

## **SUFFOLK COUNTY VANDERBILT MUSEUM**

### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

#### **MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Board of Trustees was held on July 15, 2009, in the Planetarium Lobby, Centerport, New York.

**The following were in attendance:**

Noel Gish - President  
Michael B. DeLuise - 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Matthew Swinson - 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Ronald Beattie - Treasurer  
Gretchen Oldrin Mones - Secretary  
Sarah Anker - Trustee  
Donald McKay - Trustee  
Dr. Steven Gittelman - Trustee  
Dr. William Rogers - Trustee  
Carol Ghiorso-Hart - Executive Director  
Barbara Oster - Staff  
Lorraine Vernola - Staff  
Peter Newman - Staff  
Randy Lang - Staff  
Michael Iadevaia - Accountant  
Jill Moss - Budget Review Office  
Stephanie Gress - Staff  
Emily Gittelman  
Ann Marie Pastore - Stenographer

**Absent:**

Daniel Olivieri - Trustee  
Arthur M. Sillman, Jr. - Trustee  
Lynn Dwyer - Trustee  
Thomas D. Glascock - Trustee  
Dr. Anthony Pecorale - Trustee

**(Mr. Gish called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.)**

**MR. GISH:**

I would like to ask everyone to stand for the pledge to the flag, please.

(Salute to the Flag.)

**MR. GISH:**

Do we have a list of guests in attendance?

**MS. PASTORE:**

Yes.

**MR. GISH:**

Thank you. Can I have a motion to accept the minutes of the last meeting?

**MS. OLDRIN MONES:**

Motion.

**MR. DELUISE:**

Second.

**MR. GISH:**

Any questions? All in favor? Opposed? **Motion carries. (Vote: 7/0/0/8 Not Present: Ms. Anker & Mr. Swinson. Absent: Mr. Glascock, Ms. Dwyer, Mr. Olivieri, Dr. Pecorale & Mr. Sillman. One vacant position.)**

Is there anybody from the Oversight Committee here today that would like to address the Board? Is there anybody from the community that has a concern about the cell tower issue?

I would like to take this time to introduce our newest Trustee to the Vanderbilt Board. Don McKay comes to us from Huntington.

**MR. MCKAY:**

Yes, born and raised.

**MR. GISH:**

So he is a Long Islander through and through. We're glad you're with us. I believe that the appointment was made on June 6<sup>th</sup> or somewhere around there. You missed the last meeting, so you were

assigned three new committee assignments, and I will advise you of those in short order.

Is there anyone to address the Board at this time? Okay, we'll go to Committee reports. Gretchen, Education and Exhibits.

**MS. OLDRIN MONES:**

Designing and producing the Education Brochure for the 2009-2010 school year has been and remains our number one priority. Staff has revised, edited and proofed the latest version of the brochure. Changes and suggestions have come in from staff, from Mike Pesale – is that how you say his name?

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

Yes.

**MS. OLDRIN MONES:**

Okay – he is the graphic designer who works here on Tuesdays, Trustees and from Tom Curran, who is also helping out. It's hoped the finished product will highlight the vibrant programs at the Vanderbilt in an updated and eye catching way.

In other news, two part-time educators have been hired to fill existing vacancies. Jennifer and Kathleen are working out very well and will be an asset for the summer programs and camps.

Attendance has been very good, and things have been quite busy. Living History is doing exceptionally well. Normally we would have hired additional part-time people, but we have been fortunate to have six volunteers who are highly qualified and educated to fill various roles, as they assist Stephanie and help handle increased volume.

These volunteers who are interning and doing community service are working as greeters, archival assistants and one, a marine biologist, is helping with the collections. She has already transcribed and catalogued the entire photograph collection. However, Stephanie is only one person. There is only a limited number of interns she can train and supervise while she performs all her other jobs, which she does so well.

Stephanie has also been busy dealing with the many researchers who contact her for appointments and documentation. She had a request for photographs of Fishers Island and for the original blueprints, which were then used to get approval for renovations for Alva Base. The

developers were thrilled with the materials that she provided. They were able to make appropriate adjustments and preserve the integrity of an historic Vanderbilt home. Not only are the archives making money for us; in this case, the happy clients reciprocated by providing Stephanie with information they possessed.

The reviews from BOCES are in, and they are all glowing reports in praise of our education programs. But perhaps the highest and best feedback is from the children themselves.

I just wanted to read a couple of letters that we got from one class that visited at the end of May. I will pass around the rest of the letters because they are just charming. Each child seems to like something different about the Vanderbilt. How lucky that we have so many different things to look at and to enjoy.

One of the letters says, and it's addressed to Mr. Nick, who is an educator, "Thank you for the great tour of the Vanderbilt Museum. My favorite part was the marine exhibit because my mom is a marine biologist, so I'm really into marine life. When we went to the marine exhibit, I learned that Mr. Vanderbilt was an amazing fisherman and caught a Manta Ray that took him quite a few hours to reel. After we left we went to the planetarium and saw a show. My favorite part of the show was when we saw a simulation of the solar eclipse. It was cool!" The drawings are really unbelievable. They are fabulous.

Catherine says, "I thank you for all the time you spent and talked with us. I loved the car room because we learned that he was a great racer and the car was amazing." If you read the letters, you will see the word amazing used quite a bit. The pictures were, too. "I wish I could have seen him race. I liked learning from you about the car and the trunk. After we went to the planetarium and it really rained. I loved how it felt. I loved it but it felt like we were moving. I got something at the gift shop too."

**MR. GISH:**

Thank you.

**MS. OLDRIN-MONES:**

There are plenty of letters to look at. That's the end of the report.

**MR. GISH:**

It's critical in view of the fact that part of our mission – the first part of our mission is education and then the enjoyment of the people of

Suffolk County. So for kids to enjoy a day at the museum and a day at the planetarium is critical. Finance, Ron.

**MR. BEATTIE:**

Okay, I think everybody has copies of the Treasurer's Report. It's two pages long. I don't think there is anything unusual about it from the previous years, but Carol pointed out to me today that on the Treasurer's Report in terms of the actual versus the budget and the variance you will note that there is a \$7,000 overage in professional services. It's really an accounting thing that we have to work through because most of that – well, \$15,000 needs to be applied to that, which is based on a grant for the refurbishment of the habitat. That's it on the Finance Committee.

**MR. GISH:**

Ron, Buildings and Grounds.

**MR. BEATTIE:**

Do we need to have a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report?

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

No.

**MR. BEATTIE:**

Sorry, different organization.

Development, a couple of things in the Development Committee. I have been asked to present the information from Lynn in terms of getting a development consultant. The status of that is, and this was reviewed yesterday with the Oversight Committee, the RFP that Lynn had done – she did a great job putting together. It was reviewed by Terry, Lance and Jill of the County. We're estimating the bids will probably be coming in at \$3,000 to \$7,000 per month. Lynn has done extensive research on firms to send this to and has selected a short list of four to send this out to. If we get it out to them, we're hoping to have the developing consultant on board by mid August. Is that something that needs to have the Board vote on today whether we're going to send this RFP out for bids?

**MR. GISH:**

I don't think so. Do we need Board approval for approval for an RFP to go out?

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

I don't think so. It has been budgeted.

**MR. BEATTIE:**

So I guess we'll ask Lynn to submit those to the four and see what we get back.

**MR. GISH:**

That sounds fine.

**MR. BEATTIE:**

Some of the other stuff on rebranding, with the new logo and standardization that we have been going through and was presented last month, we have also – I think he mentioned a payment donation of a high-end photographer. That photographer is actually meeting with Carol and Tom tomorrow. They're going to do a walk-through and identify the areas that we want to get photographs for in the brochure material. The same thing applies for the memorial bricks and the benches, so that everything has that same context in terms of the photography.

I spoke with him for about an hour and a half about some of my ideas in terms of what we might be able to do. I am going to be out of town, but it will be in Carol's capable hands to take care of that.

We had a meeting of the Development Committee, and we decided that in order of priority the new materials that we're going to work on once we get these photos taken – and by the way, they could happen very quickly. Within a week of the photos being taken, they can be incorporated into the design work that Tom is going to be working on. By the way, education brochure wise is our number one priority. He wants to get photos for that.

Gretchen had a great idea about taking some of the artwork from the letters that she just went through and trying to incorporate them into the educational brochure, as well. I'm going to talk to Tom about that. Carol is going to get him the word file for the content of that. He is going to relay it out and then meet with Michael to kind of teach him what the standards are and everything. He's going to start with the layout and then work up through there.

The new material that we're talking about is, number one, the educational brochure, an overall brochure of what the Vanderbilt has to offer. The third priority is takeaways. Takeaways are when people

buy tickets to the Vanderbilt, it's the map that they get, again, incorporating the photographs that we're talking about and incorporating them in later with signage that is around the property. So if people are down at the mansion, they will see a sign that says "Dinosaurs Live" or something like that. It's all in the same context.

The other thing that we're going to include in the takeaway is a membership brochure. We have kind of identified that we don't do a good job when people come in and buy tickets of letting people know what the value of membership is. If we have that on the takeaway with them, we can at least have that conversation with them, and they realize that in a family of really six, two and four kids, in really just two visits they will have obtained the value of their membership and more. We need to do a better job of selling that when they're buying tickets and hopefully increase membership that way.

Corporate sponsorship brochure, a group tour brochure, membership brochures, a full one, corporate event/event function brochure and new revenue generating website. Once we get all the content on all these other things, we can incorporate that into a revenue generating website.

That's all I have on Development.

**(Mr. Swinson entered the meeting at 6:35 p.m.)**

**MR. GISH:**

Let's now go to someone new, Buildings and Grounds.

**MR. BEATTIE:**

Buildings and Grounds, not too much to report on. First of all, there has been additional landscaping that's been done by Bill Hall, who is a volunteer. We need to give him plenty of kudos for the work he has been doing, especially as a volunteer. There is a project at the arcade to fix the drain issues that we have.

As of yesterday, we are going to schedule a meeting to discuss – and I'm not sure you guys were part of that conversation at the end – what's happening with the capital projects or the seaplane hangar to stabilize it. I think we're finally starting to see some attention being given to that on the Legislative side to find out what's happening with the \$2 million. All we are asking for is to stabilize the building now, not to do some major project.

The Normandy entrance construction has begun. The security lighting is complete, and cameras are being installed. I'm still working on that compilation of all the buildings and grounds that I'm hoping to have done for the next meeting. That's it for Buildings and Grounds.

**MR. GISH:**

I'll just mention our volunteer –

**MR. BEATTIE:**

I did. It was one of the first things I mentioned.

**MR. GISH:**

I'm sorry. Public Relations, Sarah isn't here. Maybe we should just do a quick Tom and Jerry routine on all the things that have been going out dealing with public relations.

The Legislature and a number of other individuals, as well as members, have gotten a hold of the brochure that Carol put together concerning all the things that were happening during the summer starting with the 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities and the Independence Day Festival that Emily so adeptly ran on the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup>. Then we had Tango Night, which again was a big success. If you didn't get a chance to take a peak at that, we did get some kudos from the Oversight Committee yesterday on sort of getting out the advertisement on what we're doing during the summer.

For those of you who have seen the *Pennysaver* we are attempting to sort of sneak into the front page of the *Pennysaver* whenever the price drops. Also *Newsday* on "What's Happening This Week" has been covering us. Our public relations, our exposure has gotten better and better in the last month, at least for people coming and knowing exactly what we're doing.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

It's been wonderful. There are a number of publications that now know if they call or if they have some open space on a front page or a back cover within a couple of hours I might respond. So I am getting those kinds of calls. They know that it's pretty. I think that's an extra little incentive for them to have us with a good placement. We've been taking calls, referring to different events when one of these publications comes out. So we are pleased with that.

**MR. DELUISE:**

Carol, are they donating that space or are we getting it at a good price?

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

We're getting it at a good price. Sarah has also worked on some PR releases. We are getting the word out on our PR.

**MR. GISH:**

As soon as Tom Glascock gets here – I believe he's going to be late and he's going to have to leave early – so when Tom comes in we're going to probably shift very quickly to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Audit choice. We will do that as soon as Tom comes in.

Cell tower update, very quickly, we did have a meeting July 8 for our second cell tower conference with WFC Architects, Neil McDonald from T-Mobile, and their crew to see exactly what type of tower we possibly could install.

Again for those of you who are not familiar with the area we'd like to put the cell tower, as you come into the Vanderbilt, you probably parked on the left. The parking lot to the right, you sort of go down a little bit going east on Little Neck Road. So they're going along parallel to Little Neck Road, that's the spot that they'd like to put the tower. We put the tower up to 120 feet or at least a crane up to 120 feet and then drove around the property to see whether the crane was visible. You could not see it from the mansion, which was a major concern. You could see it from the marine museum but only when you got up on the second floor. Then if you weren't really looking for it – to fall into the vertical lines of the tree pattern.

We then got in the car. We drove around to the other side of Northport Harbor and all the way down to the beaches of Asharoken. There was minimal visibility. You would have to know where – as a matter of fact, we had to sort of scan the horizons and say, "We're over here" to be able to find the tower at 120 feet.

We then had a community meeting, which was set up by Legislator Jon Cooper on July 8. We sent out 5,000 postcards to residents from Northport, Centerport and Asharoken, and anyone who might be able to see the tower and asked them to come. I think the meeting went very well. Peter Matheson is the Deputy Mayor at Asharoken. He came and supported the placing of the tower because he felt that Asharoken needed it for security and emergency services. The Police

Commissioner also came, also recommended it and said he would put up a tower on his property if he had enough land. We had a letter from the Centerport Fire Department also suggesting that that take place.

We had some significant positive responses. I would say about 95 percent, after contacting Jon Cooper's Office, 95 percent of the people that phoned into his office were positive in getting a cell tower in and improving communications in this immediate area. I thought that went very well.

We had a meeting with the Oversight Committee yesterday. We are now proceeding with a new Director. We seem to be going through Directors very, very quickly. In fact, there are some people on the County who are not talking to me for fear of being fired after a discussion. But Gary Ponzio, who we were originally dealing with as Director of Telecommunications, is no longer with the County. Gary Quinn is our new contact person. I believe he is an interim Director until another individual, Pat Donnelly, comes up to speed and takes over that division.

We will be in the midst of going through probably a historic review to see exactly, since this is an historic site, how that might impact the construction of a cell tower. There was some discussions on the County level of whether we would need an RFP to go out at this stage in the game on the cell tower, even though we have sort of bounced around between Verizon, T-Mobile and a few others. We were directed to T-Mobile by the County. We may have to go to a RFP, if that's their final conclusion. I would say we're moving in the right direction with the cell tower and the passive revenue that we might be able to generate from that coming in the fall of 2009 if everything stays on track.

Executive Director's Report.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

Just quickly, Audio Tour production has been completed. We hope in August that that will be up and running. We still have some contractual things to work out. Things got a little held up with – Antenna Audio was taken over by Discovery. They have had some changes in their administration as we have here, but we still hope to have this in place by the end of the summer.

Our events have been wonderful this summer. We have a full slate of events. We kicked off the summer with an Independence Day weekend festival. It was so successful, that I am quite sure that this will be an annual thing.

We have to do a huge thanks to Emily Gittelman because without her efforts, we would not have been able to do it. When we first started talking about this with her, I told her that we just didn't have the staff to do it and didn't have the funding to pay her. I wasn't going to be able help her, so that if she was willing to do it, she was going to be basically on her own, just checking in with me for approval here and there. She was willing to take it on.

It was a wonderful, wonderful event. Noel was there both days. Steve Gittelman was there doing hay rides for people. We had a very good attendance. People who came had a wonderful time. Most importantly, I think was seeing the many different people who worked together on this event. It's the first event since I have been back here where we had a huge core of volunteers. Emily reached out to Girl Scouts and to virtual communities putting the word out and got them in as well.

We would not have been able to run this event with staff only, although certainly our staff did give up their holiday weekends, as well as our grounds staff and many other staff. I have to thank them again for making this possible. You know who you are. It was a very, very nice event. We certainly did make money and had twice the number of people coming on that Saturday as we have had in the past.

What was very different was to be open through the evening. For the first time we were open for families to come and view the area and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks. People who did stay got to see them. There was probably a couple dozen displays off on the horizon, and then we have to thank Asharoken for their wonderful display that we were able to watch from our property. Again, it was another kind of event for us. It was a nice community event. We were able to make some money from it, as well. It was a terrific event. Again, thank Emily for all her efforts on that event.

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

Carol, can I just say something?

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

Sure.

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

I want to buy Emily a brick. If it's okay, I would really like to do that. If you guys will figure out how to word it, I will be glad to pay for it.

**(Ms. Anker entered the meeting at 6:50 P.M.)**

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

Thank you. This past Sunday we had another new event for us, Tango in the Courtyard. We are reaching new audiences. There is a wonderful community of people who Tango. Normally they go to halls, so to come to the courtyard at the Vanderbilt Museum and to be able to Tango and listen to live music, as well as the DJ was a wonderful treat for them. We had over 160 people for that event. I think that's an event we will be doing again.

Because of the lack of staff here, I don't know that we would have been able to put on that event on our own, but I had a wonderful volunteer, Barbara {McCade-Raysh}, who really took that event as a volunteer and pulled in her family and friends, just as Emily pulled in her dad, her mom, her sister, brother-in-law and friends, Barbara did as well. Again, that's what made that event successful. We had volunteers from our own staff for that event. I thank again our volunteer staff and people who stayed to almost midnight to make that event a success.

We have upcoming events as well. We have a depression glass society sale and show. We always sell out our parking spots on that date. We have a number of car shows coming up as well. We have Alex Torres – it's the third annual Alex Torres and his Latin Orchestra performance. On this event, Barbara Oster, our bookkeeper, steps out of that role and really takes this event in hand, sends out letters for sponsorships and volunteers a lot of her time. She is very committed to this event. It's been a very successful event. Thank you, Barbara. Again, many of our staff will volunteer for that night to make sure that night is a success.

If any of you are available, it's in the courtyard. It is another magical evening of spicy Salsa, Merengue and Latin Jazz. It's a 13 piece Latin orchestra. I invite you to come to that.

In addition to the special events, we of course have our ongoing planetarium shows, laser shows. We have a meteor star party in August. We have our little history tours. We have our children's

summer camp, Wizard University, which will be kicking off next week with I think almost 30 children at this point signed up for a week of magic potions, astronomy, magical creatures, and a lot of fun. August has been a little bit slow to fill up, but I think we're going to have some good attendance for that program, as well. That was a run-down of some of our upcoming events.

Catering, we did send out a catering RFP. We have to date received three viable proposals. We had received a fourth proposal earlier in the year, but they have withdrawn. We have another person that's interested. But we certainly have three very, very different proposals. We have a fifth that might be coming. We do have a committee that will be looking at these and evaluating not only the different proposals, but again looking at our own in-house operation and looking at all the pros and cons. I'm sure this is going to be a bit of a process.

The Legislature is very interested in this particular RFP. The catering includes not only catering special events like weddings but also trying to provide some visitor food service. There are several different elements of that. That is moving along.

We talked about the development position, and that will be moving along. That is going to be a huge change for us for the good.

View Space, that's on my report because Gretchen and I first saw View Space at the AAM meeting. We were both independently impressed with how perfect that would be for us. All of you wonderfully got out your wallets and helped fund this. This is what you're seeing now behind us. There is audio for this, as well. It's turned down right now. Noel put in huge hours working with Dave Bush to make this happen. So I'm going to thank Noel for all his time. There are other people in this, as well. Maybe I will turn this over to you, and you can explain how this came to be.

**MR. GISH:**

Is Dave back there at all?

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

Dave is back in the planetarium.

**MR. GISH:**

Dave, obviously, was key in that I really caught wires that he threw in the hole in the middle of the room. That was successful. We have a few things that we have to clear up with this. It's not your eyes that

are out of focus, for those of you who are looking. For those of you who are not familiar, this is a direct feed from NASA, which we thought would be great in the planetarium. The shows run between about seven to eleven minutes, which is just about the time frame for young people's attention span. We felt that that would be good.

Peter refused to bring over the benches that Herb built – just joking. That will be addressed later, but we have a number of benches that will slide in this immediate area here to let kids sit on the benches. Those were constructed, and Peter was vitally important in helping this construction. It took a whole day from about eight until four to construct the benches.

Dave was critical in getting the tech end through. We can see the NASA feed that's going to last six minutes. It does come with an audio, so audio would be available in this room. When the kids come in, they will sit on the benches. If we need this room for a Trustees meeting, the benches can just be slid away. They are on rollers. We can move them away. This adds a little bit more versatility. This is going to really update things dramatically.

When the Space Shuttle gets launched, if that's ever going to happen this week, there will be updates from NASA that will come directly into the planetarium. Kids will be able to – this is not old news. This is current events. I think that's going to keep their level of excitement and interest up.

We are going to improve on the focus on that in very short order. We have asked that –

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

We just need another cable.

**MR. GISH:**

Once we get that cable that will be accomplished. It's not your eyes, but this will be perfect. We do have the versatility of this unit for putting in DVDs that might be able to show a tour of the mansion, that might be able to just give an update of where you are and ask our visitors if they saw the marine museum. We can do a lot of things in-house with this projector. It's not just a NASA feed, but we can now use that in a number of different areas to possibly show maybe the boathouse during construction. We can get pictures out of the archives and take pictures from the archives and them on the screen as well, so

this adds just many dimensions to what we can do for young people here. I think this is good.

Again, the Trustees are responsible for this, and I want to make sure it was up and running in a reasonable amount of time so that you didn't have to feel that your money was lost. This is now up and paid for. It's ours. I think we have to pay \$150 a year after this for copyright from NASA. But like I said, it's constantly updated. It should be just absolutely spectacular as time goes on. Star projector.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

Our capital project replacing the Goto star projector, I am happy to report that we had a two day kick-off meeting last week, July 7 and July 8. We had representatives from DPW, including engineers and architects. We had representatives from the engineering firm that's the lead consultant on this, again, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, and architects. They all attended, as well as the astronomy planetarium consultant from Chicago was there. We also had several from our staff attend.

In addition, we had someone from Suffolk County Purchasing. We are all on the same page. We all know what needs to happen. We know how it's going to happen. We are about four weeks behind my initial April time schedule, but we still feel that we can make our October 2010 start date. Talking to all the people around the table, it's going to take an aggressive schedule, but the feeling is we still can make up those weeks. It's a very exciting time for us all to be getting closer and really moving forward on this.

Right now the consultant is working on the RFP that will go out to the vendors. There are several vendors that we anticipate responding. The RFP is being written to encourage competition. So it was written in as general a way as possible not to eliminate anybody. We expect some really exciting proposals to be coming in. We will be hearing more about the different elements.

Again, this is not just the star projector. That's the critical element, but there is also the full dome video, stereo system, cove lighting, work stations, some content, warranties, and things like that. We need to do some modifications. We have to make an eight track – a room for all the equipment to go, so that's where the engineering and electrical goes in. That's all being considered as part of this package. You will be getting updates. We should be meeting again with the

consultants within the next month and hopefully the RFP will be going out within the next month.

**MR. GISH:**

I'm going to add to that, that the County was willing to work on our schedule back. We aimed for a mid-October start date to take advantage of the downtime which would be from July, July, August, and September. Usually the school programs start, obviously, after Labor Day but not exactly. School programs start coming in in October so we felt that if we could be open by October 15 as our starting date, we could take advantage of the revenue generation that would be from the October, November and December of 2010.

I will tell you that Kathleen from Purchasing actually took our start date of October 15, and she worked back from that describing exactly who had to report when and when things had to be done. It was just a "Oh, let's see when this is going to be finished." There was an effort by the County to give us the best time for us to open and to maximize the revenue that we could gain from an opening in October. Kudos to the County, at least for that opening session and for them to be willing to work with the Vanderbilt and making the Goto projector or the star projector function on time at a reasonable opening.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

For new people, one of the reasons why we're talking so far out is that the star projector itself is on the order of 12 month construction from the time the bid is placed because it is a unique made to order kind of thing. Deliverability will be certainly a factor in the timing of it.

Just because I keep forgetting to say it, but the Vanderbilt Museum has received a grant from New York State Council on the Arts. It's not a huge grant, but it is a \$7,000 grant to fund the cataloging of the Samuel Yellin iron work on the property. The curators here – and I count myself as a curator, I guess – we're very excited because the Samuel Yellin iron work is beautiful. It's not until you come here and catch a glimpse sometimes of the figural iron work and the beauty of it, that you really appreciate it.

Samuel Yellin was known as the Tiffany of iron work. His work is all over the country in numerous universities, federal buildings, churches and those of the wealthy of the 1920's and 1930's. We're very excited to have a consultant who will be coming in, working with our staff, and cataloging that. That's an important thing for us. Again, it's not the size of the grant so much but the fact that it is recognizing that we are

a sustainable museum of importance, and they're willing to make an investment with us.

I think that's it.

**MR. GISH:**

Okay, good. Just a few things on my end here. We did get a letter from Bill Lindsay concerning Resolution 122-2009, which was the Task Force Study concerning the feasibility of the Suffolk Community College assuming the responsibility for the operations at the Vanderbilt. They want members of the staff or the Board of Trustees on that Task Force Study.

I pressured them on the start time. It seems that Suffolk Community College is now in their down phase. I would imagine that that will be sometime in September. Michael DeLuise has agreed to chair that committee. I will be on that committee. If anyone else chooses and has the time or motivation to be on that committee just to take a peak at what the two might be able to afford each other or whether in fact this marriage is workable, please see me and we can discuss that. That will be something that will be taking place in the fall.

**MR. BEATTIE:**

I know he's not here right now, but perhaps Anthony Pecorale could also be on this committee. I think you might want to contact him. He has a lot of contacts and years of experience in education.

**MR. GISH:**

For those of you who are not aware, Anthony has been superintendent of schools in a variety of school districts. Anthony is a top notch educator on the Island. I believe he is being called in to a school district even as we speak to try to get them out of the doldrums. Anthony, PhD., will be a person we will reach out to. I hope that he will be on that committee, but since he is not here, I was not going to speak for him. But, Ron, that is an excellent idea.

We do have a September 12 night scheduled for the fall for the reopening of the habitat wing and the completion of the "Save America's Treasurers Grant." Maybe I will let the Director of Curatorial Affairs, Stephanie Gress, talk a little bit about what we plan for that evening and who she has emailed. Stephanie, can you come up?

**MS. GRESS:**

Carol has arranged for a \$75 per person cocktail party.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

I think we're going to go for \$100 on that.

**MS. GRESS:**

I'm glad to hear that. What I have done just today, actually, is I faxed a letter to Hillary Rodham Clinton, our new Secretary of State. Noel was good enough to get contact information. Why we are contacting her in particular is because we received the grant about four and a half years ago. We received a personal letter from Hillary Clinton as our New York State Senator.

She really has a dual interest in this, not just as our New York State Senator at the time, but during Bill Clinton's administration in approximately 1998 the "Same America's Treasurers" Grant Program was initiated by him. She was instrumental in it as well. I'm not sure her exact role in it, but they were founders and champions of this grant program. She took an enormous amount of pride in sending us a congratulatory letter at the time that we received here. We would like to extend an invitation to her to come to our event on September 12.

As I said, Noel got me the contact information. We faxed her a letter. Hopefully we will follow up with an invitation in the mail shortly and see if we get a response. She was not only supportive of this, but sent her regional director at the time to spend the day with me, and she did. She spent almost the whole day with me. While touring the facility she was very exciting about our project and was extremely supportive.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

Stephanie, for some of the new people who don't understand what that "Save America's Treasurers" funded, how critical the funding was, the partners that were involved in that – and Stephanie is not going to say it, but Stephanie was absolutely the critical person in securing the funding, writing the grant, getting the funding, and has worked very, very hard on the last four years overseeing the implementation of this grant. There are many, many different consultants and people who have been involved in this. We did save one of America's treasurers. Why don't you just quickly say what that project was.

**MS. GRESS:**

The year 2001 I came here as Curator of the Collections. The habitat had been in very bad condition. The habitat, for those of you who

don't know, is a diorama hall of nine huge natural history dioramas conceived of and executed by Mr. William Vanderbilt himself and a consultant that he hired from the Museum of Natural History in New York. The diorama hall after the end of the 1920's, it was finished in 1935, he then added the whale-shark to it. So this huge diorama hall was just the most spectacular exhibit here.

Unfortunately, as the years went by, it began to have problems. The whale-shark had problems as early as the 1940's. By the time 50 years went by, there was water damage and structural damage, and there were no environmental controls in there. It was impossible for its age to keep it a viable, open space for the public to tour. So it had been closed in approximately 1996.

When I got here I knew that something had to be done really drastically. What I found out at the time was that the Department of Public Works had plans for nearly every building on the property. They had upgraded our electrical systems, our environmental controls and made many major repairs to buildings. This space was included in that, that they were also going to improve the structure of this space, the environmental controls and things like that.

However, the Department of Public Works funding is not suitable for an exhibit or to restore any type of museum display. It's not what it's for. That money – that effort that they put toward the habitat was what I was able to use as a match for the grant. So the "Save America's Treasures" grant funding opportunity came up, we had to meet the threshold criteria of proving to them that this was an American treasure, not just a local treasure, but that this was a national treasure.

The first year we applied for it, they turned us down. That's normal for a huge grant. You don't usually get it the first year. But when I called them to ask what I could improve about the application, they were very encouraging and said, "Well, just send it in again next year." I did change it a bit. I actually asked for a little bit more funding, and they did approve it the second year.

It's been a wonderful experience. For those of you who haven't seen it, please do or bring your family or whatever you have to do, but it's definitely worth it.

The consultants that we were able to hire through the grant funding were also some of them from the Museum of Natural History. In the

case of the taxidermist, his father was the lead taxidermist at the Museum of Natural History for 40 years. They were thrilled to work on the project. He acted kind of like a project manager. He hired the men who subsequently painted the whale-shark.

Since it was such a large piece of taxidermy we had to get someone who was really the best out there. That's what Vanderbilt did, as well. He always got the best people out there. Then we were able to find someone to touch up the paint on some of the backgrounds. He was also from the Museum of Natural History. Now he works for the Kruse Museum. We had a really great group of consultants who worked for me as inexpensively as they could and as hard as they could. The result exceeded our expectations, I think.

**MS. ANKER:**

What was the total of the grant?

**MS. GRESS:**

The grant was \$135,000 federally funded dollars. The DPW match was around \$158,000 that I was to match. What we had to do -- and we couldn't get an exact amount. It had to be prorated from the entire funding amount from DPW, which was in the millions. The total would be the total of those two sums.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

Stephanie, again, was the critical person not only overseeing it but being the person putting on her jeans and getting on scaffolds and dealing with how much things were costing. She kept us in budget and in control.

Just to also clarify, we had the grant unveiling of the whale-shark, so the taxidermy on the whale-shark was completed a year ago, but it's just within the last weeks really that the rest of the exhibit, the nine dioramas have been complete and the marble polished. We're really ready in the next few weeks I think there are a few lizards remaining outstanding.

**MS. GRESS:**

There are a few sea lions that we are waiting to come back from New Jersey. I'm holding his check.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

But the sea lions will be back by September 12. We are very excited about the opportunity to thank everyone who was involved. Truly,

again, this was a partnership of the County, of the federal government, of our staff, of other people in the museum world that recognized what a treasure this very special room is. Steve Gittelman has written about Vanderbilt's passion of that particular room.

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

Any chance of getting one set of –

**MS. GRESS:**

The electricians are trying. We did have a gentleman in not too long ago who may want to volunteer his work. We are out of funding to do that, so any effort toward that would have to be someone that we rope in, so to speak. We are still hopeful. It was a very difficult – that was the most difficult part, the electrical work. It was an ongoing problem. It had several phases.

As you know, we had the floor. The floor is illuminated. Most of the floor is illuminated underneath, and we had those fixtures restored to their original condition because what had happened over the years is I guess they weren't working or something must have malfunctioned with them where they weren't suiting anyone's needs. They were retrofitted with fluorescents in the 1960's. We took the fluorescents, back out again, had the original fixtures back working and were able thank God to technology, to use the spiral florescent bulbs, a very, very specialized special order bulb. You can't buy them in a regular store. That's what's illuminating the floor. That part was fixed.

Then we got to the dioramas themselves and that's still an ongoing effort. Our own staff has been in there trying to keep them lit. The electricity is not 100 percent in there all the time because they haven't been able to pull all the wires. They had to abandon certain lighting fixtures and such. That's what happened with the floor petals, unfortunately. The original dioramas were illuminated in several ways where you could have different lighting effects depending on what you wanted to see or whether you were educating someone or whether you wanted to give a dramatic effect through the use of colored bulbs and different lighting effects. The floor petals they had to abandon, unfortunately, because they weren't safe.

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

Is there any single set that could be restored?

**MS. GRESS:**

We're going to look into it.

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

There's 18 of them.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

I believe we spoke to the Suffolk County liaison who knows that we're concerned, and that there is some electrical wiring money in capital projects. It's an ongoing discussion. If we could even just get one look into it.

**MS. GRESS:**

We're trying. We haven't given up yet. That's the last –

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

I was the one who ordered it closed in 1996.

**MS. GRESS:**

I know.

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

For me it's very exciting to see it open and also put in a capital project. I remember, and I'm very proud of what you're doing.

**MS. GRESS:**

Thank you. I appreciate that.

**MR. GISH:**

And that's what we will be celebrating on September 12. All of you just set that day aside. It should be a spectacular evening. I will mention that Stephanie and I have discussed our connections to the Guinness Book of Records in our attempt to try and get the whale-shark listed as the world's largest skin mounted fish. We have to be very technical on that, because I don't want to get involved with King Kong or something like that. But that's what we're aiming at. I know Jill has spoken that she has seen it on the inside of a Snapple lid. She did not save the Snapple lid, however.

**MS. MOSS:**

I gave it to Carol.

**MR. GISH:**

It's probably in the vault. We are attempting to find it. It will be great if we could have that also included for that September 12. I don't know whether that's possible, but that's an ongoing thing. If they

would just answer one of my emails or one of my calls, it would be swell. But we are working on it. We have the potential for doing that. We would love to be able to tell young people when they came in for that tour that this is the world's largest skin mounted marine –

**MS. GRESS:**

Interestingly enough, and that is the reason why it's there as people who have been here for a long time know, the collection assembled here Mr. Vanderbilt's. He didn't accept any outside collections. He tried to collect everything himself. This whale-shark was the exception. When he saw this, he could not pass it up because it was something that special, that spectacular, that large. It stands today. I didn't even realize it but the taxidermists are the ones that brought it to my attention because I had, at times, several of them here, sometimes as many as six at a time. They said that they work in museums all over the country and the world, and they do believe that it is the largest skin mounted fish anywhere in the world, and a shark is a fish, so we can say that. People always think it's a whale because it's so large, and that's the reason why they named it whale-shark because it the largest species of shark. They are confident that it is the largest specimen in taxidermy.

**MR. GISH:**

We're going to make it stick. Again, thank you, Stephanie, for all your work. That was spectacular.

**MS. ANKER:**

Can I just ask one quick question?

**MR. GISH:**

Sure.

**MS. GRESS:**

Are there upcoming projects – once this is done and pretty much is where it needs to be, do you have other ones in mind?

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

We have several projects in mind.

**MS. GRESS:**

The problem – that's why I explained the grant process to everyone. You can have the greatest project in the world, and you can have everything in place, and I can have Leonardo DaVinci here himself, but

if you don't have that match, that dollar match, you're not getting that grant.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

We have applied for some grants. It was a good problem, but Save America's Treasures, while we still had a federal grant we weren't likely to get another federal grant. So now that this one is closed, we're more likely to get something new from that particular funding source. At a future date we can run through some of our projects and wish lists.

**MS. ANKER:**

Again, we can have grants going at the same time, right?

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

Yes.

**MR. GISH:**

It's tough to keep focus if you have a number of them out there. You really have to zero in on –

**MS. GRESS:**

They're not likely to give them to you – they take into account who on the staff is going to working on them. They did ask Carol that.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

That's one of the problems we had a year ago for the grant we just got because they say, "All right, let me get this straight. Who is doing this grant?" I told them Stephanie. "All right, so if Stephanie is doing Save America's Treasures grant, who is going to do this other grant?" They do take these things into account.

**MR. GISH:**

There has to be a point person.

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

It's a complicated thing, but certainly in a sub committee we will start to talk about what grants are out there that we hope to get out there and what our next big project will be.

**MS. ANKER:**

Speaking of that, the della Robbia, it's basically going to stay within that area until –

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

That's certainly one of the things that's high on the list. We will be talking about that in the future.

**MR. GISH:**

Any other questions for Stephanie while she sits before you? Thank you, Stephanie. That was absolutely spectacular. I would like to thank all of you for emailing your State Senators on the hotel/motel tax, which went through. That was actually the discussion we had the other day for the Oversight Committee that when the money might start flowing from the hotel/motel tax. Again, your reference in calling your State Senators was critical in getting that hotel/motel tax passed.

Tom is not here but I think we should deal with that and we can do it tonight. Tom Glascock is sort of caught between work and getting his daughter to a doctor's appointment. So I'd like to discuss this now.

The Ad Hoc Committee dealing with the new audit group, which at one particular time caused Steve to sacrifice his phone in a fit of anger over the Audit Committee and has come up with a recommendation to choose a new audit agency for us to use. It is an agreement of the Audit Committee to overwhelmingly choose – there were two that were up. It was very, very close, but there was a difference of \$5,000 and they felt that they were comparable and that we should go with the one that had the lesser annual fee. Five thousand dollars was considerable.

ABZ was chosen by the Audit Committee, and I would like to now put that before the full Board of Trustees for us to vote on choosing ABZ so we can get that audit underway and completed. The middle of October was going to be the time – the audits are critically important for us to move forward on grants. That is one of the things that Carol, since she has taken command, has moved us very, very quickly up to date. We were behind in audits considerably. That left us really in the dark in moving forward with a number of key elements financially. We are now almost up to speed. This will now move us away from that audit company that gave us some grief in the past and with a group that I think that everybody feels comfortable with. Steve?

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

I'd like to make a motion.

**MR. DELUISE:**

And I'd like to second that motion?

**MR. GISH:**

Motion by Steve. Seconded by Michael. Any questions? All in favor? Opposed? **Motion carries to go ahead with ABZ as the new audit firm. (Vote: 9/0/0/6 Absent: Mr. Glascock, Ms. Dwyer, Mr. Olivieri, Dr. Pecorale & Mr. Sillman. One vacant position.)**

Any old business? Steve?

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

I would ask for an executive session on a personnel matter.

**MR. GISH:**

Can we go into that after the meeting, and then let Ann Marie and the rest of the group go?

**DR. GITTELMAN:**

She needs to be present after the meeting.

**MR. GISH:**

Okay, motion to go into executive session has been made. Is there a second?

**MS. OLDRIN MONES:**

Second.

**MR. GISH:**

All in favor? Opposed? **Motion carries to go ahead with ABZ as the new audit firm. (Vote: 9/0/0/6 Absent: Mr. Glascock, Ms. Dwyer, Mr. Olivieri, Dr. Pecorale & Mr. Sillman. One vacant position.)** Okay, we'll meet right in the education room.

**(Executive Session 7:20 – 7:45 p.m.)**

**MR. GISH:**

Okay, I would like to reconvene, if we can, very, very quickly. We're back in session. Any old business? Any new business?

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

I just want to – as many of you know, ASLI, the Astronomy Club of Long Island, meets at the Vanderbilt every Wednesday night. Tonight, our own Dave Bush is going to be giving a presentation in the dome on the history of the planetarium, the past, the present, and the future. So if any of you – and he might not be talking until about 8:30, but it's

at the mansion, so any Trustee who can stay, it would be a wonderful opportunity to walk around a little bit and enjoy the view and maybe catch a little bit of Dave's presentation.

**MS. ANKER:**

I'm sorry, where is that?

**MS. GHIORSI-HART:**

It's going to be inside the dome. He thinks it's going to be about 8:30.

**MR. GISH:**

And Peter will be mowing grass in the dark over near the marine museum, if anybody wants to see Peter mow. Is there any other new business? Can I have a motion to adjourn?

**MR. DELUISE:**

Motion.

**MS. OLDRIN MONES:**

Second.

**MR. GISH:**

All in favor? Opposed? **Motion carries. (Vote: 9/0/0/6 Absent: Mr. Glascock, Ms. Dwyer, Mr. Olivieri, Dr. Pecorale & Mr. Sillman. One vacant position.)** The next meeting is in August. Have a good night.

**(Mr. Gish adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.)**

**NG:ap**

**Attachments**