to give everybody time to get down there. Maybe even a little bit later – like a half hour later?

DR. GITTELMAN:

What time does their event start?

MS. HART:

Their event starts 6:30 to 9:00.

MS. LEBOW:

We have time to get there before 9:00.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I don't know. This meeting was short but –

MS. LEBOW:

I have another suggestion. Why don't we send out a notice to all the Trustees that if they come early, they can network from 6:00 to 7:15 and then we could –

MS. HART:

That's their start time. Michael Deluise is very involved in that organization. He set this up. He's Vice President. I really should be there also. That's my only problem.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Well, can we move it to the 26th?

MS. PASTORE:

I will be on vacation that week.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Not only that but it gets too close to the gala.

MS. LEBOW:

Could we do it Tuesday the 18th instead of the 19th?

DR. GITTELMAN:

I can't do that. When is the gala?

MS. LEBOW:

The 29th.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Okay.

MS. LEBOW:

What about Tuesday the 11th?

DR. GITTELMAN:

I can't do that date.

DR. PECORALE:

Make an executive decision, Steve.

DR. GITTELMAN:

All right, Thursday, September 20 to be confirmed. If I have to, I'll make it a non-business meeting at 7:00.

MS. HART:

I'll send everyone invitations and the website link to this chamber. I think we're hoping to make some good contacts. These are the corporations on the 110 corridor.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Is there a motion to adjourn?

MS. FUHRMANN:

Motion.

DR. PECORALE:

Second.

DR. GITTELMAN:

We stand adjourned. All in favor? Opposed? **Motion carries. (Vote: 7/0/0/8 Absent: Mr. Olivieri, Ms. Oldrin-Mones, Mr. DeLuise, Mr. Macchione, Mr. Parr & Mr. Swinson. Two vacant positions.)**

(Dr. Gittelmann adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.)

SG:ap