Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Transcription of the Board of Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, June 17, 2020, 12:00pm

Video Conference

**Meeting called to order at 12:01pm.**

Dr. Monroe Harris: Welcome everybody to our first ever virtual full board meeting. I hope you all and your families are healthy and safe and thank you all for joining us for this meeting. Would you please do a roll Caprice?

**Roll call of the Trustee full board by Caprice Bragg. Full attendance listed in the meeting minutes.**

Caprice Bragg: Wonderful. Thank you. The roll call is complete. Back to you Monroe.

Dr. Monroe Harris: I’m sorry. Can you hear me?

Caprice Bragg: Yes. We’re all set.

Dr. Monroe Harris: So, we don’t have any public comment right?

Caprice Bragg: We do not.

Dr. Monroe Harris: We do not. Thank you. OK. So again, please remain muted except for voting or if you have some discussion of questions. When you speak, please state your name, and if you experience any difficulties please email Kay Baker to assist with troubleshooting. In accordance with these requirements, a recording of a transcript of this meeting will be posted. If there is no request for public comment, we will proceed with the meeting as follows. Can I get a motion to approve the minutes from the December 11, 2019 full board meeting as distributed?

Kenneth Johnson: So moved.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Second?

Charlie Whitaker: Second.

Dr. Monroe Harris: All in favor?

Full Board: Aye.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Well. What can I say. We’re in a new time here with the new normal that we’re dealing with. I’d be remised by not welcoming Hubert, Ashlin, and Michel, the new members to our board. Thank you all for your participation and we look forward to you all getting involved and getting to know you much much better. Thank you all. With everything that has gone on in the last three months, I think it deserves a little bit of commentary, so please, I beg your indulgence. The past few months for me has been just surreal. First we had COVID-19 that brought the country to a standstill and created a social, health, and economic crisis that I’ve never seen before. It exposed many of the health and economic disparities and inequities in our society and brought them to the forefront for all of us to consider. That, in and of itself, would have been enough, but then there was the tragic murder of Mr. George Floyd by the police. Anyone with any sense of humanity was horrified, saddened and angered by Officer Chauvin’s callous and nonchalant disregard for human life. The pain and response of Mr. Floyd’s death and the death of many others including Breonna Taylor, who was from my hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, the world erupted in protest and Richmond became the epicenter, one of the epicenters, of that protest. On the night when protesters reacted to the statues on Monument Avenue and came down Arthur Ashe Boulevard, and even tagged one of our neighbor’s buildings, the statues on our campus and the art remained relatively unscathed. It is meaningful to me that our community understood the importance of our institution.

It is important that our message here at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts resonates well within the community. How wonderful it is that we, as a Board, have chosen to be thought leaders and advocated for diversity and inclusion early on. We chose to give a voice to the voiceless. It’s in our strategic plan. It’s apparent in the complexion of our board. It’s evident in our executive and creative leadership. It’s reflective of our programs and exhibitions, and it culminated in the unveiling of Kehinde Wiley’s “Rumors of War”. How timely and even more important has this acquisition become? I fondly remember when Bill Royall got up at one of our meetings and advocated for the purchase of “Rumors of War” and how we as a board unanimously voted in favor of it. We were in our leaders in a crucial time. Are we perfect? Of course not. Are we helping to move the needle forward in the right direction? Absolutely. It is because of you that this institution has become the beacon of inspiration and reflection that it is and I am proud to be a part of it and I thank each and every one of you for all that you do to make this museum what it is today. Thank you all very, very much.

And with that being said, we’ll continue with the meeting. As you all are aware, we will open July 1st and we are enthusiastically cautious about that. I think it is going to be a big opening, I think the people are ready for it, and I’m looking forward to coming back into the museum, and going to Amuse, and having dinner, and just enjoying everything that we’ve missed for the last few months. Each stage of the pandemic has brought different challenges, and, yes, even opportunities for the museum. The Executive Committee met twice virtually to understand the impact of the pandemic on the staff and the museum operations. Again, I want to acknowledge Alex, the senior management, and the entire staff for all that they have done during this time. The museum’s work has continued. We have not seen anything like this and I hope that we never will again, but, however challenging it has been, the staff has learned and adapted well. During this meeting you will hear a lot about that. Again, thank you all for your support and engagement with Alex and the museum during this time and that’s my report. Next, we will hear the report from the Foundation co-presidents. Lilo, are you on the line?

Lilo Ukrop: Yes I am Monroe.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Great.

Lilo Ukrop: Thank you all for your support and interest in allowing Jim and me to be present at this meeting. It means a lot that we continue to work so closely together and collaborate especially during these challenging times. From the Foundation standpoint, I just can’t say enough about our senior leadership and the staff at the museum. For the past few months, it’s been a whirlwind. (inaudible) So I can’t thank our leadership team enough for working 24/7 to keep our museum open. (inaudible) We at the Foundation have been busy. We had our first ever Zoom meeting on May 8th and accomplished quite a bit. We elected new officers for the coming year. We voted in four new Directors: Farhad Aghdami, Agustin Rodriguez, Mike Schewel, and Brian Jackson, and we approved our budget. We are happy that we had some reserves to help support the museum during these challenging times. (inaudible) …work with the Trustees to bridge some financial shortcomings that we might see.

Our investment committee has stepped up. We are meeting monthly now. Because of the volatility in the market we thought it was a good idea to stay in touch and talk about ever changing markets and see if we should adapt and make changes to the portfolio. For the most part, we were invested… (inaudible). We are continuing to work to solicit gifts thanks to Tom Gutenberger and his team. They continue to connect with people and talk to people and may not overtly asking for financial support, but continue to remind folks of the importance of the museum and why their philanthropy is so important to our work and the work we’re doing, like Monroe said, in the community. One of our Foundation members put a challenge, a $100,000 grant out, and we’ve worked hard at the Foundation to match that grant and I’m sure Tom will report out on that later. So we appreciate your support and thank you for anything you can do to help support our leadership team and staff strategic thinking at the museum. Does anyone have any questions for the Foundation? Jim?

Dr. Monroe Harris: Lilo, Thank you. Jim? Lilo?

Lilo Ukrop: No. We’re good.

Dr. Monroe Harris: You good?

Lilo Ukrop: Yes.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Thank you for everything. Thank you for your support. It’s been great working with you all. I really appreciate it.

Lilo Ukrop: Thank you.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Thank you. Once again, if you're not speaking, please mute your, your device. We're getting some feedback from someone. Alex, you're up next.

Alex Nyerges: I've got to unmute. Thank you Monroe. And Monroe, thank you for those great introductory comments. I appreciate your kind remarks about the senior management, but I have to say that it goes to all of the board, all of the foundation, all of our staff. While we've been closed now for three months and three days we've had a large number of staff actually working onsite. Security is there 24 hours a day. Our HVAC and engineers, our electricians and plumbers have all been working. Many of our other people are shop people who've been working selling things on line like crazy. We've had visitor services people obviously to answer the phone. Our mail room. I mean, dozens and dozens and dozens of employees coming in every day in these rather challenging times. And they had persevered and have done a great job of keeping things together. Candy keeping our office running, keeping my life as close to normal as possible given the particulars. So now, as we mentioned, we are going to be opening to our membership. It will not look like what you see on the screen. I can promise you that. At least, I hope it won't look like that. We hope that people will observe physical distancing, keep six feet apart with the protocols. A number of things are going to happen. We're gonna keep to our normal hours with the members. We're going to be open, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday at first, second, and third of July from 10:00am to 9:00pm. The shop will be open. Amuse will be open. The cafe will be open. Again, all with different protocols. All staff will be wearing masks. All visitors will be asked to wear masks. If they don't have one, they'll be offered one for free. If they refuse, we will not be making exceptions, except for people who have physical limitations that require them not to wear a mask or children under two and we've done a ton of things all of what you see here. Keeping people apart. Limiting capacity.

The best illustration is with the Sunken Cities. We were going to ticket that from day one at four hundred tickets per hour. We're limiting that to a hundred tickets per hour in the initial weeks. We'll look at changing that as we go along, but that's one fourth of the capacity. Obviously lots more cleaning protocols, hand sanitizing stations, and those kinds of things. Kimberly and the folks from the Best Café created a “grab and go” service that will start up on the 29th. We're doing everything we can do to be touchless as much as possible. So we're trying to provide the very best environment. One entrance in being the main entrance as our primary entrance. We will still have the 1936 entrance open, but then the school entrance will be the main exit. You know we have hundreds of thousands of square feet, so to be able to keep people fairly separate is gonna be easy, we believe, even though we anticipate a fairly robust attendance as soon as we open, not just from the museum, but for the Sunken Cities. I will tell you by experience with our colleagues, when Houston opened, they were averaging about five hundred people a day for the few first few days, but the more impressive part were the number of visitors that were coming in literally breaking down and crying, because they wanted to be back at their museum. I would say that the enthusiasm for our institution is as much or better than the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston and I suspect we will see the same kind of reaction. I can't tell you how many people have told me they want to come back as soon as it's possible.

Safety and security is going to be first and foremost. Now, we've done a number of things to change the schedules. So, let me touch on those. The annual board dinner. Obviously, we are not doing any opening events as you see here. This is an event from the past. This is past Fine Arts and Flowers event. We will not be doing the annual board dinner. Obviously, we're not doing it today. We will likely not do it in September. We're not doing any events of mass gatherings that includes Family Day, our Friday night events, our Thursdays. We're looking at ways we can bring those partially online, partially with physical distancing, and using the Robins sculpture garden as a staging area where we can ensure the proper kinds of safe protocols. Fine Arts and Flowers has been rescheduled to October of ‘21 and I want to say thank you to Cammy and all the council and then we also decided because they had built their entire program around the reopening of the Mellon galleries, we were able to extend the Mellon tour of the French collection, which arrived in Mississippi, but has not yet open to the public. We were able to extend that to the first of January, but even bringing it back in to be installed in the spring we realized that the council would put so much work into Fine Arts and Flowers and that rescheduling it to the fall of ‘21 would be best if we would reschedule the opening of the Mellon galleries to coincide with that. Needless to say, the council was thrilled. We can then dovetail all of our publicity and everything that needs to be done to build up that momentum to that date. And although we've missed the Mellon collections, they've enjoyed a fantastic world tour, and they will come back in force in October of ’21. I'd be glad to pause and answer any questions that people have for the reopening protocols or anything else related to reopening.

Anne Edwards: I have a question, this is Anne Edwards, about the sculpture garden and the outdoor spaces. How are you going to control crowds there? Social distancing? Are you going to attempt to do that?

Alex Nyerges: That's a good question to ask. We only closed the sculpture garden recently during the protests when we were doing our best after that first Saturday evening two and a half weeks ago. So, we closed the sculpture garden in the evenings, removed all of the furniture, but the garden has been open. We've had some fabulous spring days, and I have to say, giving credit to our audience, that they have done a marvelous job 99% of the time at maintaining physical distancing. Our officers are out there patrolling to make sure that we don't have large crowds. I mean, there are four acres out there, so we can handle a very healthy number of people. Where it gets a little dicey, quite frankly, is them having to make decisions about what constitutes a family group. But, actually, because I've been when I've been going in, I've gone in on the weekends, during the day, and the garden has been busy and you've got people showing, you know, sitting on blankets, but six feet apart. You've got family groups, sitting close together. So our folks are having to make some decisions about where we might have to intervene and ask people to respect that six foot physical distancing. But what we see is a lot of people have family groups on blankets. Clearly, parents with their kids and grandkids and those groups we obviously leave to themselves. But I've been very proud to look at the crowds wearing masks and, unlike some of the other places I’ve been, I think our people have been much more respectful.

Anne Edwards: That's good. One more question about Amuse. You said Amuse was reopening and the staff will be wearing masks, but how are you going to limit the reservations? I mean, that's easy enough to do, obviously, but I assume you are limiting reservations to the restaurant.

Alex Nyerges: We're following all of the secretary of health and Governor protocols and CDC. So tables will be spaced more than six feet apart. We’re gonna limit groups to ten or less which is easy because we only have one table that sits as many as ten. We will be using disposable paper napkins. All of our staff will be wearing masks. All of our visitors will be wearing masks. Obviously, the only exception will be when people get to eat and drink at the table whether in Amuse or in the Best café. I’ve discovered that it’s impossible to eat or drink through my mask. But the number of reservations, we’ve got a great reservation system, and the same thing with ticketing. We’re gonna be able to have a sense of what our anticipated crowds will be. We will be welcoming walk up attendance in Amuse. There will be no bar seating and no bar service initially until, I believe, it’s in phase three which will be at some future date.

Anne Edwards: Right. OK. Thank you.

Meg Gottwald: Hey Alex. It’s Meg Gottwald. Just curious about our ventilation system.

Alex Nyerges: Good question. Well, you know here’s the good thing when you spend $150 million dollars on a new building and then you spend millions, millions of dollars more. First of all, what we have basically throughout all of our public facilities and our private facilities, offices, storage areas and the rest, we have a low velocity system. So where people get concerned is where there is no air circulation—not a good situation in tight confined spaces. We don’t have that. Where people get concerned is with high velocity systems, which then take moisture particles and sends them spewing throughout a facility. We don’t have that. We have a low velocity system. But even more importantly, we have probably the most advanced system in terms of filtration. We have what is called a HEPA filter system. The HEPA is the highest level of filtering other than in an operating room in a hospital or a clean site in a high clean area inside a computer facility, but ours is right next to that. So, if you want to actually be safe, you stay outside. If you want to be safe inside, don’t stay home. Come to the art museum because it’s better than anywhere you’re gonna go with the exception, I have to say, of a hospital, but I wouldn’t go to the hospital for a clean alternative.

Meg Gottwald: Great news. Thank you.

Alex Nyerges: Any other questions about protocols?

Satya Rangarajan: Alex, this is Satya. When it comes to your employees, are you giving higher folks at risk that are choosing to work remotely and will not be coming back in when the doors open. How are you dealing with your employee sickness, et cetera?

Alex Nyerges: Well, first of all for all of our employees that are telecommuting, and I'm a good example I'm sitting at home in my office, we're going to promote that people continue to telecommute as much as possible. Those that can't, obviously security and HVAC experts and those, they've been working all along. They've been provided with personal protection. We will, we also set up for our visitor services, other kinds of personal protection as well. For anybody that's at risk. We have the ability for them to use special sick leave because we don't want anybody that's uncomfortable or a high risk case, so, working with our HR department, we are ready to handle any folks that are unable to come in. Everybody, as I mentioned, will be required to wear masks whether they’re visitor or staff, and so I think that unless there's some unusual case that we've not anticipated, but our people that really nimble. HR and security and visitor services are gonna be ready, I believe, to handle most everything. But it's a good concern to have and we're beginning with three days of member openings so that we can be up and running in a more gentle nuanced way without huge crowds in those first couple of days. Hopefully, that answered your question Satya.

Satya Rangarajan: Yes. Thank you.

Alex Nyerges: Any other questions, because we're gonna get into the fiscal side of things to talk about Advancement and Capital Campaign with Tom. Let me begin, though, by a little framework. I have to say that we are, we've been blessed, Tom and the development operation have done a fabulous job of continuing to work, both remotely and then onsite. They have been on the annual operations doing an amazing job of not realizing the 15% minimum drop. We would have expected in membership, in annual support, in upper donor support. I'll let you Tom, give you the numbers. But we, we have been so much better than we would have ever dreamed about particularly based on the 2008-2009 Great Recession experience, which was very different. We're seeing an allegiance and support and loyalty that quite frankly is unprecedented. And I think that goes to the strength of the institution and the loyalty of our people.

The capital campaign, Tom will also talk about in detail, but I want to start by framing this. That, you know, number one we decided we were gonna have a multi-year quiet period. 30, 36 months rather than 24 months. We didn't know how smart we were when we decided that initially, but that gives us the latitude and the flexibility and the time that we are doing right now, which is all about continuing to cultivate and steward all of our donors. Some people are saying, I'd like to have another year, but I'm gonna increase from Founders to the Commonwealth Society in this next year, and then come back and look at a capital campaign gift back to you. We've seen that time and time again. But then we also have seen continued gifts. We have a pending seven figure gift that is going to get wrapped up in the next probably couple of days if not a week. Actually, a second one beyond that, but I'm going to turn the podium over to Tom, though, but not before saying thank you to Jill and Monroe Harris because last week they signed the papers, despite all the things that we're going through, to make a seven figure leadership gift to this capital campaign, and so Monroe please tell Jill thank you for us, and Monroe thank you for your leadership, but thank you for your enormous financial generosity as well. I know this is one of those gifts that where Tom, as a chief development officer says, you know, we gotta get, we have got to get people to stretch beyond where it's painful. And I think Monroe despite the fact, you're smiling, I got to tell you, I know this is a stretch.

Dr. Monroe Harris: It is a stretch.

Alex Nyerges: It is a stretch beyond normal, but that's a sign of a true leader. So thank you Monroe.

Full Board: Clapping and congratulations.

Alex Nyerges: Tom. Turn it over to you now.

Tom Gutenberger: That's great Alex. Thank you. And thank you so much Monroe and Jill, and for your leadership and right now that commitment is incredibly important to us to keep the momentum. So, not only the importance of the gift, but the importance of the timing is also is also amazing. So thank you very much. In the external relations committee. We had some technical difficulty. So, I'm going to weave some of the comments that I was gonna make there into this presentation, but I promise to keep it still on track in terms of time. What I wanted to do is share with you, basically, the current environment. What we've seen in other, not for profits as well as within the museum world and then I'll talk about some best practices and then what are we doing, what are we seeing, and then the fundraising update. So, to start with, I've been on a number of calls with other museum development folks as well, as a lot of calls with our campaign consultant. And basically what people were seeing is a ten percent to twenty percent decline in fundraising this year and they're predicting that for next year. What we did was to be what we then plugged in for us was a fifteen percent decline this year, and a fifteen percent decline for next year. And, just to jump a little bit. The good news is that we're actually up thirty four percent in terms of fundraising this year. And our unrestricted giving is flat. Which is incredible because in talking to our consultant, they don't have anybody else who's either up or flat and so I'll go into the numbers a little bit more so we're not seeing that fifteen percent.

As David Goode and I did on the fiscal oversight call, we both knocked on wood so please everybody do that because we still have a couple more weeks left in June, but what we're seeing in terms of campaigns, overall, most campaigns are being extended by a year. So, if they're in a silent phase, which typically would be two years, they're making it be three. If they're in the public phase, which typically is five years, they're extending that public phase by a year. And then also what they're seeing is a pause on people willing to make multi-year commitments at this point. And I think everybody can understand why with both COVID and what we've seen in the fluctuations in the markets. But just on that note I wanted to touch quickly just on those two points and what we're seeing in terms of our campaign. As Alex mentioned, the great news is that we actually, in our feasibility study, people did voice concerns that there might be a recession. And so we, in our planning, said we would do a two to three year silent phase. And so, obviously, it looks like we'll do the three year silent phase, which, board leadership basically called it, which we probably figured out we would do anyway. So, we have not had to change our plans overall. The other good piece of news is that we, in our campaign budget, we actually invested in front line fundraisers for the most part, and we put most of our money into folks who are gonna be fundraising rather than programming and that investment actually paid off. It really did put us, in terms of the body count, that we should have with the size of prospect in our prospect pool, what we raised for a year, and what our opportunities are. So, even that investment through the campaign budget, in those major gift officers did not put his own size of where we should have been on a regular basis. Anyways it's just we needed that special draw or the special funds to actually hire those folks. They've been incredibly active, I think, Lilo, you'll appreciate this. You came up with the radical hospitality that you all have been doing in terms of just engaging folks. So, our gift officers have been on the phone emailing every single day and working really hard. Just two weeks ago, they had a mini campaign during the week, and they called it radical outreach and there were almost two hundred contact reports filed in one week by our gift officers. So, they're out in front of people, and they're talking to folks all along the way. And I'd say the investment that you all made, in particularly the Foundation, in the campaign has paid off because if we didn't have the fundraisers out front, talking to folks, we would probably see about a seven hundred thousand dollar decrease in our unrestricted giving.

As I mentioned, we're flat and so really I [appreciate] the outreach from the gift officers and the generosity obviously of our donors, but that's a seven hundred thousand dollar difference just in, I think, the investment that you've made in the campaign, what we're seeing is that people are still making gifts and I do want to say as again thanking Monroe and Jill and also, in between calls, I ran across the street in the rain to sign a gift agreement with Anne and Gus Edwards, so Anne, it’ll be on the way and I wanna say thank you so much to you and Gus for your leadership support, and their support will be in our next month's numbers. And so we are seeing others also making multi-year commitments. But, for the most part, I mean, that has slowed down. But what we're seeing is, people are actually maintaining their level of annual support from last year, or membership, or in many, many cases, increasing that support. And I think that's why we're in a good position we are. And again, that's our gift officers talking every day to folks. And so we are continuing to have campaign conversations. And I really do think that, as things start to settle down and people get a little more comfortable in the summer and hopefully in the fall that then we'll actually be able to resume a lot of those multi-year commitment conversations that we've had. But we did have a lot of momentum coming into the year, right into the crisis, I would say, because we've raised in gifts and commitments, since July 1, nineteen million dollars for the campaign. So thank you to the committee. Thank you to all of you. And that's really with a million dollar investment that we've made in the campaign. So I'd say the ROI on that is pretty good.

And then fundraising implications during the last recession--I guess Alex is probably going to not be happy with me to end the slide on more of a negative note--but in the last recession, overall fundraising decreased for all philanthropies by fifteen percent, but arts and culture had a twenty six percent decrease, and it took about a year for all philanthropies to recover to where they were the previous year, but Arts and Culture took two years. So, just that as a backdrop, we're gonna be very conservative about our estimates just because of what we've seen historically and that fed into our fifteen percent projection which again does not look like we're gonna see that in terms of decreases. If you want to go to the next slide. We've looked at best practices and how to get through times like this. And again, it's a “communicate with donors frequently”. That, as I mentioned, our gift officers have been doing a great deal that. We're producing video content to make sure that we're in touch with folks. One of things is donors don't stop giving in times like these. Again, they may not make multi-year commitments, but tend to go back to supporting their top priorities. And so if someone who is sort of supporting ten charities, they might go down to five, but really supporting the things that are most important to them. And again, back to our feasibility study, we're in the top three of people's philanthropic interests in almost all of our conversations. So, I think that's, again, while you see the strength and the closeness with our donors.

Donor advised funds are incredible opportunity because people have already made a gift with those resources and it's sitting in their advised fund. So, what we did was we ran a list of anybody who'd made a gift to us from a donor advised fund over the last two years and then creating strategies around that to go back to them. Foundations, corporate, and government funders are being much more flexible, creating special funds for COVID and so we've been very aggressive about our outreach and creating proposals and submissions and I'll talk about that in one of the one of the next slides, but also back to communicating with folks we’re just prior to sending out our mailings, we're staying in touch with donors, making sure they know that it's coming and asking them for their support, and also to consider making an increased gift. So we're trying to give people a heads up so we don't look insensitive when we're sending out direct mail solicitations, and then talk a little bit about what our strategies are.

And so, if you want to go to the next page. Again, communicating regularly with our volunteers and donors, and, as I mentioned the success of our gift officers. In-house I have to say thank you so much to our volunteers particularly many of our campaign volunteers who are reaching out to folks to get their membership in this year and to increase their gifts and so a number of folks have taken prospects on to make phone calls for us. We did suspend all solicitations for basically mid-March through the end of April and now we resume those. As Alex mentioned, we did not see the decrease we thought we'd see in terms of all membership. In total, we're only down two percent in terms of membership and that's on a thirty three thousand number. And overall on the state level, we're really flat a state level memberships. On the circle level is where we're down that's a hundred and seventy five to the six hundred dollar level. We're down about twelve percent and those folks really has stepped up from the state level memberships to this mid-level membership because of the benefits that we provide, and the museum being closed, this is the group that's most susceptible to it. But I'll mentioned about the video content in a second. We've extended memberships for the time that the museums been closed, but we're having people opt in to have any extension of their membership. And so, if somebody who doesn't want to, which we've heard from a lot of folks who said, you know what, I just I'll renew on my regular day. The museum is going to need my money and needs my support. There are some folks who contact us and said, you know, they want to take advantage of the fact that, you know, we've offered this opportunity and since has been closed. They really expect to have it. So, we'll have people on both sides of it. We have a strategy in place where people can opt out of getting their extension and one of the things that's been awesome.

We've created a lot of new video content, and I have to say, thanks to our curators, the cocktails with curators that Alex has mentioned has been incredibly successful. We've made it a member benefit and so for upper level members, some of them have been limited to those folks where we've had two hundred to three hundred people watching. We've take those and then a week later, we'll push it out to general members. So, they can watch some cities was supposed to be a lecture is supposed to be for all members. And so we had about a thousand people coming to the Sunken Cities presentation, which has been great and actually Satya and I talked for a long time yesterday about some of our strategies around virtual content, and actually have an inventory. And I think this is one thing that we've really learned from this that people really do want to see what we can provide online. And so we have to build up our inventory of content because we are seeing people in Florida and other places saying, “Hey, this is great. I got to see and visit the museum virtually.” And so, I think what we've learned through this is we've got to invest a lot more in our content and delivering that content through virtual sources. And I think we're gonna have to do that in the fall as well.

The foundation, government, and corporate solicitations, we actually have submitted $800,000 worth of grants that are directly related to COVID. To date, we've gotten $385,000 in commitments to help relieve our issues around COVID. Conducting research and prospects, reviewing prospect lists so our back of the house folks are doing a lot of work and trying to find new prospects and help us with strategies. For planning for fiscal year twenty one, you know, we have to be flexible and creative and back to what I mentioned with virtual content, we will deliver our benefits to our members, but they'll probably be virtually for the most part. So, lectures all those types of things will be and also we'll try to offer more small, small gatherings. So lunches with two couples, three couples, dinners, smaller tours. We'll do everything we can to get people into the museum particularly those folks that are in the process of thinking of a campaign gift. One of our ideas is to probably take out the furniture from Alex’s conference room and put in a table so that we can have a few folks in there for lunches and dinners. It's just one of the ideas and so we're just working hard to try and make sure that we can deliver content and stay in front of folks and be flexible coming up.

Something really that I want to talk about that's been awesome is the challenge that the Garner family created for us for the COVID relief fund and I'll touch on in a minute the success on that, but I just have to say, thank you so much to particularly Carol and Tom for what they've done. It's been incredible and is really driving our annual fund. If you want to go to the next slide. As I mentioned for fiscal year ’19 to ’20 comparisons, membership again is only down two percent. The fact that we have not even done a mailing yet for Sunken Cities it really speaks well for the fact that, I think, as soon as Sunken Cities opens, we'll be able to drive membership up again. Unrestricted giving, again, is flat which, as I mentioned, if we were down fifteen percent, that would be seven hundred thousand dollars less. Restricted giving, this is really driven by the campaign, which is up sixty six percent. Total giving up thirty four percent and, again, really related to the campaign and then exhibition fundraisings up almost seven hundred thousand to slightly over two million dollars.

Just a quick update on the campaign. Since July 1, we've had nineteen million dollars in commitments and you've just heard of a couple just now, that will add to that total. And so we're over the forty million dollar dollar mark, which I think is fantastic. And then back to the COVID relief fund, we're using this is to really drive our annual fund campaign as well as outreach to a number of our leadership donors and so, again, it's a hundred thousand dollar challenge from the Garner family and as, of June 15th, we've raised two hundred and seventy one thousand, and I just got a number from yesterday we're at two hundred and seventy five thousand from six hundred and ninety eight people. So, it's been really effective and successful in terms of our annual fund outreach in what we've seen is, as I mentioned before, a lot of our members, particularly at the leadership level, or saying, “Okay, I'll do what I did last year” or they're saying, “I'll make an increased gift this year”, and what we've done is we're allowing any gifts to the COVID relief fund to count towards membership. And so that's bumping a number of folks up to the higher membership level. And then again, applications to institutions. As I mentioned, eight hundred thousand dollars in submissions to corporate, government, and foundation for almost four hundred thousand dollars. So, again, knock on wood. We're in good shape.

The month of June. We're just making completely hectic for us, which is sort of what I learned in higher ed, because our fiscal years and higher ed and at the end of June, we were not on a membership basis. So much activity happened in June and that's what we're doing is trying to make up everything from March until the end of May in the month of June and so our gift officers are on the phone every single day and I just want to say thanks to the volunteers also that are helping to push this along. So I think with that, that was my last slide and happy to take any questions.

Alex Nyerges: Thanks Tom. And then Caprice, strategic planning, because obviously, I will tell you this, a couple of my colleagues, every Wednesday--I would be doing it today--but every Wednesday at noon, the twelve largest art museums in America and Canada get together online thanks to our association. And so we're all sitting there and have been for the last three months trying to figure out how do we get through first what was the COVID-19 crisis, the economy, and then now the protests and social unrest, but a couple of my colleagues, I gotta tell you, what they've done is just incredibly bad. They have suspended their strategic planning process. They suspended, in some cases, their strategic plan and they're basically going into some kind of, like, isolated space that’s unrelated to who they are and where they were headed. We're not doing that. In fact, we're doing something very different than that. So, I'm going to turn it over to Caprice, because, as you know, we were coming up on the end of our fiscal 2015-2020 strategic plan, finishing up on our 2020-2025 plan. So, Caprice if you want to take it from there.

Caprice Bragg: Thank you and good afternoon to everyone. I want to just quickly tell you first and foremost I want to offer to send out a bit of a report out on the strategic plan to you after this meeting. Our time is abbreviated today, but what I wanted to do is talk with you about two things. Really our planning for the 2025 plan began back in the fall of 2019 when we launched a reputation test of the 2020 plan. We hired TDC and we wanted to figure out whether we had achieved one of the primary goals in the 2020 plan, which is to be broadly perceived by our peers as a leading regional museum that has transformed itself over the last ten years, and that work began in the fall. We received the final results in January. We were slated to give you a report out in March. Unfortunately, that meeting was canceled. So, I can send you an executive summary, but I want to hit just a couple of highlights. The great news is that in testing our overall reputation what we've learned is that there has been a significant improvement over the last five years and, in fact, we achieved that goal, that 2020 goal, of being recognized and broadly perceived as a leading regional museum that has transformed itself and in our peer group is the Dallas Museum, Nelson-Atkins, St Louis Art Museum, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art. But I think what is even better, and even more exciting, is that we aspired in the 2020 plan to be recognized as a peer to certain nationally recognized museums such as the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Detroit Institute of Art.

The great news is that when we checked into the reputation testing, we learned that some in the peer group actually believed we're already there. So, the museum is much better now, was characterized by words, such as dynamic, strong, high quality, evolving. We also tested our education. What was known about our education and our visitor engagement in there to learn that we, our statewide partners have a deep familiarity with our work in education and also around visitor engagement and that we have seen increases in our reputation in those regards, but particularly, the biggest increases were around exhibitions and collections and that is very much directly aligned with where we are in the plan. The goal was, though, to receive those results, find out where we are, and then use that as a launch pad for our planning for the 2025 plan.

So, in early 2020 we engaged TDC for this project to work with the leadership team, devised an approach that, and you see it on your screen, which would have a couple of phases. One and two crucial groups. So one is the senior leadership team playing a very critical role in terms of developing out a hypothesis, an initial planning hypothesis, that would then be tested and also to work also with the strategic planning committee, which would be comprised of both Trustees and Foundation members—Foundation Directors, excuse me, with our senior leadership team. The committee was named. Andy Lewis is the chair. The committee was going to convene. The senior leadership team did convene, and then COVID hit and we had some challenges, as you know, being able to convene a meeting during an emergency. So the good news is, as Alex has said, we've advanced the initial planning hypothesis. We've been testing that. TDC has been contacting some board members to get their reactions to the hypothesis.

The hypothesis is based on sustaining the momentum that we have in the current plan, but going in focusing our efforts to be a bit deeper and a more precise in certain areas,

for example, such as technology and visitor services. We anticipate that we will be convening the committee now that the museum will reopen in the next four or five weeks. What is left is to do some more work understanding some of the questions that have come up, been working with staff, mentioned that TDC has been interviewing board, I've been meeting with almost every division, I have one left to go, and we are going to then reconvene, talk about some of the open questions, further refine that hypothesis, gain some insight on some emerging trends, and then understand the financial implications. And then, ultimately, our goal would be to draft and finalize the plan for you and your action.

Very, very quickly. I would just share that, and acknowledge, I mentioned Andy Lewis, but some of the other members of the Strategic Planning committee are Lynette Alston, Ken Dye, Denise Keane, Sarah O’Keefe, Monroe Harris, Jim and Lilo, and that is a very quick summary. And I’m happy to send you a much fuller report, and I look forward to reporting to you at future board meetings.

Alex Nyerges: Thank you Caprice. Any questions for Caprice or myself about strategic planning? Any members of the Strategic Planning committee? If not, Mr. President, that’s our report. Thank you.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Okay. That was a very in-depth report. Thank you so much Caprice, Tom, Alex. Next on the agenda is a report from the nominating subcommittee. Rupa, are you on the line?

Rupa Tak: Yes I am. Hi.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Hey. How are you?

Rupa Tak: I’m good. We just moved to Miami so it's been a hectic month, but thank you so much Monroe. The nominating subcommittee met yesterday and, during the meeting, the subcommittee offered a recommendation to elect Monroe Harris for a one year term ending June 30, 2021. So I have a motion to elect the Monroe Harris as Trustee president for a term ending June 30, 2021.

Tom Papa: I’ll second it.

Betty Crutcher: Amen.

Rupa Tak: Yes. Thank you so much. OK. The subcommittee also reviewed board terms and discussed potential candidates. There are five trustees who…

Caprice Bragg: Rupa. This is Caprice. I think we got a second, but we need to take that vote. So, Kay, if you can unmute so we can, then Monroe can call for the vote.

Full Board: Aye.

Dr. Monroe Harris: All opposed?

Full Board: --

Dr. Monroe Harris: I think the ayes have it and so thank you all very much.

Rupa Tak: OK. Thank you. The subcommittee also reviewed board terms and discussed potential candidates. We have five Trustees who are eligible for reappointment by the Governor. Those would be Cindy Conner, Betty Neal Crutcher, Ken Dye, Sarah O’Keefe, and Janet Geldzahler--sorry if I butchered that—but sadly we have two Trustees who have served two terms that are not eligible for reappointment at this time. That would be Karen Abramson and Bill Royall. We will miss them dearly, and I'm honored to be among the first to thank them for their dedicated service. Monroe and Alex now have some special remarks to share, but thank you so much.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Thank you so much Rupa and it is with gratitude and regret that we have to announce that Karen and Bill are rolling off the board of trustees. They’ve both been very, very supportive and dedicated trustees and they will be greatly missed. Karen, first of all you’re just delightful person to be around and I really enjoyed getting to know you. You've been a dedicated contributor. You've been the co-chair of our Art Acquisitions Subcommittee, former chair of the Nominating committee, and you’ve served on several committees such as Art and Collections and External Affairs and so your contributions have been great and you will truly be missed and thank you so much for all that you've done.

Bill, your leadership. Really, there are few words to express our gratitude for all that you've done for this institution and for the community at large. A lot of your leadership, the result of that we're experiencing right now even today at the museum, and you spearheaded so many efforts that continue today. You were a former board chair. You are a member of the Art Acquisition committee and External Affairs, but, of course, as board chair you’re on every committee. You are friend, a donor, a patron, and just an overall supporter of the arts and culture in the city and the state and beyond. You and Pam are the 2018 recipients of the John Barton Payne Award for Art Philanthropy. John Barton Payne was the first donor that started the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and so you have more than continued in that tradition. And so, because of that, we're going to miss you immensely, and, for both of you, we do have a small token of appreciation for you: this wonderful, ceramic piece, which we will be sure that you both get. And this is only a small token, but everything in our heart is much, much bigger than that. So thank you all very, very much.

Bill Royall: Thank you so much Monroe. Pam and I are very grateful.

Karen Abramson: Thank you so much. It’s been an honor.

Alex Nyerges: Well, thank you Karen and thank you Bill and I wanna pause a moment to remind us all that, as an art museum, the foundation of what we do, and all of the things we do and we build buildings and we have programs, but, ultimately, it's the collection that we build and that we improve, and we nurture that makes the difference. And it's the one thing that when we all look back at our time involved with the museum is the most permanent of all. Buildings come and go, all of us as people come and go, but the collection remains, and we have done an amazing job over the years of building a collection. And I have a quick slide show that I'd like Stephanie to queue up. And this is this is about Bill as a board member, but more as a donor, and I have to say this is really about Pam as well. So Stephanie, if we can flip through, I wanna go back to really the start, the early years of Bill's involvement and Pam's involvement with the museum. Presaging anybody even knowing who the heck Kehinde Wiley was before the presidential portrait, obviously well beyond his sculpture, we acquired in 2006, right before I arrived at the museum, thanks to support from Bill and others, this fantastic Kehinde Wiley. It was one of the first signals of us changing who we are, and how we position ourselves. Then as you look at the gifts that have rolled in, and I'm gonna say, this is merely a highlight show. We'd have to spend the next couple of hours looking at the countless gifts that Pam and Bill have made to the museum and it has strengthened so many areas of the collection.

Sonia Delaunay, one of the great early modernists, French. Elaine de Kooning. I mean, a marvelous early great abstract expressionist work. You know, not only has the legacy of the Royall gifts and purchases because they've provided a number a substantial number of dollars to buy works of art, but the fact is that so many of them represent people of color and women. Areas that, in most art museums, are completely overlooked and underserved. Thomas Downing looking at across the spectrum from the thirties, but particularly with strength as we get into the modern era. And then bringing friends of theirs, like Donald Sultan, to the table. This large and important work from 2004. Kirsten Baker. Again magnificent works and I have to say that their connections in the art world have been tremendous at connecting up with our curators: Valerie, Sarah, Michael. And a local talent, Heidi, who is one of the great talents out there in contemporary art and, again, not just works of art by these artists, but amazingly landmark pieces that when people look at what we've been doing and collecting over the last 10-15 years thanks to Bill and Pam, it’s absolutely remarkable. And again, making sure that we look to underrepresented, particularly though. And how good can you get for where we are in 2020 but African American artists. This is just one example by Charles McGill from the Royalls. A work that uses golf equipment to create these contemporary, large scale collages. And as you've seen from their collection other examples as well.

Mickalene Thomas, another person of color, a woman, African American, who is one of the great lights who, you know, when, when Bill and Pam and the museum have been collecting these, these are not, until recently, more household names. Again, we're leading thanks to their foresight and particularly to their generosity. Rashid Johnson who's become a superstar in the contemporary art world, African American, but, you know, were this nine years ago, people were looking at this and saying, “Rashid who?”, but a large scale work and we're proud to not just own works by these artists, but to have the Royall name on there as well. Sanford Biggers, a more recent acquisition from a year ago December from Art Basel, a large sculpture. To help to give you a sense the three sculptures down below are about a foot and a half tall and this is about ten feet tall an installation piece. Sanford Biggers, again, one of the hotter artists on the planet today. Thornton Dial. They were collecting Thornton Dial before people knew who Thornton Dial was. Thornton Dial, operating in obscurity and anonymity and helping, not just us, but Virginia Union, which has a fabulous collection of Thorton Dial set up at that museum as well.

And then I'm gonna close, because I think it's appropriate particularly in this time of a great social upheaval and what we think will be very positive change that we, as the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, could be a national thought leader in changing the dialogue about monuments. About Civil War and Confederate monuments and Bill, I think for those of you who were with us exactly a year ago today in person, and Bill got up to do a stump speech and said this is a project that we all need to support and offered a very generous personal gift from them that helped for the cause and advocated what was then a unanimous approval of the Kehinde Wiley “Rumors of War” sculpture. We installed it in New York in September to millions and millions of viewers and then in December with five or six thousand people, Bill and Pam, being on the front row, we installed the sculpture that is now part of our permanent collection, but I think a symbol of what I'll call the new Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. As new as we were ten years ago, we're yet new again.

So, to Bill, for your service as a board member for your leadership, for your insight, your foresight, and this sculpture, in particular, will stand as a memorial to all that we have done as an institution, that you and Pam have contributed and what you've done to make really changes that are incalculable overall on the most positive side and I'll close by saying this: when the crowds were gathering around the United Daughters of the Confederacy two and a half weeks ago and defacing and torching the UDC building, people were gathered around the “Rumors of War” and on social media and on film, and in person, people were saying, don't touch that statue. It's different. The VMFA is different and to that, Bill, for all that you've done, thank you as a board member, thank you as a donor, thank you as a friend to all of us for everything you've done and continue to do. Thank you very much.

Bill Royall: Thank you so much Alex.

Full Board: Applause

Dr. Monroe Harris: Alright. Well, I tell you, this is a great meeting. The next item on the agenda is the Strategic Planning committee and is Andy on the line?

Caprice Bragg: He is not Monroe. He was not able to join us, but he gave me his report to offer in his absence and I'll make it very quick in the interest of time. He said that based on the planning that you heard just described earlier and because of the delays necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, we will not be able to develop and approve the strategic plan for 2025 before the expiration. (volume drop) …is that the current strategic plan has been extremely important to the museum's efforts to achieve its goals and that we should extend the plan by six months so that it gives staff time and TDC time to finish and complete our planning and to understand the financial circumstances that we're operating in. So therefore he wanted to offer up the motion which appeared on the agenda to extend the current strategic plan by six months.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Alright. So the motion is to extend the plan by six months.

Karen Abramson: Second.

Dr. Monroe Harris: All in favor?

Trustee Board: Aye.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Alright. Very good. I think that's the report from the strategic planning committee. And so the next item on the agenda is the Art Acquisitions subcommittee. Tom and Michael.

Tom Papa: Good afternoon everybody. It's 1:16pm by my clock. I'll try to be as quick as possible. I know we've covered a lot of ground. This was a very unusual subcommittee meeting. Normally we get to look at the art in person and this is two sessions worth of art, and it was no small task for the curators to come to us and show us the works and describe the significance. I was very impressed with the effort and with the works that our curators were able to come up with. I also want to say something before I move to go into closed session, that Karen is co-chair of this subcommittee and it has been a great pleasure working with you, Karen, and, you know, you didn't miss any sessions. You've been very thoughtful in your input, your questions, in your guidance, and I will miss you. So, thank you for your efforts here and also Bill, there’s not a lot I could add to that. The only thing that Alex didn't say that, I believe from my heart, is you have been a great part of the moral compass of, you know, to me personally, but I think to the museum. So, I know I will miss you in this museum and I know that the museum will too. So thank you so much.

So, without further or do, I propose that the Board of Trustees meeting go into closed session to discuss the proposed art purchases, gifts, deaccessions, and loans. The relevant exemption is Section 2.2-3711(A)(6 and 10) of the Code of Virginia. And I'd ask for a second for that motion.

Dr. Monroe E. Harris: Second.

Tom Papa: Thank you. OK. All in favor please say aye.

Full Board: Aye.

**At 1:18pm the meeting went into closed session.**

**At 1:24pm the meeting resumed in open session. Roll call of the Trustee full board by Caprice Bragg. Voting results listed in the Certification Resolution in the meeting minutes.**

Tom Papa: We are out of closed session. I would like to move to ratify the recommendation the Art Acquisitions Committee made in the June 16, 2020 meeting to approve the gift, purchase, loan and deaccession considerations as fully described in the meeting packets and I’d ask for a second.

David Goode: Second.

Tom Papa: All in favor?

Full Board: Aye.

Dr. Monroe E. Harris: Tom. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Tom Papa: Thank you.

Dr. Monroe E. Harris: Alright. We need to do a little bit of housekeeping. We need to vote again on approval for a six month extension of the strategic plan. All in favor?

Full Board: Aye.

Dr. Monroe E. Harris: Very good. Next on the agenda is the Fiscal Oversight Committee. David?

David Goode: Yes. Committee met this morning and received very thorough report both on the completion of the current fiscal year and on the budget, which has been distributed and is before you. About the current fiscal year, I would just say that with a lot of hard work which you have heard much about already, but the committee saw even more of it on the part of the Hossein and Alex and the senior staff we’re going to be able to close the year with our required balanced budget. We have used a minimal amount of reserves and we are benefitting from many of the things that you have already heard about, but that is very good news for before a museum like us to be able to complete this year with the budget in normal condition. Now, that said, the senior management, Alex, and Hossein have prepared a balanced budget for the next fiscal year, and, as you can imagine, there are a lot of questions in that, but the committee very thoroughly has looked through it. We have also done it in a joint fashion with the foundation budget, and we are able to present, as you have seen, a budget that is in balance, it does not invade our endowment, it does use some reserves, and it has a lot of hope and expectation as to how we're going to do. You've heard from Tom that we're doing very well on the revenue and contributions side and we hope to continue that. There are some ways that we can come out even better and do and use less of the reserves that are in the budget. However, I'm pleased to submit to you, on behalf of the committee, the budget for fiscal year ’21 which was presented to you and I will move the approval of that on behalf of the committee.

Tom Papa: Second.

Dr. Monroe E. Harris: All in favor?

Full Board: Aye.

Dr. Monroe E. Harris: All oppose?

Full Board: --

Dr. Monroe E. Harris: The vote passes. Thank you.

David Goode: (volumne drop) …work in the in the next couple of months, and will probably be back with investments.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Very good. Alright, the last item on the agenda is the external affairs committee. And Alex, do you want to take the lead on that?

Alex Nyerges: Actually, I'm gonna ask Jan to start us off Monroe. Ken had to leave so I'm going to turn it over to Jan to give us a brief summary. And then we'll talk about a few of the issues that are out there still.

Jan Hatchette: Okay. So quickly I'll just go through basically, we were talking in external affairs about, of course, when COVID hit us we were right in the middle of the *Kamoinge: Working Together* exhibition and so we were also planning for the opening of *Sunken Cities*. So, we basically were able to put on hold all of the marketing efforts that we had put in place. We will be starting those efforts back up. And so you will see marketing, social media, the whole nine when we open back up on July first. With COVID, we basically put together a communications plan, and were able to determine what and how to communicate with our different constituencies and we were communicating with them on a weekly basis. We used our analytics to determine what people were responding to and engaging with. And we did that not only from a digital perspective, but also on our social channels, and we just kept serving up the things that people were responding well to.

We had a ton of content available in our archives that we could give to folks. Art activities for parents to work with their kids while they were at home. Content from our permanent collection that we could share online. Plenty of video content that we hadn't been able to get out there. So we were very successful in sharing a lot of different information and people have responded well to it so much so that we will continue to serve that up through our assets. With COVID, we came up with how to communicate with folks what's happening with the museum when we had a case of a staff member we were able to develop talking points for the media for staff. And just for our general audiences, when we had to furlough some staff, we developed a communications plan around that as well and what the reopening. So we've been busy, but we've been getting it all done. And I hope that you all have had an opportunity to experience and enjoy some of what we've shared with folks online. Alex, do you want to talk about the Instagram situation?

Alex Nyerges: I do. You know, it's something that I believe several members of the board has seen, but first of all, just to give it a little frame of reference, we, as you know, sent out a statement to all of our members, to all of our to all of our boards, to all of our people on the mailing list in the aftermath of the first evening of protests that black lives matter talking about our positioning in terms of our strategic plan. Our staff, our volunteers, our programs, and our collections, and I will say first of all that the response from all of our social media posts of our emails has been overwhelming by the thousands and thousands and thousands. Kehinde Wiley posted it as well. He had instantaneously eighty five thousand likes just to give you a sense of the balance of how things are. Having said that we also had on Instagram only, although we did have some from the emails, we've had members of the museum and people who visited us that send us emails and said they no longer want to support the Virginia Museum. You know, we're supporting protests, we're supporting the destruction of Monument Avenue, and obviously none of that is true.

On Instagram, though, were some more insidious. Some of it outright lies. Things that were fabricated. Things that were partial truths that were pulled from facts that we had dealt with and had remedied, but then also things that were not true. I'll just take a moment to tell you a couple of the key ones. You know, they, they looked at the message and said, well, you need to take care of your own house first. One of the examples was that we don't pay our housekeeping staff, most of them are African American, a living wage or a competitive wage. Then they went on to say that we condone racism. We condone sexual harassment. They went on to say that we have a sculpture outside, Kehinde Wiley, but, you know, there's no balance in the rest of the institution. Just to put it in numbers, there were about six hundred Instagram posts. When you start separating out the ones that duplicative, there were maybe a hundred fifty people. We had about two or three thousand positive likes on Instagram and a number of positive comments and, as I mentioned with Kehinde Wiley weighing in, eighty five thousand, instant likes, the number of the things, as I mentioned, were not true. We have had instances of sexual harassment. We've had instances of harassment against people of color, not just by staff, but in the case of exhibitions by visitors. I will tell you this, all of those rise to my level of attention. Kimberley and her office handle all of them. Not only are we fair and judicious, but we're relatively quick about it as well.

I'll give you a couple of examples. We had a member, a longtime member, of our building staff, an HVAC expert twenty some five years at the museum who made a couple of comments about the Kehinde Wiley sculpture, but in the context of racial harassment, condescending comments about people of color, you know, this guy didn't care. Made comments to one of our Hispanic HVAC experts. Gave comments like that to one of our African American colleagues. It was investigated. He was terminated, despite having almost twenty five years because we have zero tolerance for that. On the sexual harassment side. The same kind I could give you the same examples because we have zero tolerance for any kind of harassment or abuse. We don't keep people from making passing comments, and we certainly don't keep people that are material abusers of any cap. On the treatment of our black housekeeping staff, first of all, most of our black housing keeping, I know all of them personally on a first name basis. They have told Kimberly and others directly, and myself, that they're not on the page with what they read on Instagram. We did respond on Instagram with a number of facts with our housekeeping staff. We pay our housekeepers ten percent better than any of the other agencies within the hundred agencies of the Commonwealth.

Now, that doesn't mean we shouldn't do better and we are, and we have a whole host when we come back to you in September plans of what we're going to do to further the cause of equality, equity, balance, for all people regardless of their gender, their preferences, their ethnicity because we want for visitors, for employees, for volunteers, to be the most equitable place on the planet. Not that we are there yet, but, you know, with seven hundred plus employees, you're gonna have a few bad apples that you have to identify, and when we do, we are fair, but we're also swift. When we looked at the equity issues around pay, forty percent of all of our managers and directors, these are people who are department heads, budget managers, department managers, forty percent of those are people of color and the compensation there is well above standards and averages and not just in Richmond in Virginia, but in our field. And then when you look at our senior management team, the same thing applies. You know, half of our senior management team, or people of color, and I have to say that only the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston can have a track record that anywhere is close to ours in terms of what we do with its workforce to promote equity, inclusion, diversity, all the things that people talk about, but quite frankly, I have to say in sitting in with meetings of my colleagues, a lot of them are just clueless. They don't know where to start and they don't know it starts with each of us individually and I don't wanna startle everybody, but I'm a racist. We're all racist. We can't help ourselves. It's part of the environment we live in. We're inundated with images and thoughts and messaging that put us in a position where subconsciously, more than consciously, it pervades our entire being and what differences that we all try to be different. We all try to be better. We all try to find ways to make who we are as individuals, but collectively as a whole, particularly as the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, reflective of who we are.

People of color and whether it's African Americans, Hispanic Americans, native Americans, making sure that every American, every Virginian is treated equitably and fairly. It's one of the reasons that we are open with free general admission, three hundred and sixty five days a year because our audience is everybody. We don't draw lines whether people are veterans are not veterans. People have disabilities. We make sure that we're there for everybody and have the programming, the collections, and the staffing and volunteers, and the training to do that. Now, having said all that, we have more to do. As I mentioned, we will continue to report back to you, but I'm happy to answer any questions—Jan, Kimberley, or any of the members of the senior management team—because I think that what we do is far better than most of our field, far better than so many others, it's still not enough. And I'll applaud Monroe for co-authoring that and the people that helped us with that message. And as I say, the vast majority has been positive, and we just have to whether the ones that are less.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Are there any questions of Alex or any of the team?

Satya Rangarajan: Hey Alex. This is Satya. I did want to say that, even since I've been on the museum board, we've come a long way towards progress. So, I would say, keep it up and, you know, we have to embrace our own inbuilt bias and just work on, you know, doing our best.

Alex Nyerges: Yeah, absolutely. Thank you.

Marland Buckner: Alex. Marland. Were there any significant influencers among those posting on Instagram that were hostile?

Alex Nyerges: You know, there were not near as we can tell. I'll let Jan weigh in on this too. You know, when you start tearing it down to how many true complaints we had and how many people were actually instigating complaints, they tried to talk about the interest in the media where they've gotten nowhere.

Jan Hatchette: Yeah, so we did have one particular person that decided to actually reach out to some journalist, local journalists. So, national journalists to sort of engage them in the conversation. And, to this date, I've heard from none of those journalists inquiring about the Instagram post, and we've not seen any stories that have resulted from that.

Alex Nyerges: We also brought in the Martin agency with their social media experts to strategize what to do, how to do it. You know, both in terms of strategy, but also in substance and Jan, and I are working with Kimberly and the rest of our senior management team on a very comprehensive plan. I mean, many of the things, as Satya just mentioned, we're already doing we need to do more, we need to do better, and we also, I think in some ways, need to communicate it better there. We did go back in Instagram to tell folks because we knew a number of the people just, you know, they're listening to you're not paying your housekeepers, your black housekeepers well enough. Well, it's not true. It's not fair. And I'll give you one statistic, for example, that we were attacked for, you know, taking advantage of part time employees. Well, the fact of the matter is in the last five years--and this is something that we hadn't even tallied up and that's why I said we need to do a better job of selling this, I mean, distributing this and telling it--In the last five years, we've converted fifty seven part time employees to full time positions at an average of about twenty one thousand dollars of cost for benefits that they had not been receiving. You do the math. It's about one point two million dollars. We have more in the works this year, but that was a complaint that was lodged erroneously that we're taking advantage of our part time people.

Nobody--myself, Kimberly, or anybody within senior management--is more committed than all of us to bringing equity to the people that are on the lowest end of the economic scale and then you go to where we were with the furloughs. We only furloughed two hundred and twenty one of our seven hundred and ninety two people on payroll that they all were eligible for the six hundred dollars extra a week. And, of course, even there no good deed goes unpunished because someone wrote in, “Oh, yeah. I make more money being furloughed then I made as a gallery associate.” Well, yeah, I'm sure that is absolutely true because you're getting unemployment and an additional six hundred dollars a week, and if you're making twelve dollars an hour and working twenty hours a week, that's only two hundred forty bucks. So, yeah, I can do the math too, and you can attack us, but the fact of the matter is when you look at what we do, and the equity, I'm proud to stand on it, but I'm also determined that we're going to continue to push change and do the things that no other institutions are doing and do it better.

Jeff Humber: Alex. This is Jeff Humber. Listen, I applaud, particularly that last part. I think one of the things that we may see come out of all of the social movement that we're having is so moving of the goal posts on what's fair and what's appropriate. I accept the fact that we're ahead of the curve. Now I particularly applaud your commitment to stay ahead of the curve as the curve moves and hopefully that curve will, in fact, be moving, you know, certainly within our span.

Alex Nyerges: Well, thanks Jeff and I welcome you and everybody as we come out with the kinds of additional changes as improvements. Please weigh in with ideas. I mean, we're only strong as you as a board of trustees are there with your ideas and your support to make that happen. And I'm talking about bringing your experience, your intellectual abilities, and your vision from your perspective because every one of you brings a perspective that is hugely valuable to us and together, and only together, are we gonna be able to stay ahead of the curve, and, I gotta tell ya, my standard has been you push the pedal down to the floor, ya never let up. Getting successful is one thing. Maintaining success and staying successful is the hardest piece of any equation. And I don't want us ever to slow up because when I start looking back, I know that if we slow down, everything will be gaining on us.

Dr. Monroe Harris: I think everything you said is on point Alex and thanks everybody for your comments. And in real time, and I know that all of these discussions that have been pertinent and needed discussions, but I don't wanna run too far over. So we're about twenty minutes over right now if there are there any other questions?

Betty Crutcher: The only thing I'd like to say is to let us continue. Let us really continue.

Dr. Monroe Harris: Very good. If there aren't any questions, then I would like to call this meeting adjourned and thank you all for your attention and your patience and have a great day.

**Meeting adjourned at 1:53pm.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Transcribed by: | Thomas R. Lunsford  Executive Administrator to the Chief Strategy Officer and Deputy Director for Strategic Planning, Government and Board Relations |  |