

SUFFOLK COUNTY VANDERBILT MUSEUM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Board of Trustees was held on July 16, 2008, in the Planetarium Lobby, Centerport, New York.

The following were in attendance:

Dr. Steven Gittelman - President
David D'Orazio - 1st Vice President
Matthew Swinson - 2nd Vice President
Gretchen Oldrin-Mones - Secretary
Dr. William Rogers - Trustee
Carol Ghiorso-Hart - Acting Executive Director
John Pokorny - Staff
Ann Marie Pastore - Stenographer

Absent:

Michael B. DeLuise - Treasurer
Dr. Anthony Pecorale - Trustee
Effie Gicas - Trustee
William Macchione - Trustee
Daniel Olivieri - Trustee
Susan LeBow - Trustee

(Dr. Gittelman called the meeting to order at 8:00 P.M.)

DR. GITTELMAN:

We'll begin the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Board of Trustees meeting. We cannot approve the minutes from the previous Board Meeting because we do not have a quorum. We can discuss the minutes. Gretchen?

MS. OLDRIN-MONES:

Can you just change Atlantis to Atlanta on page six?

DR. GITTELMAN:

Okay, are there any other changes to be made on the minutes? Education and Exhibits, Gretchen.

MS. OLDRIN-MONES:

We continue to have good news from the Education and Exhibits Committee. The Education Building is complete except for further clean-up and re-organization. Beth will be being moving over there next week, starting with the workshop. By September it's expected to be fully utilized for school programs. For the purposes of our programs, the Education Building is in a much better location than the cottage. It's near the Marine Museum and Mansion and offers an attractive outdoor area where students can eat lunch. It will be an exciting and positive change.

The summer programs are doing well. Right now there's the Polynesia Program, which also offers creative and labor intensive projects. Coming up in August is the Shell, Sharks & Sea Stars. Both programs depend heavily on the Marine Museum. Last weekend's family program, during which Sailor's Valentines were produced, went well.

Advertisement has been ongoing. There are two nice mentions of both the planetarium and the Alex Torres concert in this month's *Pulse* magazine. I'll pass that around.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

That's the *Long Island Pulse* magazine, right? There are two separate magazines.

MS. OLDRIN-MONES:

I'm sorry. Yes, it's the *Long Island Pulse* magazine. *Newsday* has placed different calendar events for us. For those of you who haven't already seen the Bridal Planner published by *Newsday* in June, I'll pass that around. In it Paul LoDuca's fiancé models gowns against backdrop scenes here at the Vanderbilt. Stephanie steered the photographers to some unusual settings and you can see the results were spectacular. We also had a quarter page ad in *On Long Island*, which is distributed in hotels, museums, and Chambers of Commerce. I'll pass that around. One more reason to come to the Vanderbilt is that Shakespeare in the courtyard has started with "Romeo and Juliet" for July. "Hamlet" is scheduled for August.

This year's Education brochure will be printed by the County. A big thanks to the County for that. Carol has ideas for some new programs – both public and

education and she's hoping to do some strategic programming that will fit in the time periods when we're traditionally slow. Naturally, the whale shark will now be highlighted in our programs.

As we just saw, the whale shark was completed today. The taxidermists have said they'll never see a fish this size mounted ever again. It reminds us that our collections, like our planetarium, are unique. *Newsday* has been documenting every step of the restoration of the whale shark. Now that he's painted, they'll shoot the last part of the video journal. Incidentally, it was determined how to paint the whale shark from live feed of the whale shark living at the Atlanta Aquarium.

Stephanie reports more good news from the habitat area. The diorama that suffered major water damage has been completely repaired through the grant obtained by Stephanie. She describes it as better than new. Additionally, about nine specimens have come back from the taxidermists and will be put back in place. When the taxidermists finish, they will disassemble the catwalk and the lumber will be used for other projects here. A professional cleaning crew will be hired to clean the habitat from ceiling to floor. Next to be accomplished will be the handicapped ramp, which will be constructed this month as part of the ADA capital project. It will be the same type as we have elsewhere.

Unobtrusive safety railing will be ordered for around the glass floor. Once the space is cleaned and the ramp and railing are up, it's good for occupancy.

Naturally, there is always work to be continued, such as touching up the paintings, but that can still be done after the area is opened.

Very importantly, Stephanie has filed the June 30 interim progress report. All financial reporting is up to date and the taxidermists have been paid to date. Kudos to Stephanie and Dan for all that they have done to bring us to this point where the whale shark and the habitat will once again be available to the public.

Stephanie and all staff are working on the Motor Parkway exhibit and the activities surrounding this year's centennial celebration, such as the Antique Car Show and the 130th birthday celebration. Among other things, Howard Kroplick has provided blown up images of drivers and the parkway from 1908.

Stephanie has two interns for the summer. There has been a steady stream of researchers. Bob King continues to do research on the Vanderbilt's home. Howard Kroplick gave us 10 or 11 copies of his latest book for our gift shop. Kim Mochler is publishing a book "Fatio," the architect who designed Alva base. A couple who write vacation books is doing one on Long Island and included five or six original photos of the museum and grounds. They'll donate some copies for our gift shop.

Unfortunately, the telescope is out for repair, and Mead says it will take about four weeks. There was a defective part in the drive base. Lasers are working well and two more shows have been added on Thursday evenings. The "Our Night Out" program is on the third Sunday in the month and continues to be popular and appeal to families with a wide range of children from infancy up.

The Goto replacement is making progress. I'll leave it to Carol to tell you about the amazing technology and ideas for educational programs and special events that she and staff experienced at the Chicago International Planetarium Society Conference. I'll also let her tell you about how well known and regarded our planetarium is, and how unique we are in providing original programming and live educational programs that address teacher requests and New York State standards. But I think we all know and appreciate how special this place is.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Any questions? Thank you. Development Committee, David.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

As far as the Development Committee is concerned, we're still moving forward with the gala and with a series of events all correlating with the Vanderbilt Cup Anniversary. The Antique Automobile Car Club is going to have their show on October 5. September 19 is the Vanderbilt Gala. I got a call from Todd Shapiro today discussing the possibility of having a junior event also for younger people as part of the entire package of events for that time period. Carol and I will have a discussion on that and look into the logistics and see if that's feasible. Is there anything, Carol, that you want to add as far as invitations or save-the-dates?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes, actually we're almost two months out, so I gave everybody a sample of the sponsorship letter brochure. This has been handed out and will be sent out. If you know of anybody that might want to sponsor the celebration, which would include not only our gala but the Antique Car Show as well, let me know. I will be sending out a cover letter and more sponsorships, and hopefully we'll get some support. It's a really special time, it's not only the 100th anniversary of the Motor Parkway, but a very significant race where the first American car actually won, which was Willie's intention for starting these Vanderbilt Cup Races all along. We're excited about the number of different events and look forward to having people sponsor some parts of these different events. The invitations should be going out in the next two weeks as well, so if any Trustee has any suggestions on what we might add, please let me know. If you would like to come, we will be getting those invitations out soon.

We are fortunate to have the Vanderbilt Cup Regional Antique Automobile Club of America working very hard with us. They have been wonderful volunteers and are coordinating our car event. I'm sure that's going to be very successful. We have been meeting monthly and now bi-weekly for a while, so it should be a very successful day.

Again, if anybody has any personal contacts that you might be able to help us with not only in sponsorships but we will be doing a silent auction, if anyone has any gifts that might be appropriate for that, as well as any people who think might want to come and enjoy the gala with us, it's a beautiful evening. We will be having the Lou Picardi Orchestra playing, as well as a jazz band in the courtyard. The special theme is "A Night at the Races." We're looking to have a lot of fun that evening.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

If I could suggest that we don't forget our recently retired Trustees, Marjorie and Carl Luecke, to make sure we send them invitations. They might actually join us.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes.

MR. SWINSON:

Has anyone actually spoken to either one of them?

DR. GITTELMAN:

I have.

MR. SWINSON:

How are they?

DR. GITTELMAN:

They seem fine. Carl is having what seems to be a wonderful life. I have been exchanging emails with Marge.

MR. SWINSON:

Tell them I said hello and send them my regards.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Will do. Building and Grounds.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

We have been making a lot of progress with our sprinkler systems. There were a lot of repairs that needed to be done with that. We are making a lot of headway. The grounds are looking really good. Staff has really been working overtime making sure we'll be ready for our weddings. We have started our wedding season. From now on, every Saturday there is some event here at our event tent, so we're very busy with that.

We have a number of capital projects going on, as you are all aware. Now I'm meeting twice a week with James Ingenito. He's the architect; he's our liaison with capital projects with DPW. We have about 14 different projects, it seems, going on here at various stages. We're very pleased with the communication we have now with DPW and really look forward to a lot of work starting in the next six months to a year.

DR. ROGERS:

I have questions on this Vanderbilt Audio Tour equipment that I would like to address. One of the questions is the contract and the upfront money and so on, who looks into that and how are we going to handle it?

DR. GITTELMAN:

What are you seeking in terms of looking into?

DR. ROGERS:

Well, the organization that proposes to do this is asking for upfront money, something like \$30,000. I don't generally give upfront money just like that. I don't know anything about the organization. Has the Vanderbilt done a

thorough check up on them? Has it been your opinion now that these are the people you want to go with?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes, I believe that this project goes back a number of years, three or four years. Lance and Stephanie had researched the different vendors and had determined that this vendor was the one they wanted to work with. They are very well known. Most of the major museums in New York City and around the country use them. I think it was determined that this would be a good company for us to work with prior to my being part of this.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I think the question is whether the terms are negotiable because certain – half down and half when they deliver it is –

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes, I think we could certainly talk to them some more. They had presented this proposal to Lance a while back. It's been a while now. We can certainly talk to them some more.

DR. ROGERS:

I'd like if you could look into it and find out what we can do. I will make the funds available, as I said I would, if this is what you want and the conditions in which we're going to enter a contract into are amicable.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Perhaps we can turn it over to the legal department. It's an old contract. Maybe we can get them to be flexible. I'd always rather give less money upfront to them, myself, because it's a lot safer. I think we can talk to them about that.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes, certainly we'll talk to them.

DR. ROGERS:

What's the upfront money for?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

That is divided, I think, into equipment, and then the upfront money is the development of the actual tour itself to start doing the research and prepare the script.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Of course, the equipment is useless to us if we're not happy with the tour.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

I think it's two separate parts.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I don't want the equipment if we're not happy with the tour. I have no use for it. I think we have to come to an arrangement with them where the lion's share of the money comes on our satisfaction of the tour. We'll come back to this again.

MS. OLDRIN-MONES:

Do we own the tours so that people will be able to download onto their i-Pods?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes. We will own it. To work out an arrangement to download it on-line, additional fees come in through companies. We would have to look more into that. We would own it and be able to use it forever if we wanted to.

DR. GITTELMAN:

That also doesn't stop us from using someone else to record a different tour and to get different ownership rights, once we have the equipment. I think we have to look into that also. I mean, we want this to be as flexible as possible. They are only giving us an hour worth of tour. I don't think you can cover all that we need to cover in an hour because you could have 1,000 points of interest. Somebody could then dial into 932 and hear about a particular fish in the Hall of Fishes. So instead of these things being static displays with just numbers and labels, we can actually describe where it's from, who caught it, what's the story behind it, what's interesting, look at the bottom, look at the top, how can you tell it's a male – that kind of thing. I really feel we can bring the museum to life if we get more flexibility to do narration and then I wouldn't be surprised if we could find somebody with a good voice who could do it for us. I think we have to talk to them now because that was always the concept. A one hour tour of the grounds is not the concept. That may be the proposal but it's not the concept. Finance Committee.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

We each have the Treasurer's Report and some additional information to give a better sense of where we are financially compared to other years. I think I'm going to be working with our Finance Committee getting a better dashboard kind of presentation to sort of see where we're at. There is certain key information that it's hard to get into one page.

One of the things, for example, in looking at where our projections were off in May, there were certain things that stood out to me. The Treasurer's Report, it turns out, doesn't reflect grant or grant money that comes in, but it does reflect the expense that goes out. For example, any of the money that we paid the taxidermist this calendar year is reflected in our expenses underneath the professional line. In May there was a big bump there. That's primarily due to the fact that we paid the taxidermist during that month. Any money that we have paid out we've gotten in from IMLS.

DR. GITTELMAN:

When?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Usually right before.

DR. GITTELMAN:

So how are you showing that income?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

It's not showing on the Treasurer's Report. There is a separate line – Barbara was explaining this to me – that there is a separate line in the financials for income of that nature.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Why isn't it on the Treasurer's Report as "other?"

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

It's never apparently been done that way. I'm looking into why that is. In fact, there has been \$49,918 this calendar year which has come in and gone out, but the coming in isn't reflected, but the going out is. It's, again, to get a better idea of the cash flow. I'm going to either talk to our accountant to see if that can be put back on to our Treasurer Report so you can see that or have some other way so you can see.

DR. GITTELMAN:

It can be put on.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes, it just hasn't been for a while apparently. That explains one of the reasons the projections were off. The tent floor was more money than we originally had anticipated, so there is going to be a little bit of a hump in May and June. We did include in our projections money for the floor that was split out over the course of the year, so we're sort of getting the big lump in a couple of months. That explains a little bit more –

DR. GITTELMAN:

You can amortize that expense.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

They will, yes. This is the fluid document. In fact, in talking to our accountant, that's a capital improvement. It might not come up on this kind of report at all. I don't know.

DR. GITTELMAN:

If it doesn't have a useful life for over five years, how can it be a capital improvement?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Well, parts of the floor, I think, have --

DR. GITTELMAN:

Tell them to –

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Anyway, that's what we're in discussions about. Certainly it would be spread out over the year.

DR. GITTELMAN:

If the floor isn't reused because we don't put a new covering over it, then it becomes a useless item. So it's written off because it's got to be removed -- we have to talk to them about this.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Like I said, this is a working document. Things sometimes change. Taking those things into account, we're pretty much where we have projected we would be this month. We're still ahead for the year. We are pretty happy overall. Are there any other questions? It looks like June is about where we projected.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I think the reporting is much improved, but I'm not happy with the way in which some of these idiosyncrasies in the statement just continue onward. I'm very happy that you disclosed them to us, but I'd be happier if the accountant made recommendations in advance to fix them. I also feel that the accountant is a little bit slower to make recommendations in general. I'd like you to consider whether we need a new accountant and come back to us in a future meeting and let us know your opinion.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Okay.

MR. DORAZIO:

Carol, I don't know if you know the answer to this question, or maybe Steve knows it. How long have we been using this accounting firm?

DR. GITTELMAN:

The auditors or –

MR. D'ORAZIO:

Not the auditors.

DR. GITTELMAN:

The accountant, Michael, it would seem to me about ten years or more. Sometimes somebody is good in the time and place and other times I'm finding him to be difficult to get him to move along with the needs of the institution. I'm uncomfortable with that. Audit Committee.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

We do have an appointment on August 1 with the auditors and the committee. We should have an Audit Report after that meeting. It's been hard to get the auditors to meet with us.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Do you want to describe what you mean by hard?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

It's been about a month and a half, I guess, since we first started asking for a meeting and expected something sooner. Their availability was not quite there.

DR. GITTELMAN:

What do you mean their availability wasn't quite there?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

August 1 was the first available time since mid-June when we first asked for a date.

DR. GITTELMAN:

So you're saying to me that we have an auditing company that won't meet with us for a month and a half when our audit is past due?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Any particular reason? Are they ill?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

I'm not aware of any illness.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Are they out of town?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

I think because of the summer vacations they were out of town for some part of that. Hopefully on August 1 we will have some answers.

DR. GITTELMAN:

So what you're saying to me is that our audit is delayed because the auditors don't want to meet with us or are unavailable to meet with us? I'm not seeking any information on anything other than their willingness to meet with this institution. Have they been paid everything that they are owed?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Are we behind in any way, shape or form financially to them?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

No.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Has there been any dispute or anything that should cause them to not show up?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

No.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

How many meetings did you have with them this year in 2008?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

I think we had a meeting in January and I don't think we've met since then because there was one issue that we were discussing and --

DR. GITTELMAN:

And we can't have those issues coming before the open board. The reason for that, for the record, is that neither the Treasurer or the President can be part of any of those issues. If you want to go into executive session to discuss the issue, we can, but we can't vote on it because we don't have a quorum. So without discussing any particular issues, are they aware that this is a statutory audit that we are delinquent on?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes, they are aware of that.

DR. GITTELMAN:

And they are not willing to meet with us until August.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

That was the earliest date they gave us.

DR. GITTELMAN:

When was the audit complete?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

The audit was complete mid-January.

DR. GITTELMAN:

So we have been delayed seven months waiting for the auditors to finish something technical.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes.

DR. ROGERS:

It doesn't sound right.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Has anybody refused to meet with them?

MR. D'ORAZIO:

I don't think, to be honest with you, I don't think Carol is very qualified to answer that kind of question. The Treasurer should answer those questions.

DR. GITTELMAN:

He's not here.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

Then we should wait for the Treasurer so we can talk about it.

DR. GITTELMAN:

The Treasurer is not allowed to participate with the Audit Committee. That's the problem, David.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

I understand that, but where is the Chairman of the Audit Committee?

DR. GITTELMAN:

He's not here.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

Then we should wait until he's here to talk about that.

DR. GITTELMAN:

That will be in two months from now.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

He's probably got all the information that we need.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Fine.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

If you want to have another meeting next month, we can get in touch with him and make sure he's here.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I was thinking that given our attendance, that we might not have a meeting in August. We do usually cancel our August meeting.

DR. ROGERS:

I would think that we should meet at least every three months to see what's going on and what has to be corrected.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

You mean with the auditors?

DR. ROGERS:

Yes.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

That's the whole point, and we understand that the point has been made that we haven't met with them in a while, but we don't know why, and Steve can't talk about why and Carol can't talk about why.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Carol can.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

But she can't talk about it in open forum.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I can leave.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

It doesn't behoove us at this point to beat a dead horse. Let's get the Chairman of the Audit Committee to come in and discuss it.

DR. ROGERS:

I think we ought to take steps to make sure that it happens quickly instead of waiting two months for it.

MR. D'ORAZIO:

Carol, can you get in touch with Dan Olivieri, who is the Chairman of the Committee? Maybe we can light a fire and we can do whatever we have to do to get this going.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Sure.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Okay, Carol, your report.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

It's been a very exciting day with the completion of the whale shark. We have a lot to look forward to in the next two months. We hope to have on August 1 a preview where we will invite people who have been an integral part of this process, including our County Legislators and the County Executive's Office, as well as State officials. We have had a federal grant through IMLS. It took a lot of people and a lot of hard work. Stephanie Gress certainly coordinated and did an incredible job. It's something that many adults and children have been waiting for. We frequently get questions about where our big whale shark is. It's going to be very exciting to point them to the habitat room. We look forward to that August 1 grand opening preview and press day. August 9 will be our public grand opening. We expect a very large turnout for that. *Newsday* has been covering this story for the past year. It's going to be a really wonderful on-line video. A lot of research went into that. It should be a nice *Newsday* article, as well. That's really an exciting thing.

We also have staff from the planetarium, Dave, Lorraine and I went to Chicago for the International Planetary Society meetings and had the opportunity to meet with planetarium people from all over the world, astronomers and astronauts. It was very thrilling to see the latest technology. Because this meeting meets every two years, companies wait until this particular meeting to unveil their latest, so we actually found that in the last year since Lorraine and Dave did some of their research on planetarium projectors and video equipment, there have been some new developments. It was very exciting to be able to see these things firsthand.

I had gone to Nashville, Tennessee, prior to this meeting to look at a new planetarium that was opening that weekend and to see their new Goto projector and to talk to the Director of that Planetarium and make some inquiries. Then from there I talked to other people from Japan, Germany, England, and Montreal who were considering purchases as well to see what kinds of experiences they had had, so that was very helpful. Then at the meetings, it was great to talk to directors and people making equipment purchases and people who were working with us, as well as the vendors. I learned quite a bit and got to see some of the

new Zeiss equipment and Minolta equipment. There is a lot out there. It was a wonderful experience for us all.

What was most exciting to me was that people knew the Vanderbilt. Again, these were people from all over the world. When I said I was from the Vanderbilt, they didn't have to ask where or who, they knew us. We have a world-wide reputation. It was really nice to be treated with that sort of respect. When people asked, "How big is your dome," I said, "We have a 60 foot dome." They were impressed with that. We have a reputation for our programming that people remember. This goes back to the '70's. I think it was an inspiration to the staff to see that we want to be world class. We want to continue that, and we will in the next year, once we get our new equipment. We will have an opportunity to live up to that reputation that we have and to grow even stronger.

Coming back from that meeting, I had a number of conversations with Jim Ingenito. We will be hiring a consultant to help us develop an RFP for our purchases and give us more expert advice and to be able to work with us so that we do have a good, competitive bid. It was a very worthwhile and exciting trip. In two years the meeting is in Alexandria, Egypt. I'm saving my money. Again we made a lot of contact. We also went to a lot of interesting sessions to see what other museums are doing, what other education programs or ideas that we can borrow with their blessings. It was a wonderful experience for us all.

In the last two months a lot has gone on. We did present our Operating Budget to the County Executive's Office. We had a wonderful meeting, but I'll let Steve talk a little bit more about our walk-through with some of our County Legislators. That was a nice opportunity. With the nice weather I'm getting more and more opportunity to show off the museum with the different visitors and all the programs we have going on and once again appreciating how special and wonderful this museum is and the variety that we have to offer people. We have extended hours in July, so that on Thursdays and Fridays the mansion area is open until 7:30. We have tours going out at 6:00 and 7:00. We also have planetarium shows on Thursday night. We're trying things out. I'm not sure we're going to continue as late as 7:30 in August, but we are trying different venues for advertising and trying to appeal to different kinds of people. Staff has been very excited about trying new things. We are trying a new tour on Saturdays. Our Living History tours have been wonderfully successful as well. There is a lot going on there.

I have been reviewing our security and have proposals from three companies, in addition to the company we have right now. I would like to get a contract signed with a company shortly. That's another area that we have been looking at closely.

Just to remind everyone, the gala is coming up. We can use all the help we can get on our sponsorships and invitations.

MR. SWINSON:

What's the date on that, again?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

It is Friday, September 19.

MR. D’ORAZIO:

Carol, do you have additional sponsorship –

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes, there is a pile over there. You can take some, and we will be mailing some more out to you.

MR. SWINSON:

Is it possible to get that in an email?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes.

MR. SWINSON:

Perfect.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

We will get that in an email format for you as well as one you can print out, as well as some donations forms. I know you are wonderful at getting donations. I will get you those forms as well. So it’s been a really busy time. I thank Steve for all the work he is putting in, not only as John the Gardener, but as our leader here. We have had to do a lot of talking with different people in the County. I will let Steve tell you about the visit we had as well.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Just as you folks did today, we were fortunate to have Legislators join us and tour the grounds. They actually took a more intense look at some of the decay that I showed you. This was in the context of a very difficult appropriation season. This was the toughest appropriation season we have had. This was very hard. We, unfortunately, began with having every one of our programs for 2009 vetoed by the County Executive. He has a tough budget this year. We understand that. The only program that was left was the building facades. The building facades project is the life and death of this institution. If we don’t stabilize these buildings, in terms of the stucco and the decorative elements, we will just be dealing with sand piles. I am very grateful to him for having done that.

What’s bewildering about it is that it’s not a one-year project. It’s not something somebody can appropriate and say, “I fixed it.” It almost falls into continuing maintenance now, like, as you saw, the stucco continues to decay, and you can’t have the whole building netted. It just doesn’t work.

On top of that, around the flashing around the roofs, there are leaks. So that wonderful bathroom that I think all of you have seen in Willie K.’s bedroom, it’s closed to the public now for two years. I have a personal affection for it because I used to hide in the shower and jump out as John the Gardener and scare our guests. I can’t do that anymore because our guests aren’t allowed to go in it. When you go into Mrs. Vanderbilt’s dressing room, the ceiling is peeling. In Mr. Vanderbilt’s bedroom, the ceiling is peeling. I remember one of the last things that Carol did before she left on her first life here at the museum. I remember her sitting on scaffolding fixing the ceiling. I didn’t expect for it to peel so quickly, but there are leaks that we can’t fix. In other words, we can’t do

anything about it. We are powerless to fix it. Wherever you see a leak, it's going to get worse. It's very hard to push for projects when you have such fundamentals. It's hard to keep people from looking up. It's just like that.

I expressed to you, this was the first time, this was the first summer ever in over a decade where I actually went through a Sunday and every single tour had at least one person who said, "What's wrong?" I never experienced that before.

I know you all heard this before. I guess I feel like I have to say it. It's something that we all have to be aware of. In our capital projects, we were able to get and we are very grateful for what we got. We were able to get \$450,000 or \$400,000 for Normandy Manor. But that's again, stabilizing the roofs on Normandy Manor. That's one place where we will get a roof and gutter repair. But they did turn down the \$200,000 we needed to convert the building into public occupancy use. Unfortunately, we won't be able to use it for the public, which was our intended purpose. It's a great building. Thank God we saved it.

One of the other problems is that when Cornell Extension was in the building, the boathouse perhaps was put under more burden than it could handle. DPW seemed to recognize this and asked them to leave. They left. They were given very little notice, and for that I'm very, very sorry. All you need do is go under the building and see that its infrastructure is crumbling. We can't say that it was due to Cornell because we don't know. They had water tanks in there circulating water, and water is very heavy when you put enough of it together. There might have been too much of a load bearing on the floor, but whatever it is, now the money that we had to save the facades on that building to make it an anchor for our waterfront, that money had to go to stabilizing the underpinnings of the building as opposed to making it appealing. We need more money to save the building, another \$400,000.

We had a lot of capital projects. Thank God nothing in 2008 was stopped. It's just future money that was stopped. Our future looks difficult.

We do have new Trustees that I understand are being considered or folks that may be considered. I look forward to maybe getting some folks that can help us raise some money because we're going to need it.

In the meantime, being here this summer has been a particular delight for me. I have been lucky enough to come here almost every Sunday for Living History. You get a sense for the place as being a very vital, breathing place. The Living History tours have been moderately busy, not overwhelmingly busy. It's been a lot of fun. For me, sharing it with Emily it's a bonus all together.

I am deeply concerned over the issue of not what's going into the audit, but I am concerned about it not finishing. I know I mentioned that already but I want to say it again. We have to get it out. When you go in front of the Legislature or anybody and if you don't have an audit, you lose the element of credibility. We killed ourselves to have this done in January and February, and here we are six months later unable to complete it.

What I would ask our Vice President to do is to follow up on this issue with Dan, if you would. If need be, follow up with the auditors. I would really appreciate that. I am powerless to do anything about it.

The whale shark is something that if everything I said to you sounds a little bit sad, the whale shark is an absolute triumph. I think it was ten years ago that I had to close that room because part of the room was at the edge of that Belgium block courtyard because it's underneath and it leaked like crazy. When you walked into it, you have to look up next time. I should have pointed it out to you, but when you walk through the door, if you look straight up you can see the freezers as they were. We lost the freezers but we indented the ceiling a little bit so that we can get air conditioning in there. That's where the air ducts are, but we really will have a fabulous exhibit. It's one of the most perfect jewels anywhere. It's really worth coming to see. I don't care if you're from Georgia or California, it's worth the trip. When you come to New York, this is the star attraction in Suffolk County. If you're coming out to Suffolk County, you better go to the Vanderbilt Museum. I just want to come to a place and see that. I'm really proud to see that open. I'm really excited about the fact that, okay, fine, I've seen it closed, and now I'm seeing it open. There is a sense of progress. It's a mixed bag.

I'm very grateful to the Legislators who came here -- Legislator Alden, Legislator Beedenbender, Legislator Cooper's Aide, and Terry Pearsall from the Presiding Officer's office. Jon Cooper came on Sunday and went to Living History and had a great time. After waiting a whole summer hoping to see Jon come to the Living History tour, because it is his habit to show up unexpectedly, I missed him because I went home at 3:00. I never go home at 3:00. It's the first time I left in the middle of the day for ten years and Jon showed up. Anyway, Emily was here to see him. It was wonderful.

That's it. Any questions? Old business? New business? We cannot establish the need for an executive session. Can I have a motion to adjourn?

MR. D'ORAZIO:

Motion.

MS. OLDRIN-MONES:

Second.

DR. GITTELMAN:

We stand adjourned.

(Dr. Gittelman adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.)

SG:ap