

Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum

Board of Trustees

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Board of Trustees was held in the Vanderbilt Museum Lobby, Centerport, New York, on September 14, 2011.

The following were in attendance:

Mr. Noel Gish – President
Michael B. DeLuise – 1st Vice President
Gretchen Oldrin Mones – 2nd Vice President
Betsy Cambria – Secretary
Kevin Peterman – Trustee
Thomas Glascock - Trustee
Joseph Dujmic – Trustee
Dr. Steven Gittelman – Trustee
Dr. William Rogers – Trustee
Peter Gunther - Trustee
Lance Reinheimer – Interim Executive Director
Lorraine Vernola – Staff
Ed Hanley
Ann Marie Pastore - Stenographer

Excused Absence:

Tanya McKay – Trustee
Rodney Rodriguez – Trustee
Duncan Armstrong – Trustee
Ron Beattie – Trustee

Absent:

Chris Hahn - Trustee

(Mr. Noel Gish called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.)

MR. GISH:

I'd like to call the Vanderbilt Museum Board of Trustees meeting to order. I'd ask you to rise for the pledge to the flag.

(SALUTE TO THE FLAG)

We have Ron Beattie, Duncan Armstrong, Tanya McKay and Rodney Rodriguez who are excused from tonight's meeting. We will refrain from a vote on the minutes until we get a quorum. Do we have a list of guests in attendance?

MS. PASTORE:

Yes.

MR. GISH:

Anyone wishing to address the Board at this time? Please come forward. Please take a seat at the microphone. Just state your name for the record.

MR. HANLEY:

My name is Ed Hanley. I'd like to give you a copy of a termination letter that I received today. I ask of the Board to look into this unjust and unfair termination signed by Lance.

I met today with both Lance and Bridget. Their foundation for termination I find to be extremely unjust and untrue. In speaking with fellow staff members of mine, I'd like the Board to look into some of the accusations that were mentioned within this termination letter in regard to staff members stating that I've created a hostile working environment and that employees that work for me have difficulty approaching me.

There are accusations in here that I'm not available during the day. Meanwhile the amount of hours that I've been working here at the Vanderbilt range anywhere from three, four, sometimes five shifts a week, both afternoon shifts, morning shifts, overnight shifts.

They state in this letter that my performance wasn't satisfactory, yet this is the first conversation that we have had both with Lance and with Bridget pertaining to my performance not being satisfactory.

They expressed some concerns in a previous meeting about doing an increase of drive-bys. I'm here three nights a week on most occasions. I come by here four or five nights a week, knowing that the Vanderbilt is tight for money. Just being here four or five days a week -- it just didn't make sense for me to be here more than that. And the weeks that I hadn't been here that often I've done drive-bys.

Also in this letter, it mentions about working double shifts. It was brought up to me that they didn't want double shifts being scheduled. I had a conversation with Lance pertaining to working double shifts. When you have 15 individuals that work up at the guide booth, everybody has a different availability. Some weeks guys need certain days off. Some guys can only work midnights. Some guys can only work days.

We juggle the best that we can to make sure that all shifts are covered with two guards at all times. Lance understood the importance of not taking hours away from anybody. He said as long as it doesn't happen on a regular basis, it was okay. So, yes, it happens from time to time. That seems to have been an issue.

I'm a bit concerned in regards to this termination because I feel that it's personal. I feel as though there is an ulterior motive that's involved here. Not only do I want the Board to look into that, but I also want to bring to your attention some things that have transpired at the Vanderbilt that I think should be of interest and that should be looked into.

Going back to February, we had an incident at the planetarium. There was -- not a large amount but an amount of pot that was found on the ground. Employees were questioned on it.

No drug tests were administered until after a month's time. By that time, anybody that would have been involved and everyone who's been involved with drugs knows that pot goes right through your system. The fact that Bridgett communicated to Lance that it would take a month's time to set up an account to do drug testing is completely false. We found out it only takes two days. Yet that was okay for that to happen.

After that incident I lost total respect for my HR person. The fact that I see my HR person on the grounds at Vanderbilt functions consuming alcohol and being extremely unprofessional, and at the same time clocking in while she's on the grounds during these special functions

and I'm sure she's getting paid for it, if you look into it. To me, that's stealing time. Yet, here I am finding out today that I'm being terminated for supposedly employees that aren't able to communicate to me. I know of one employee that's friends with Bridgett and has expressed that he can only work three to eevens. He can't do midnights. He can't do days, and doesn't want to work Sunday afternoons when there's football. It's a part-time job, and it's very difficult to get everybody exactly what they want.

(Dr. Gittelman and Dr. Rogers entered the meeting at 7:15p.m.)

Supposedly there were multiple employees that came forward and complained about me. Yet if you interview every employee, which was never done in regards to the security staff, I think you would find out that there were no issues in the security booth. I would ask that you look into that.

The other thing, so the Board is aware, in regard to the drug bust that was found on the grounds here, there was also personal interest on Bridgett's part because she had her boss's daughter – she has a second job. Her boss's daughter was one of the individuals that was here that day working. To me, it's quite evident that there was a cover-up that was swept under the carpet.

In addition, it's been well known that Bridget needs more hours. Bridgett let it be known to the staff that her husband is not working. The fact that this is coming down at such a time that it is is kind of mind boggling to me. I ask that the Board take a look into the termination that you have in front of you.

MR. GISH:

Thank you very much, Ed.

MR. HANLEY:

Thank you.

MR. GISH:

I'd like to introduce a new Trustee to the Board. This is his first meeting. Peter Gunther is local and is well known to everybody in the immediate area. He is a member of the Centerport Fire Department. With my contact, initially when I began to work on the cell tower, he was gracious to give me some leads. Who appointed you to the Board?

MR. GUNTHER:

Jon Cooper.

MR. GISH:

Maybe you could just tell us a little bit about yourself and what you'd like to do on the Board – what your area of expertise might fall.

MR. GUNTHER:

I'm 55 years old. I was born and raised in Northport. When I got married I moved over to Centerport. I've been here since 1983. I have four children. My two daughters are either in college or married with a couple of kids. I have a 20 year old and a 15 year old, same wife.

I retired from 26 years in the New York City Fire Department. I worked in one other fire house in the city. I was a union delegate for many years dealing with contract negotiations and discipline with employees locally in the fire house within a battalion. A battalion has approximately 800 to 1,000 people. I would sit on a Board with a couple of the high ranking chiefs and the rest of the union employees and tried to work something out.

I played a lot of baseball and soccer in my life. I was elected to the Softball Hall of Fame many years ago when Huntington – I have a lot of friends there – I was elected the Fire Commissioner here in Centerport. I've been a Commissioner now for ten years. I'm up for reelection this year. The Commissioner's job is elected by the public. I work on the budget, levy the tax money, and coordinate with the Chief and the other members of the fire department. They tell me what they need for their budget. We try to work that out.

In fact, we just had a budget meeting Monday night. We came up with a lot of new rules in the last couple of years because we're looking at small districts, not only the fire districts, but the water districts. I have public meetings scheduled for next month that go up for approval in November for the budget. We have ten employees, some part-timers. We do contract negotiations with them. We work with the employees very closely.

I do some purchasing – purchase the fire trucks and set the regulations for the use of the apparatus and the specs of the apparatus. Other than that, I'm retired now. I'm here to help to do whatever I can to help everybody.

I met Lance, and Lance has walked me through here. He was very kind. I just swung in here one day, and he took me all around. He was gracious. I was introduced to most of the employees. I'll tell you, they're all wonderful people. I appreciate what they do. They don't get paid what they deserve to get paid. That's just my opinion. They spend a lot of hours here. They really should be commended for the job that they do. It's more in their heart than it is anything else. Anything else is collecting a paycheck. They like to do what they do. I'm glad to see that.

MR. GISH:

That's great. I think we have a new Chairman of the Staff Evaluation Committee. Welcome, Peter. Thank you.

We now have a quorum. Can I have a motion to accept the minutes of the June meeting?

MS. PASTORE:

July?

MR. GISH:

No, July was the cell tower public meeting. So it was the June Trustee meeting. Can I have a motion?

MS. OLDRIN MONES:

Motion.

MR. DELUISE:

Second.

MR. GISH:

All in favor? Opposed? **(Vote: 8/0/0/7 Absent: Mr. Beattie, Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Hahn, Ms. McKay & Mr. Rodriguez. Not Present: Mr. Dujmic & Ms. Cambria.)**

Committee reports, Education and Exhibits, Gretchen.

MR. OLDRIN MONES:

Summer and summer camps are over. The planetarium closing was certainly a factor affecting enrollment. Week long four hour workshops were offered for \$200. An absolute bargain for the quality program the educators and crafts offered. That piggy-backs on Peter's comments. We really do have a phenomenal staff who come up with

fabulous programs. If more people were aware, I think everyone would benefit.

All of those who attended enjoyed it. In fact, Betsy's granddaughter – she's not here so I will speak for her – her granddaughter absolutely enjoyed the African program. It's felt that better advertisement would have resulted in better attendance.

(Mr. Dujmic entered the meeting at 7:25 p.m.)

The new Education brochure, which I will pass around, is being readied for distribution. When you get one, you can see that it is compact, easy on the eyes, and it emphasizes school programs that will be taught at the Education Center and the mansion.

We'd like to thank Dr. Inna Gellerman, a Huntington orthodontist, who has volunteered \$1,500 to sponsor local students for an hour-long Education program.

Staff discussed the experiment of restructuring fees prior to the closing of the planetarium and implications and the possibilities for the future. For example, by lowering fees and by bundling, attendance increased resulting in 60-70 attending instead of the usual 15.

If you've been reading Lance's emails and press releases or checking the website, you know that several new programs have been offered, although circumstances have necessitated changes or rescheduling. Programs like "Super Nova," "Songs in the Key of Earth" and Shakespearean plays complement our education mission and offer public events that are filling the courtyard and improving attendance. So check out the website. It changes daily. It reflects the latest events, programs and updates.

In June staff exhibited at the Sweetbriar Nature Center. Stephanie attended the first annual Motor Parkway Sunday Drive to Lake Ronkonkoma Parade and Car Show on August 7. I don't know if you all got the poster or if you saw the advertisement, but I'll pass it around just in case. It's very nice looking. She distributed folders with literature and free passes to families, to the Ronkonkoma legislator to give to constituents, and to firemen and their families. Attendance was pretty good for a first time event.

Living History concluded on Labor Day. Although attendance was significantly up at the start of the season, the hurricane and the

planetarium closing resulted in overall lower attendance from last year.

Volunteer Kirsten Amundsen of Northport worked during July and August with grant funded intern Nina Sangimino on the Yellin Ironwork cataloging project. She has since returned to school at Salve Regina.

Very sadly, two of our long-time mansion greeters passed away in June. We'd like to acknowledge Millie Winter and Angela Costanzo for their many years of service to the Vanderbilt. They generously shared their time and their expertise, and they will be greatly missed.

On a happier note, approximately \$30,000 has been raised for Sponsor-A-Chair, and this represents 68 to 70 chairs for the new planetarium.

Stephanie is working on several projects. She is still working with the Fisher Island restoration team by providing them with images to help them decorate their interior spaces. Previously she provided exteriors and blue prints.

Motor Parkway diorama scenes have been removed from the turntable hallway exhibit and are now on loan to the Ward Melville Heritage Organization for an upcoming show. That area is now available for a satellite gift shop or other use.

Professor of Italian Renaissance sculpture, Anita Moskowitz, is visiting a specific library in Italy in October that houses information on della Robbia. Stephanie provided her with the archival images, information, and current photos of our sculpture. There will be no cost for this research.

Art conservator, Alexander Katlan, visited on August 11 to help Stephanie assess which paintings are most in need of attention. There was no cost to us for this initial assessment.

Perspective collectors continue to surface regarding our vintage Chrysler. Stephanie is continuing to gather information for the upcoming sale process.

If you're looking for Stephanie, she has relocated to the archives.

Except for some internet hook-up problems, the transition of staff from Normandy Manor to the Power House was relatively smooth. I was

away for a month and unable to attend the grand opening of the Designer Show House. I hear that it was wonderful. I saw the beginning stages and the coverage in *Newsday*. I applaud the amazing and artful transformation. We all have the wonderful photographs in front of us. It's hard to believe that all that could be done in such a short period of time.

At lunch today a person mentioned how much they enjoyed the Show House and especially the bonus of a Vanderbilt tour for only five extra dollars. Lance has handed out the coupons for that five extra dollar tour.

Betsy has some thank you cards and notes. These were given to us by staff to share with you.

"Thank you for the wonderful show, 'Our Night Out.' My favorite book was The Stinky Cheese Man. I loved it so much. Love, Daniel," and it has lots of smiling faces and hearts. I will pass that around so you can see firsthand what it looks like.

This is just a sampling of the kinds of things coming in all the time. "Dear Vanderbilt Planetarium, we are a fifth grade class from Sherwood Elementary School in Islip. Yesterday we visited your planetarium for a show. We all enjoyed the thunderstorm. Some of us got wet, but other didn't. We thought Neptune and Mars were the best planets. We also like the final explosion. We learned so many new things. We didn't know that Neptune rained diamonds or that so many planets have hurricanes and tornados. We thought it was neat that a day on Jupiter lasts only ten hours. We had a really enjoyable time and want to visit again. Thank you for giving us your time." It's signed, "Sincerely, Mrs. Gemma's Fifth Grade class." I'll pass that around.

"Vanderbilt staff, big thanks for everything. Thanks for all your support, patience, and kindness to the students of Great Neck. It's very much appreciated," and that was from Paul Zirdry.

"Dear Lorraine, thank you so very much for taking time to help my son, Bobby, by bringing him behind the scenes to see what is really going on during a show. It really helped to give him the confidence to work through his fear of going in. I have no doubt that if you hadn't taken that time, he would not have ended up seeing the last 20 minutes of the show. It meant a lot because unless you move through your fear the way he did today, there is no way to know that there is

nothing to be afraid of. He learned that today, and it is an experience he can draw upon in the future. Thanks, again, Beth Eckhart, Bobby's mom. P.S. he picked this picture to include with this note and his sister Sarah wanted him to send hers too."

Those are the ones that I have. But you can only imagine the kinds of notes that we're going to get when the new planetarium is up and running. Thanks to the whole staff, thanks to Lorraine for generating this kind of feedback and for taking this kind of special interest in every student.

MR. GISH:

Thank you. Excellent report. Joe?

MR. DUJMIC:

I just wanted to say something regarding what was mentioned in the Education Committee Report --the della Robbia. I just actually got back from Florence about a week and a half ago. I have to say that I'm not the world's greatest art lover. I never have been, but after having been there and have seen how highly regarded the della Robbia's are, I think we're doing a major disservice to ourselves and to the community by not appropriately displaying this type of artwork. I don't think people realize the historical significance someone like della Robbia and his work.

I don't know how many there are in the United States. In a place like Florence where you have Michelangelo, Raphael, DeVinci, he may be one of the highest regarded of all of them. I don't know if we've done much research regarding what type of cost it would be. I know there is some crud on it. It's Suffolk County, so I know how that happened, but I don't how it stayed the way it has stayed.

Is there anyway we can bring someone in from the outside and perhaps loan it to some kind of a school or somewhere it will be appreciated. Like I said, I'm not a huge art lover, but after seeing what I have seen, I feel like we're really not doing it any justice.

MR. GISH:

It is one of the sort of hidden gems at the Vanderbilt. You have to remember it was just sort of unearthed recently when there was some work done on the Stoll Wing. Initially the Stoll Wing, which was added in 1969 or 1970, was an extension of where the whale gallery is and the dioramas.

The della Robbia was on the exterior wall more than likely picked up by Vanderbilt in many of the travels that he made. If you go around the mansion, you'll notice that you can find fire place mantels from 1494. You can find artwork through the 15th Century.

If you know your artwork, Vanderbilt had a unique collector's eye. If he liked a room, he bought it and moved it back here. The della Robbia was covered. Actually when they did the Stoll Wing, rather than put 2 by 6's to sort of bead out the wall, they put in 2 by 4's, some of the della Robbia was knocked off. When Peter Newman uncovered that, and there was some indication that there was some work behind the wall back in 2008, we decided that we were not going to cover it up again with part of the diorama background, that we would leave it exposed. We do have both the *New York Times* and a *Newsday* article that's in front of the della Robbia that's there.

Some workman must have known what you knew because the entire exterior wall was tarred at the time they were trying to waterproof that part of the Stoll Gallery. He didn't do it on the della Robbia. He did knock the base off and part of the arm to sort of fix the 2 by 4 header. If they would have used 2 by 6's they probably would have saved the whole thing.

I have looked into trying to see whether someone would be willing to come in and give us an estimate on restoration. I will tell you there is a cost in getting someone to come in and do that. There are very few people who will, number one, have the expertise in della Robbia. Those individuals who have come in expressing an interest say it's della Robbia or the della Robbia family. That's how it's been sort of revealed to me.

It is going to be a cost, and restoration will be a cost. At the present time, we have it exposed as part of the process of the evolution of the Vanderbilt, but there is nothing on the horizon for a conservator to come in to take a peak at it to give it an estimate. It was just something that's going to have to sit on the back burner, but it is exposed. We haven't buried it again. We haven't done anything that would sort of create more of a problem than already exists. But it is something that I would like to see done, but it's going to be after payroll.

MR. REINHEIMER:

If I could add something. Stephanie's professor from Stony Brook is an expert in that field and was over in Italy. He's going back to

Florence within the month. When I was up with Stephanie the other day, he was preparing a package of pictures of our della Robbia to provide this woman who feels that she should be able to verify through sketches and pictures in Italy that it's a cousin of the della Robbia family, like Noel says. I think she said it's 14th or 15th Century, at no cost to us.

So she has someone. She's confident that she might be able to verify this. That's the first step. If we can find a sketch or something and verify that what we have is the real deal, the next step then is to work on restoration. If you have verification that it is a real della Robbia, then we should be able to raise money for its restoration or move it to a climate controlled area once we have that. So she is working on that. Three days ago I was up in her office and she was putting this package together. That's something Noel didn't know about. This woman feels pretty confident. She thinks it is. Now she's going back to verify if she can find some documentation to support her feelings.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Can I just say something?

MR. GISH:

Sure.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I think part of this is perspective. The Vanderbilt Museum with all the collections tells an interesting story. We are a museum of a museum. It's an interesting perspective in a sense that there are no museums of museums. We have a gentleman in 1931, Willie K. Vanderbilt, who collected and created a museum. What we have preserved is a museum structure that was outdated the day it was built. The American Museum of Natural History had passed it a long time, but all in all we still have frozen time and have a moment in history in museum science, if you will.

That also includes some mistakes that we've made in the past, which are honest mistakes. Adding that wing was an asset in some respects, but if you know the history of the house, it's a detriment in other respects.

The della Robbia is a kind of a capsule in and of itself. Who would smash the nose off of a della Robbia by putting 2 by 4's opposed to 2 by 6's? Well, someone who didn't appreciate it.

That's what this museum is about. We are telling the story, and that was part of our story. I think that we kind of have to walk around this place with a sense – and the American Association of Museums really likes the story we tell. They like the fact that we are a museum of museums. They really encouraged us in the three accreditations to stick with that theme and not to abandon that we represent a snapshot of what a museum looks like in 1931.

I don't want to lose that. I think that if we look at it and say it was a well meaning effort of how his philosophy changed – a 2 by 4 as opposed to a 2 by 6. It's part of the story.

MR. GISH:

Tom.

MR. GLASCOCK:

My understanding from hearing that conversation was that the cherubs were knocked off and that they could actually be recreated. In terms of the restoration, could it be brought back to the way it was? What would be involved in that?

MR. GISH:

I guess it would depend on how far you want to take it and the cost that would be involved. If you want to bring it back to where it's palatable, you could start with taking the tar drippings off the top and off the surrounding fret work on the top. Then if we can restore the Madonna and child in the middle, then we can possibly do the cherubs on the side. That would be really great.

As Lance is mentioning, it's Stephanie's inquiries to produce a drawing. Supposedly the della Robbia family really did a lot of preparation and a lot of drawing prior to the execution of pieces. It's sort of like trying to deal with this like Norman Rockwell. Norman Rockwell, if you look at it, you can look at the same piece that's done in watercolor and pencil before you get to a final drawing. I think that's very similar to the della Robbia family.

You should be able to come back with more data. I think once we get that data, I think then we can look at the level of conservation. There is a difference, as Joe and Steve pointed out, between preservation. At least it's been inside. It's been preserved. How far do we go with the conservation of it? How far do we go with the restoration of it? Those are all elements that obviously have to be taking into consideration.

I guarantee it will not be a capital project for Suffolk County. But it may, in fact, elicit some response from someone who believes that a della Robbia of its quality, if it proves to be the case, is worth restoring and taking a peek at the Vanderbilt.

Again, all the things that we do here, even the gallery and dealing with the restoration of the whale shark, which was a major event with Saving America's Treasures, is one of those things that long-term will bring a lot more people in here. That's just another element.

MR. GLASCOCK:

-- an example of restoration. I have seen pictures of what they were before --

MR. GISH:

Remember, the Pieta was damaged severely. It was way back when after it emerged here it had gone back to Italy. Somebody had jumped the railing and smashed the arm and smashed the nose. From what I gather from people who have been to Italy, you wouldn't know it happened. The restoration is almost seamless. I'm sure that we could in some way, shape or form move toward that. But, again, this is going to be a long-term effort. It's going to mean taking a peek at it and seeing if we have some pictures of how it existed prior to that, getting the documentation, and then finding someone who is willing to come along and fund the money for that restoration and conservation.

MR. GLASCOCK:

(Inaudible) with the dioramas and drawings themselves -- the same person who did that was the one that did the Museum of Natural History --

MR. GISH:

Most of the ones that are in the exhibit room with the whale-shark were done by noted painters who did the dioramas.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Not the one with the della Robbia.

MR. GISH:

Right, the Stoll Wing is very different. That's why we left the panel off.

MR. GLASCOCK:

I find it incredible that there are drawings that are 500 years old. To me that's amazing.

MR. GISH:

That's one of the many things we can be doing here at the Vanderbilt. Since we're mentioning Stephanie with rave reviews, I should tell you also that Stephanie went south with Howard Kroplick most recently down to Washington, the Smithsonian. Howard Kroplick, if you remember correctly, is a noted car collector on Long Island. He is the owner of the Black Beast, which was one of the cars that ran in the Vanderbilt Cup Race here on Long Island. He did run his car down at the Indianapolis 500 this year in a special run. I believe it was Mario Andretti piloted his car.

MR. REINHEIMER:

There's a picture of him with Mario. I don't think Mario was the driver.

MR. GISH:

It was a noted driver. Howard and Stephanie went down to the Smithsonian to check on the availability of getting the Vanderbilt Cup back. Stephanie has been very, very busy not only with doing the work, as Lance pointed out, but also trying to see if we can arrange with the Smithsonian to get it out of the closet. And it is in the closet. It is in a locker.

When I asked about it, they said it was in a closet somewhere, which I thought was an odd statement. They made a little bit of movement on that. I think we might see some success in getting the Vanderbilt Cup back to the Vanderbilt. Lance may have a couple of ideas on that.

MR. REINHEIMER:

I spoke to Howard and to Stephanie recently, and both of them said that the Smithsonian is anxious and is willing to loan it to us. The only stumbling block is security. We have to have secure cabinets and security where it's going to be displayed. Howard has said that he is willing to sponsor some of the costs for that also.

Stephanie is working on developing a plan as far as where to display it, how to display it, and then what the security needs are. She was pretty confident that the Smithsonian would loan it to us on a long-term basis to display here. It's in a warehouse in Maryland in a closet. It's like a drawer that slides out. It's in good shape.

One of the things that Steve was saying is the good thing is, it's well preserved. It's a part of history. Why Willie K. gave it to the Smithsonian – but Willie K. Vanderbilt gave it to the Smithsonian back in the 1930's, I think. My feeling is that I think that was a good thing. If we can get the security, which I think we will, the Smithsonian is willing to give it to us. I think having it in that closet for all these years turned out to be a good thing. It gives us some good PR and some excitement for the cup to return here.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Speaking of things Willie gave away, the other thing that Willie gave away to us that was extremely important was the Belanskis. They're at the American Museum of Natural History and have never been put on exhibit. They are true works of art that really resonated this institution because every book that Willie published had a Belanski or both of them in it.

If you don't know Belanaski, he was artist scientist who traveled with him and painted the fish and the other specimens that came out of the water while they were still in full color.

MR. GISH:

There's always the distinct possibility with any institution of not getting them released but getting them on permanent loan. More and more museums now are moving toward acquiring something, but if they can't display, they move it to an institution that will display it for a brief period of time and put it on a temporary or permanent loan. I would hope that the Smithsonian would probably review what we do here, and find that this would be an excellent place for it to be, especially if we have the security for it. It would be a great home for it.

DR. GITTELMAN:

The three words, conservation, preservation and restoration – it's very obviously that preservation is the conservation of art. Restoration is something that changes in the museum community. The philosophy toward restoration is changing rapidly. The idea of taking a della Robbia and putting the nose back on if you had the pieces -- if you don't have the original pieces, then theoretically they would put a different colored nose.

What might be best for us is to have an artist rendering of what it looked like. That would be achievable for us and to show what it is and to tell the story. Tell the story exactly how we believe it happened.

Instead of leaving it there looking like a big mistake, let's show it as part of the history of the institution and this is what happened in 1968.

MR. GISH:

One of the distinct possibilities, which is what I think we've done now-- we didn't cover it. It's sort of part of the story. Buildings and Grounds, Kevin.

MR. PETERMAN:

I'm going to talk about the success we had over the summer with amending the Capital Project to give us an additional \$250,000 to help with the renovation of the planetarium. It did pass through the Legislature as part of a Capital Project. It passed 17-1. We did get the support. That is money we definitely need to have to get this done properly.

Some of the things I was going to report on -- well, considering the hurricane -- we were very successful this summer. And with us getting the additional money from the County will be a big boost to us.

MR. GISH:

Thank you. Director's Report.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Okay, there are a couple things I'd like to talk about. I'd like to expand on what Gretchen said with the education brochure. That was designed in-house. The cost for that was the cost of printing, which was less than \$500. It was \$475. That was for 4,000 brochures.

We reduced the number of brochures we're sending out. We're realizing how important the planetarium is by its subtraction. It's a real hook for here. It's a hook for education programs. We can have as much as 400 children here on a school day doing field trips. They switch and they go through mummies or animals. They come here to the planetarium. They keep moving schools here like this because it's two field trips in one.

Without the planetarium, we're reduced to about 85 children a day maximum. Schools aren't banging our doors down for trips because it's an hour and a half program. It doesn't warrant the field trip and the expense for transportation. We're going to have a real problem without the planetarium. The planetarium is really important for the survival of the museum. Somebody had foresight in the late 1960's to

build this. I think it helps the museum generate revenue that wouldn't be here.

The other part was the gift shop area that Gretchen mentioned down where the dioramas were, where the cars are. We are going to need some cases out of the store and put them down there and expand the museum's store down in the museum during this period of renovation. We just haven't had the time to do it with the other things that are going on. There are only two maintenance people and a couple part-time maintenance people. We're basically doing what needs to be done to get through the day.

Hurricane Irene moved through here and caused some problems as far as a wedding. We had a wedding scheduled that Saturday. It was a wedding reception of 100 people. They were going to be in the courtyard. Then the plan was to go into the tent. Then the plan was that we had to do something else because my communication with New York Tent was that the prudent thing would be to remove the roof of the tent with the incoming storm. We first had to take care of the wedding and where to locate the reception.

To make a long story short, the reception ended up here in the planetarium lobby. At five-thirty on Friday night we still didn't know where that reception was going to be, and the reception was the next night. The bride came here at six o'clock. We walked through the planetarium. The caterer came here and remarkably transformed it. This lobby never looked so nice.

They had their reception Saturday night. They moved it up. It was starting at five o'clock. It was supposed to run until ten. They only ran it to eight o'clock, which was good because we lost electricity at ten-thirty. That's the story on how we handed it.

The rest of the story is because of this going back and forth, I had made arrangements for them to go to the Jelly Fish for their reception. In order to open up the Jelly Fish we would use their site fee for the Jelly Fish. That didn't work out.

Between the caterer that was handling the event and the Jelly Fish, they couldn't get together. That's why at five thirty on Friday night we were still wondering where this wedding reception was going to be.

Because of the uncertainty and back and forth and the pressure of trying to help this poor bride and groom figure out where they were

going to have their reception -- people were coming from France for the wedding – so on impulse because it was five thirty and I had to make something happen, we refunded their site fee because we had no site for them. I don't think any bride, if they're not pushed to the wall, would pick the planetarium lobby for their reception on a stormy night.

I looked at it like it was the ethical thing to do for them, as far as cost. The incremental cost to have a few staff to run the reception wasn't costing us money, but we did lose \$6,000.

My last parting words to the wedding planner was, "Ask them to make a donation for all the efforts that we put forth here. \$1,000 would be appropriate. That will be tax deductible."

We refunded the money. We're still checking the mail for the donation. We refunded the money last week. I did speak to the groom a couple times. So they went from here, and do you want to know where they went on the honeymoon? They went to Vermont. They called me Monday and were trying to figure out how to get from point A to point B with all the detours and the floods. I hope their marriage is better than how it started out.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I hope it's not as stormy.

MR. REINHEIMER:

I estimated that we lost about \$15,000 during the storm, but we only lost three trees. There was no damage. We boarded up some of the windows that we couldn't secure in the mansion. We really had a plan to look for potential projectiles, and we really spent the day before planning for the storm. Luckily there was no damage.

MR. PETERMAN:

How about leaks?

MR. REINHEIMER:

Even leaks weren't that bad. The Hall of Fishes had some leaks. This building started leaking badly last week, not during the storm. We lost three and a half days of business while the electricity was off. Sunday during the storm we closed, and we were closed Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and reopened Thursday. Thursday and Friday were slow because of the storm. But I thought it was important to get up, get

staff, get running and try to get back to a routine. The storm could have been worse.

It cost us \$3,600 to remove the roof to the tent, and to have it replaced. New York Tent came that Friday. I called them about one o'clock in the afternoon and said, "It looks like we're moving the wedding out of the tent." Public Works called me and said that there can't be anybody in the tent during the storm due to potential safety problems. There was no way they could be in that tent not knowing exactly when the storm was going to hit.

We also cancelled Tango in the Courtyard for the following Sunday because we didn't have time to be able to promote it. People were cleaning up after the storm. I don't think anybody was interested in doing the tango after the storm. We cancelled that.

Between the lost site use, the cost of the tent and the biggest event we would have had during the day was the Long Island Sound Festival. We expected somewhere between 500 to 600 people for the Long Island Sound Festival, which was that Sunday of the storm. There was also a car show that day. It was nice synergy with the two groups. It would have been a really nice afternoon. I figured we lost about \$3,500 from that. We got off okay but we lost about \$15,000 in revenue.

The Design Show, I gave you some pictures. This picture here, if any of you saw last Friday's *Newsday*, there was a half page ad in the "Home Section." This picture here was the basis for the ad, and it was morphing between an old picture of the building that we had and the new morphing over. It's interesting to see the transformation. I also provided a picture of the backyard. That's the back of the house looking from the garden. This is the old pool house, which was crooked, falling down with mismatched bricks. It's beautiful now due to the restoration.

There were 18 designers, which includes three landscapers, one and another person who did all the potted plants. They put about \$200,000 in restoration for this house. We figure about \$60,000 to the outside. There is a patio outside the back of the house that's gorgeous, a couple of fountains, the bluestone driveway was done by them, and planting of trees.

I'm really proud of our maintenance people, Peter Newman, who put in a 14 or 16 zone underground sprinkler system with about 65 heads. It

costs us about \$2,500 in parts. I could just sit there and watch those sprinkler heads all day. It's amazing what they did -- three acres worth of irrigation.

My estimate, just guessing what it would cost to put in an irrigation system in your home, that that's at least \$30,000. They had a good time doing that. It protects the plantings. That's really exciting.

We've had about 500 people go through the Show House. As Gretchen mentioned, this is a card coupon that each paying member gets to go across the street for \$5 and you get a tour of the mansion and access to the grounds. I look at this as not giving up \$7, but it's generating \$5 we wouldn't have had. I'm hoping 3,000 people walk across the street. This card expires at the end of the year because we are closed on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and the Show House is open those days. So people have time to come back. We see a few of these cards coming across the street. It's a nice experience to be able to go and see what they did in the Show House, and then go across the street and see what the mansion and the estate look like.

I'd like to thank Rodney Rodriguez who provided the wine for the Show House party. Several Trustees were there, Noel Gish, Ron Beattie, Betsy Cambria, Tom Glascock, and Duncan Armstrong. The feedback we got was that it was a fun party. People had a good time.

The planetarium update, Gretchen was away for a month. She thought she'd come home and see a hole in the planetarium where the Goto once stood. You can still go there and visit the Goto. It's still there. Legislator Stern was here today with his son. Legislator Stern's father worked on the Goto, so he came here to show his son what his grandfather worked on. That's pretty cool that he could be able to do that. The Goto is still here.

According to Public Works, we should see some movement within the month. They have no schedule right now, but they're working on lining up the contracts and trying to start. There have been people on the roof looking at the roof. They are doing some preliminary work before it actually starts. It looks like that should be starting in a month.

Gretchen also mentioned the 1937 Chrysler Imperial. We've gotten two appraisals, and they vary. The feeling is that we can keep getting appraisals all day, and it doesn't matter. It's what the market is for the car. What are people willing to pay. We are starting to work with the Chrysler Museum mapping out a strategy for marketing and seeing

what interest there is for the car and soliciting bids, and, of course, the Board has the authority to say whether we sell it or not based on the bids.

We hope to have bids in within the next couple of months and see what the actual market is. We still feel the car is worth in the six figures. It's a significant sum of money.

Something else that I don't think was mentioned previously at other meetings was Chris Hahn, one of our Trustees, has arranged through the American Museum of Natural History, to donate their traveling space exhibit. It's a coupe size RV complete with an exhibit on space that's geared more toward middle school and high school children. We're going in on Tuesday, the 20th, to see the van, to see the logistics of what it means in terms of cost to run it, programs and see if this is something that fits into our mission.

Any Trustee that's interested in joining us, you're more than welcome. Noel, Lorraine, and Dave Bush are all coming from the planetarium. Anybody that's interested -- Chris Hahn said he'd try to be there. We're meeting on Tuesday, 20th at ten o'clock in the morning. That's pretty exciting to see the prospects of having a traveling exhibit that dovetails with the planetarium.

Another issue is the Arena Players that has come up the past week. They are looking to base themselves here, work in the Education Building, and have theater programs over the weekend for Saturday nights and Friday nights. I checked with the Education people, and it doesn't conflict with their work. We're going to do some cosmetic changes there. We'll have the same arrangement that we had in the past with the Arena Players, where we share the gate. So there's no financial obligation on our part to invest anything. It's based on the gate receipts.

What I'd like to do with the Arena Players, since they have a subscription program, is to offer their subscribers a discount on membership to the museum -- a family membership for \$60 for any subscriber to see the Arena Players. I think, again, that creates some synergy between two different groups. These are people that wouldn't be coming in the door through the normal channels. They're coming in for the Arena Players. It's just trying to capture some other supporters and to develop and expand our base of members.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I have a comment.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Yes.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Kindly make sure that whenever the Arena Players puts on a production, that they have the rights to use the –

MR. REINHEIMER:

I'm well aware of that. Thank you. That's an important point that we must not forget. Thank you, Steve. Any questions on anything else that I didn't cover or anything you want me to expand on? Peter?

MR. GUNTHER:

I'd like to thank you for having to work with no time and trying to get things squared away for that wedding. I would like to thank you for all your hard work. You have to shoot from the hip all the time. It's difficult to do, but you made it work. Thank you.

MR. REINHEIMER:

That was a challenge. That was a rough Friday.

MR. GLASCOCK:

The Vanderbilt may have lost thousands of dollars, but you probably gained a lifetime of goodwill. I don't know how many times that couple might speak favorably about the Vanderbilt in the future.

MR. REINHEIMER:

You're right. That was part of my mindset. These people were going through such a difficult time. Sometimes they weren't happy with us, too, because we were limited with what we could do for them. They realized over time that I did everything we could possibly do so that they could have a reception like they should have and not have to worry.

I have to say that the bride was rational and a pleasure to deal with. I think any other bride would be hysterical at five thirty the night before not knowing where she's going to have her wedding. She called me up and said, "I should be enjoying my rehearsal dinner right now. I don't know where we're going to be." They were very gracious. It worked out well. The wedding planner was very professional. I agree, Tom, that that's in the back of my mind. I'm trying to build friends the

best that we can. We're trying to show people that the Vanderbilt is a place where we will do what we need to do to make things work.

MR. DUJMIC:

If I could just also chime in on the wedding situation, I am familiar with a number of people who are involved in the wedding industry. That weekend, obviously, was particularly precarious. In fact, there were a number of catering facilities that forced some of the couples to postpone their wedding to another day. The way that it was handled was very well done. It was better than a lot of the major catering halls in Suffolk and Nassau County. I applaud you for that.

MR. REINHEIMER:

I talked to New York Tent, and they told me that they had jobs, and they said they were absolutely not setting up, and that's it. That was their decision. It hurt me to have to pay to have that roof removed, but it was prudent. That was the responsible thing to do. It kills me that by Tuesday the roof was back on, and it's \$3,600.

MR. GLASCOCK:

We are all experiencing a lifetime of being insured – for our car, our house, our life. If we knew that we weren't going to get sick, or our house wasn't going flood, or that we weren't going to get into a car accident, think of the thousands of dollars we waste. But actually we didn't know that this was going to happen. If we hadn't taken the roof off, something could have happened, and we would have gotten a lot more criticism.

MR. GISH:

We're lucky we got that couple off to their honeymoon in Vermont on time. It was an essential part of that whole story.

I'd just like to report on some correspondence. I did receive a letter since the July meeting on the cell tower from Kathleen Young from Northport who asked me to announce her support for the cell tower in the area for emergency communications.

I met with the County Attorney, Patricia Jordan, today for three hours in our most recent discussions. Lance and I met with her in July concerning the catering contract that's still underway. It has not gone away. We are still working on it. I will review the comments that were made by the County Attorney with Lance this week, as long as he is available and will get back to her. Hopefully we will be polishing that up very, very quickly.

The cell tower – we are exactly the same place we were the last time. We do have a CEQ meeting on September 21. Lance and I will attend that meeting to give the Council on Environmental Quality an update on their requirements for us dealing with the cell tower.

I do want to make mention the fact that – I don't know whether anybody got to take a peak at the *Long Island Press*. They listed the ten most historic places on Long Island. It's interesting Sagamore Hill was number one in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The Vanderbilt Mansion and Planetarium was number two. We were way ahead of Montauk Point. We were way ahead of a number of other places – the Walt Whitman House.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Why were we number two?

MR. GISH:

I did write a letter to both the federal and the state on that, but I figured since the Sagamore Hill – I believe it going to be closed for the next three years, so we're going to be ahead just in time. They are doing renovations for three years, if I remember correctly.

MR. DUJMIC:

Closed completely?

MR. GISH:

Yes, closed completely.

MR. DUJMIC:

Just the house or the grounds?

MR. GISH:

I believe just the house and obviously the exhibits that are around there. I believe they are doing major restorations that will be taking place. The County will probably take that lead and do the exact same thing here at the Vanderbilt, since we are number two and that we're open. I thought that was interesting that from an unbiased standpoint, we came in quite well, as far as a historic venue.

I want to mention also the fact that if you haven't gotten over to see the Design Show House, I ask all Trustees to do that. Those of you who may have met at Normandy Manor when we've had meetings there really deserve to see it in its current state.

I believe Claudia Dowling did a tremendous job again with the landscaping, as Lance mentioned. I will tell you that Lance and I met with all the designers at a meeting prior to this taking place. We approved every sample of paint, every swatch of cloth that went in there. You can thank Lance for his design technique in seeing that everything came out the way it did. It is truly a magical effort on his part. If you didn't get over there, please do so and complement the people that are there. I'd ask you to do that. Bring some friends through. Make an announcement or two. I think it's a good way to see it. I think you'll appreciate the effort that was made.

I also want to inform you that we do have on the calendar Staff Appreciation Day on October 3, which is a Monday. I would hope that the Board of Trustees would get involved in that. I'm asking you to make a contribution of \$20 to defray the cost. If that's impossible, I understand, but I know where all of you live.

Again, I invite all of you to that Staff Appreciation Day. Again, this is one of those years where they really need some appreciation from the Board. There have been some furloughs, obviously, with the planetarium and some loss of time. I'd like to show them that one day. We are closed to the public. We will have our normal bill affair, but I ask you to contribute if you can. If you could, you can either send me money or give it to me tonight. I will write it down, but I'm looking for \$20 contribution from all of the Board Members. Kevin will probably throw in \$40 -

MR. DJUMIC:

He's probably throwing in my \$20.

MR. GISH:

I would hope that all of you would put that on your calendar and try to be there that afternoon.

MS. CAMBRIA:

What time?

MR. GISH:

It will be in the afternoon, probably about twelve to four. Herb will bring his chowder.

MS. OLDRIN MONES:

Famous chowder.

MR. GISH:

Any comments or questions on that? Good, then I expect you all to be there. Any old business? New business?

MR. GUNTHER:

I forgot to thank Lance. The Fire Department asked about putting a vehicle up here. The reason is that if something happened up here or the Little Neck Peninsula got cut off, there would be no fire protection or ambulance service for the people and for the Vanderbilt Museum. Thank God he did because the road was closed for almost 48 hours with two trees across Little Neck, and nobody could get up or down. We had many emergencies up there. I'd like to thank him again for being proactive with that. Thank you.

MR. REINHEIMER:

It's our way of thanking the Centerport Fire Department for all those house calls you've been making -- the ones at four o'clock in the morning. Thank you for not axing down all our doors.

MR. GISH:

Any new business? Is there a motion to adjourn?

MR. DELUISE:

Motion.

MS. OLDRIN MONES:

Second.

DR. GITTELMAN:

Question, please. The next meetings dates are?

MR. GISH:

October 19. There was an email sent around on June 17 in which I delineated all of the dates. The next meeting is October 19. I believe the November meeting is the third Wednesday, November 16. We will make the decision on December in October or November. Right now we have the October 19 and November 16 are the two dates.

DR. GITTELMAN:

I know I can't attend the next meeting.

MR. GISH:

As you can see tonight, we are at quorum by one. It's good to know if you're going to be here or not. Thank you very much for coming. See you on the 19th. Please try to get to the Staff Appreciation Day.

We have a motion and a second to adjourn. All in favor? Opposed? We stand adjourned. **(Vote: 8/0/0/7 Absent: Mr. Beattie, Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Hahn, Ms. McKay & Mr. Rodriguez. Not Present: Mr. Dujmic & Ms. Cambria.)**

(Mr. Gish adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.)

NG:ap
Attachments



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
September 14, 2011 @7:00 p.m. AGENDA**

- I. Introduction of Guests
- II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
- III. Committee Reports
 - a. Treasurers Report; Ron Beattie
 - b. Development Committee Report; Ron Beattie
 - c. Education Committee Report; Gretchen Mones Oldrin
 - d. Strategic Planning; Ron Beattie
 - e. Buildings and Grounds; Kevin Peterman
- IV. Interim Director's Report
 - a. Hurricane Irene
 - b. Design Show House Update
 - c. Planetarium Renovation Update
 - d. 1937 Chrysler Imperial Update
 - e. American Museum of Natural History Traveling Exhibit
 - f. Arena Players
 - g. Summary of Summer Events
- V. President's Report
- VI. Old Business
- VII. New Business



2011 Restoration, Design Show House
AT VANDERBILT MUSEUM IN CENTERPORT





