Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum

Board of Trustees

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Board of Trustees was held in the Planetarium Lobby, Centerport, New York, on October 21, 2015.

The following were in attendance:
Ron Beattie – President
Gretchen Oldrin Mones - 2nd Vice President
Betsy Cambria – Treasurer
Michael Mule – Trustee
Michelle Gegwich - Trustee
Anthony Guarnischelli – Trustee
Lance Reinheimer - Executive Director
Ann Marie Pastore – Stenographer

Absent:
Joseph Dujmic – 1st Vice President
Kevin Peterman – Secretary
Dr. Steven Gittelman - Trustee
Thomas Glascock – Trustee
Stephen F. Melore – Trustee
Jack DeMasi – Trustee

(Mr. Ron Beattie called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.)

MR. BEATTIE:
Welcome to the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum October 21, 2015 Board Meeting. We're going to start with the Pledge of Allegiance.

{SALUTE TO THE FLAG}

Before I ask for a public address to the Board, I want to just say, let's go Mets. We're going to get started based on the Met's game at eight o'clock. Did I mention the Mets?

{LAUGHTER}

Does anybody want to publicly address the Board? No, okay.

We're not going to vote on the previous meeting minutes because we don't have a quorum.

So let's get right to committee reports. Finance and Treasurer's Report, Betsy.

MR. REINHEIMER:
We have no Finance Report tonight. Barbara has been out for most of the past month due to a family illness.

MR. BEATTIE:
Okay, so we'll hold the Finance and Treasurer's Report until the next time.

Education and Exhibits, Gretchen, which is always the highlight of our meeting.

MS. OLDRIN MONES:
The Education and Exhibits Report is short and positive. On September 16, Stephanie participated in a Barnes and Noble book signing of Eagles Nest to benefit the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum.

Stephanie and Lorraine attended the Long Island Museum Association meeting at Heckscher Museum. At the meeting, there was a presentation by the Museum Association of New York. The topic was proposed legislation to benefit museums through grants and funding.

The mansion is decorated for Halloween and the "Unliving History" Tours are being offered. The decorations were done earlier this month to complement the planetarium show "Haunted Skies," which will run all month.

Work on the Gardiner Grant continues on the second floor of the Marine Museum. There have been large purchases of alcohol and beeswax -- the kind of alcohol you use to preserve the specimens.

{LAUGHTER}

All the interns are assisting Stephanie in this massive undertaking.

The Stoll Wing is awaiting electrical work and installation of kiosks.

There were car show newspaper articles covering the Jaguar-MG and the return of the Chrysler.

School and Traveling Bus Bookings are good. For instance, on October 14, 200 eighth graders from Mount Sinai were here for "Dynamic Earth."

On September 29, Stephanie hosted the Huntington Leadership Council with a house tour and then attended a meeting at Huntington Historical Society on September 29.

She received this lovely letter of thanks from the Leadership Huntington Foundation. I'm going to read it because it's quite a tribute to Stephanie, the staff, Lance and the entire Vanderbilt.

"Dear Stephanie, thank you for playing a vital part of the success of the Leadership Huntington History Day Work Shop last week. Many members of the Leadership Class of 2016 commented that the tour of the Vanderbilt Mansion was the best part of the day."

"Your knowledge and expertise on the Vanderbilt's and their incredible home was amazing. It was truly our fortune that you were available to be our guide and resident expert."

"The Vanderbilt is an important part of our local history. It was wonderful to visit this iconic Gold Coast property and see it preserved so beautifully. It is a credit to you and your staff and the amazing job all of you do to keep the Vanderbilt legacy alive for the future. Warm

regards, Stephanie Gotard, Program Director Leadership of Huntington Foundation."

I think Tom Glascock is involved in that Foundation, also.

I will end on that positive note. Does anyone have questions?

(Mr. Michael Mule entered the meeting at 7:15 p.m.)

MR. BEATTIE:
Wonderful. Thank you, Gretchen. Of course, every time we hear something like that, we realize just how amazing our staff is.

I'm going to skip to the President's Report because the only thing I have on that is Staff Appreciation that we had, the barbeque. We had a great time. We moved it to the planetarium because the weather was bad the previous couple of days. But the staff seemed to enjoy it. We definitely enjoyed having them. Every time we talk about the staff in this place, they're the blood of this organization.

We don't have any news on Development.

Planning and Strategic Plan, Steve is not here this evening.

Community Relations, Michael is here. Do we have anything on Committee Relations to talk about?

MR. MULE:
As a matter of fact, yes.

MR. BEATTIE:
Okay, great.

MR. MULE:
I was contacted by one of the neighbors a couple of weeks ago regarding one of the weddings. They expressed displeasure at the fact that there is no permanent solution and that it is a continuous burden on the neighbors on Gina Drive.

It's a nuisance, in a sense, that their use and enjoyment of their property is infringed when there are these events because there is music, and they're can't play their own music or be outside and enjoy their property.

That's an issue. It's a consistent issue. I know that some of the neighbors on Gina Drive have expressed that they would want those events to stop because their use and enjoyment is being affected.

I raise that. This is part of – I guess it's all related to our long-term planning. It's related to a commitment by all parties involved to get a permanent solution for if we're going to have events to be able to have it in a facility that can accommodate without affecting our neighbors on the peninsula.

MR. GUARNISCHELLI:
I think the solution is to invite them to the weddings, and then they'll be fine.

{LAUGHTER}

MS. CAMBRIA:
Is it just weddings, Michael?

MR. MULE:
That was the only thing that was mentioned in the email, but I think the events that we've had have been a success. I haven't heard any complaints about the events. We did curtail them severely over the passed couple of years.

The complaint that I received concerned one particular wedding. I haven't had any notice or any correspondence, or emails or phone calls from anyone before then prior to the last time we discussed this, which might have been more than a year ago at this point.

MR. REINHEIMER:
I'd like to say that Michael forwarded that email to me. I think they did play the last song loudly, from what I hear from the site use person. But that was the only complaint all year that I'm aware of. No one else has come forward.

I think, and I'm not sure, but one of the neighbors came over to the last wedding which was October 10. I was here that night. Carol, who is our site use person, offered that this person could go and talk to the DJ. Carol works at trying to get these people to keep the music reasonable.

I have a decibel meter on my phone. It's around 82 when you're outside in front of the tent. That's what it was also for the Grateful Dead Fest in the field where they were playing.

Carol did say that that last group really cranked up the last song. There are just times when these DJ's and these weddings just flaunt or just ignore our instructions to keep the noise at a reasonable amount.

But, yes, I would say overall we had that one complaint that I'm aware of, and that's it.

We have – and it's in my report, but being that we're talking about weddings – we book almost every weekend. We have three dates left for weddings in 2016. They are on the fringes. May 14, September 10 and October 8 – if anyone is interested. May 14, it may be nice on the water, but it could also be pretty cool. September 10 and October 8 were the other two dates.

Between special events and weddings, and we can only handle one wedding a weekend. You may ask why. Caterers like to set up the night before. So if the wedding is on a Saturday night, they set up on a Friday afternoon. We don't have the staff or the facilities to be able to turn around and do two weddings in one day, which is a good thing for the neighbors.

So when I say we have three dates left, those are the weekends that we have open. This is without any advertising budget. It's just word of mouth. The grounds – people come and they like what they see.

We have two music festivals, as well.

MR. MULE:
I have a question, Lance. As far as the tent, does the tent have some sound proofing?

MR. REINHEIMER:
No.

MR. MULE:
Is that something that can be looked into?

MR. BEATTIE:
Even less because it was damaged in the storm, so there was some shredding in the tent. That's a question I have for Lance later on.

MR. MULE:
Is that an economically feasible option to look into that?

MR. REINHEIMER:
We can look into that. I'm not sure if they make a more rigid wall or a more sound-proof wall for that model or style of tent. That's an easy question. I have a feeling they don't. The curtains and the sides are on tracks. I'm not sure if they can put a more rigid –

MR. GUARNISCHELLI:
Instead of doing all that, why can't they get these bongo drummers to keep it down? You can't go above this crazy thing.

MS. GEGWICH:
What if somebody gets fined? What if we then pass it on and we tell people when they're contacting us –

MR. GUARNISCHELLI:
Well, you don't want the neighbors annoyed. What I do, and I'm dead serious, when I go to a wedding and it gets crazy, I walk up and I ask the guy to please lower it. I have a pair of dikes in my pocket, and I go by the speaker when no one is looking and I cut the wire. Then everybody goes, "It's beautiful. We can talk now." I'm serious. I cut the wire.

MR. BEATTIE:
We have to have enforcement. There's no doubt about that. We've had this problem before.

Fortunately, this year, we've only had one out of the whole year. And one is too many because we want to be a good neighbor.

MR. REINHEIMER:
Gina Drive – I've been down there, and it's interesting because the music can be loud there because there's a ravine. It's the way the sound travels. It makes the sound louder than you think it is. It seems to gain volume down there more than it does than when you're up level with it. I don't know why. I'm not a scientist, but I've been down there in the street and you can hear it without any difficulty. It is a unique situation where that travels down the hill to those houses.

MR. MULE:
I would like to ask if you could look into that. I don't think there needs to be a motion that's necessary for that.

MR. REINHEIMER:
No, we should check our options.

MR. MULE:
Yes, we should check our options. I'd like to check back on this next meeting just to see what you found out. If there is an economically feasible way to contain the sound, I know at some facilities, my Alma Mata had one of these tents, and I believe they did have sound proofing. They certainly had air conditioning within it.

MR. GUARNISCHELLI:
A simpler solution is to tell the guy to crank it down.

MR. BEATTIE:
There is an enforcement issue there. I don't know what staff we have to monitor –

MR. REINHEIMER:
We usually have two grounds people and one or two supervisors. Carol is the Site Use Supervisor. She usually has an assistant with her. We have two grounds people, depending on the size of the wedding.

MR. GUARNISCHELLI:
It's so harmful that banging that they do. Real quick, a guy in Lloyd Harbor was telling his neighbor, he had a problem with raccoons getting into my garbage cans every night. Bring the garbage cans in his garage and leave the lids loose. Just close the door. When you hear the raccoons in, run outside, close the garage door, get your son's bongo drums and beat them loud as all heck. In an hour go out, there open the door, and they will never come back again. It's the truth. They never came back again. They couldn't take that pounding. They never came back again.

MS. CAMBRIA:
I don't know how we can adapt that.

{LAUGHTER}

MR. REINHEIMER:
Well, we had a lot of raccoons here.

MS. CAMBRIA:
I have a question. As part of the contract that they sign when they agree to use the tent, etc, is there a clause in there about the music and decibels, etc?

MR. REINHEIMER:
Not that I can recall, no, I don't think so.

MR. BEATTIE:
Really?

MS. CAMBRIA:
Maybe there should be.

MR. BEATTIE:
There definitely should be. I thought there was. Maybe I just assumed that.

MR. REINHEIMER:
I don't recall seeing that.

MS. CAMBRIA:
It still would be difficult to enforce, but you could point to it. Not you, but one of the staff members could show them that they agreed to this decibel.

MR. REINHEIMER:
Absolutely.

MR. GUARNISCHELLI:
I think there is a company – and I think Ralph had the guy where they were going to put the meters at the end of the parking lot by the Jelly Fish so that if the noise got to a certain point, it would go off inside and they would know it was too loud and it was going to go across the water. I don't know if the meeting was here or not but there was a company that were experts in containing this noise management. Was it here that we had the meeting when the guys were here telling us one of their concerns about noise?

MR. BEATTIE:
No.

MS. CAMBRIA:
I don't remember that.

MR. GUARNISCHELLI:
It was a company. It was someplace Ralph had a meeting, and they were discussing this noise containment.

MR. MULE:
Lastly, I just want to say is that I appreciate the efforts at enforcement, but I would like to see if there's a way to just contain the noise. This way, when the inevitable happens and people violate the rules, as far as decibel limits, that it's contained and we're protected in any event, and our neighbors are, as well.

MR. BEATTIE:
Okay, we don't have anybody here on Operations.

Executive Director's Report.

MR. REINHEIMER:
Okay, the County's 2016 Operating Budget has been released. The County Executive's recommended budget includes $989,294 for Hotel/Motel Tax for the museum. That's an increase of $110,750 over this current year, but it's still less than we had in 2014.

I did go to the Legislature today at the Economic Development Meeting, which is where they would have if they had a desire to discuss Hotel/Motel Tax. They didn't bring it up. They didn't discuss it. I was just there in case they had any questions of the museum.

I think it's best at this point to let the Legislature decide what they want to do before we make a case that it's important.

The Hotel/Motel Tax is critical for the operation of this museum, to continue the work that we're doing and the progress that we're making.

Right now, what the County Executive included, which is the full 10 percent maximum legal amount for us we can live with. Any cuts would be detrimental to our operations.

MR. MULE:
Lance, what is the sunset status?

MR. REINHEIMER:
That's been extended through December 31, 2017. We got a two-year extension.

I'm hoping what they'll do is ask the New York State Legislature during 2016 to craft either a permanent or a longer term – this was kind of stock gap. Then basically the legislation was continued as is.

I'm hoping that they have a dialogue and continue it for a longer period of time.

At the last meeting I mentioned Groupon. That's still going well. We've had $2,890 Groupon's purchased. The museum has received revenue of $34,000 from Groupon, so that's still very successful.

The Stoll Wing operations – the capital project for the Stoll Wing, we're still waiting for the electrical work to start. At the last meeting I reported that I expected to start within two weeks. That was a month ago. I will continue that. I expect the electrical work to start in two weeks.

There was additional specs that the electrical contractor needed for the kiosks that are being installed. They were forwarded to the electricians about a week to ten days ago. I'll follow up to find out where they are to get that started.

We met with the glass supplier to replace the plate glass in the Stoll Wing and also to install a new piece where that diorama was altered. He is going to work with us in timing and removing of the glass as Stephanie has the animals reconditioned.

She is using part of the funds that we got from the Speer Foundation. Those funds will be used to restore the animals and dioramas. We will remove all the glass at once. The individual that's coming, George Dante, who did the animal heads the last time, will come and restore the animals on site.

When he's done, then we'll reinstall the new glass and replace the plate glass that's in there now.

DPW started waterproofing the exterior walls of the Marine Museum starting in mid September. They were here for a couple of weeks. The contractor was pulled off to go to another job in the County. I don't know when they're coming back.

Our grounds crew rented a lift and did some of the work on the exterior of the building. They painted all the trim around the top.

We're doing part of it, and Public Works is doing part of it. I'm hoping that progresses and is finished up by the winter.

They also started two days ago working on the roof of the planetarium. They were here for a day, and they left. But I think they left for a reason. They haven't told me, but they started to do the work. They found quite a few broken tiles. We have no supply of tiles. So I think what they did is, "Okay we have no tiles. We have to order tiles and then go back when we get the tiles." They will also work on the area on the Marine Museum roof that needs attention. They will come back and work on that.

A new show started "Haunted Skies" that Dave helped create and to transition from the old system to the new system. That's been very successful. We started that September 26, and we sold 772 tickets between September 26 and this past weekend. That's doing quite well. That runs through November 1.

Events, we had the Grateful Dead Fest September 27; 1,500 people came here. We did a good job. I rented a Chevy Suburban to work with the van so we had continuous shuttles to the beach. Most of the people parked at the beach that couldn't park on our property. Some parked on Cobblestone. Outside of a few on Cobblestone, 90 percent of the people that were here that didn't park on our property parked at the beach and it worked very well having two vehicles go back and forth.

We grossed $37,000 that one day. That's split 50 percent with the producer. Between the two music festivals, the one we did in June, June 7, and the Grateful Dead Fest, we generated $64,000. That was split. So it was $32,000 for two days worth or work. Those were good days.

We had another Toby Tobias event, "Journey from Johannesburg." It was an excellent program in the planetarium. There was a great message there to get along and don't discriminate against people. This was about issues that Toby went through as a young boy in Johannesburg, South Africa, he migrated over time. He spent time living in Israel, and then he migrated and came into New York. It's basically his life through music and his journey through Israel to New York.

It was a great message and a great program. Ticket sales were a little slow, but it did pick up the night of the show, which was October 10. We brought in $1,700 for the planetarium for the two shows.

Just looking toward the future, we have next summer pretty well booked between the weddings and special events.

The tree lighting is November 28. Northport Choral will be here once again. I think Betsy is with the Northport Choral. No, you're with the competition. They will be here for, I think, the third or fourth year in a row. That's at four-thirty in the courtyard.

December 5 is the Holiday Dinner in the mansion. People started calling the end of September for that.

The next night, December 6, the Liverpool Shuffle will be back again in the planetarium for one show. That's a Sunday night at 7:00 p.m.

Just to mark on your calendars, way up there, July 23 is the Clam Bake. We generally have it the weekend before, but when I went to book it, there was a wedding.

It's interesting to see how things have progressed where we were looking about a day down the road. Now we pretty much have set things pretty much a year in advance. It's a nice feeling to be able to do that and have everything locked down and we know where we're going in the next year.

Getting back to the tent, the tent came down. We looked at the floor. We have to consider replacing the plywood floor. The floor is framed in a metal frame with four-by-four pieces of plywood. Many of them are in bad condition. So I'm looking into alternatives or options on how to fix and replace that floor.

MS. CAMBRIA:
Who owns the floor?

MR. REINHEIMER:
We own the whole thing. We own the tent, the floor and the sides. We own it. It costs about $30,000 a year to maintain the tent and to replace pieces on a regular basis so it stays fresh.

One last thing getting back to what Gretchen mentioned. The New York Museum Association that you mentioned in your report, I checked

into the membership there. I checked to see if were a member, and we were not. I could have sworn that we were. But it's $150 to join. I've got the link, so we'll join that association. It's a great association.

That's the Director's Report. Are there any questions? I'd be happy to answer your questions.

MR. BEATTIE:
One question I have. On the damage to the tent, are we insured for that?

MR. REINHEIMER:
It's not enough money to be insured. I would say probably not. Our insurance through the County is liability. Property – our collections are insured. We have find arts insurance. We have directors and officers insurance. But something like the tent -- and especially that we lost four or five panels. We rented the panels. We'll buy new panels next year, but New York Tent basically charged us just for installation. They didn't charge us for the rent of those panels. It was for one weekend, for that wedding on October 10.

MR. BEATTIE:
Okay.

MR. MULE:
Lance, can you tell me how old the tent is and approximately how much it costs?

MR. REINHEIMER:
I'm not sure how much it costs, somewhere in the $30,000 range, I think. We've replaced all the components. In 2011, we replaced the sides. In 2012, we replaced the roof. In 2013, we replaced carpeting. Actually 2014, we replaced carpeting. We also replaced the carpeting this year. The carpeting we got last year was not good.

I look at the tent, and it's like any kind of maintenance, you have to keep replacing piece by piece each year so that you don't have a large expense where you're replacing everything at once.

The tent is, I think, 2009. That's the original floor from 2009.

MR. MULE:
And the sides that you replaced, do you replace it piecemeal as it's damaged or do you replace all the sides –

MR. REINHEIMER:
No, I replaced all the sides at once.

MR. MULE:
When was that?

MR. REINHEIMER:
That was in 2011. The sides are in good shape. When they came to replace the sides that had ripped, I asked the person there, and he said he looked at all the sides and said they looked okay. The roof is okay. The only thing that's a concern now is the floor, and of course we'll see options if they make such as a thing as soundproofing for that style tent.

MR. MULE:
Thanks.

MR. BEATTIE:
Thanks. On the President's Report, the only thing I have left is – because we already talked about staff appreciation – is the Under the Stars Café. We're moving gangbusters on that.

We also have an RFP that I didn't have the chance to review yet for the laser light show and bringing those back. We will certainly get to that.

We have a quote from a person to start the food services part of the Under the Stars Café. So we're working on that. We'll do some RFP's for not only liquor service, the beer and wine, but also food service, etc.

We hope to begin that soon. I think the last email I saw was the plumbing drawings went to the County. Actually all the drawings went to the County, including the plumbing. Hopefully we'll be hearing from them soon to get that moving.

MR. REINHEIMER:
Right, and they're also going to the Health Department.

MR. BEATTIE:
Right.

MR. REINHEIMER:
The Health Department and construction permits.

MR. BEATTIE:
Right. So that's it on the –

MS. CAMBRIA:
Can I ask a question?

MR. BEATTIE:
Sure.

MS. CAMBRIA:
Do we have any kind of a ballpark time frame – March, February?

MR. BEATTIE:
I'm hoping that we can be under construction by the first of the year.

MS. CAMBRIA:
Okay.

MR. BEATTIE:
That's optimistic. I don't think the construction will take long. I don't think the rest of the process will take long. But we know what we're dealing with here. Remember fast track on the planetarium was twelve years. Hopefully it will be much faster than that.

Does anybody have any questions for me on the President's Report? Old business? New business?

We don't have to ask for an adjournment, but I will say on the record if you can record it, let's go Mets. I think I mentioned it before. Thank you, guys.

(Mr. Ron Beattie adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.)

RB:ap
Attachments

Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum

October 2015 Meeting Agenda

October 20th, 2015 / Planetarium / 7:00 PM

I. **Pledge of Allegiance**

II. **Public Address to the Board**

III. **Previous Meeting Minutes**

IV. **Committee Reports**

- A. **Finance / Treasurer Report**
- B. **Education & Exhibit**
- C. **Development**
- D. **Planning / Strategic Plan**
- E. **Community Relations Committee**
- F. **Operations**
  1. **Buildings and Grounds**
  2. **Technology**
  3. **Human Resources**

V. **Executive Director Report**

VI. **President's Report**

VII. **Old Business**

VIII. **New Business**

IX. **Adjournment**