Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Minutes of the Resources and Visitor Experience Committee Meeting
Thursday, 20 March 2014, 8:30 am
Theater Level Conference Room #1

There were present:
Margaret Irby Clement, Co-Chair
Thurston R. Moore, Co-Chair
Dr. Lindley T. Smith
Dr. Monroe E. Harris, Jr.
Dr. Elizabeth Forsyth Harris
Dr. Claude G. Perkins
Margaret N. Gottwald
Karen C. Abramson
Cynthia Kerr Fralin
Terrell Luck Harrigan
H. Eugene Lockhart
Thurston Moore
Shantaram Talegaonkar
William Birch Douglas III
William A. Royall, Jr., Ex-officio

By Invitation:
Alex Nyerges, Director
Dr. Lee Anne Chesterfield
Robin Nicholson
Claudia E. Keenan
Anne L. Battle
Pam Reynolds
Austin Anderson
Robert Tarren
Jayne Shaw
Darrian P. Mack
Brigette Thomas

Absent:
Mary Ann Carlson
Ivan P. Jecklin
Charles H. Seilheimer

I. CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Margaret Irby Clement called the meeting to order at 8:36 am.
II. NEW COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Co-Chair, Thurston Moore, welcomed the group, and Meg Clement, Co-Chair, proceeded to discuss the former two-committee structure and review the change to the new four-committee structure. Ms. Clement asserted this committee will today address Audience Development, Marketing and Communications, Visitor Services, and Advancement.

III. NEW DIVISION HEAD

Museum director, Alex Nyerges introduced the new Executive Director of the VMFA Foundation and Deputy Director for Resources and Visitor Experience, Claudia Keenan. Most recently she was the Vice President for External Affairs at Eastern Virginia Medical School. Ms. Keenan thanked the committee for contributing to the creation of this division.

IV. DIVISION OVERVIEW AND DEPARTMENT REPORTS

a. Audience Development – Darrian Mack
Director of Audience Development, Darrian Mack explained that his department assesses the museum’s current audience compared to the surrounding population and creates initiatives to reach underserved groups. In the coming fiscal year, he hopes to increase African American as well as Latino membership by 5%. Through programs like Jazz Café and VMFA family days, the museum can gauge interest within different demographics and reach non-members. He hopes to expand the museum’s presence in the community through religious institutions and universities. He shared a video used in a membership drive at St. Paul’s Church, a campaign reaching 28,000 and generating 30 new memberships.

b. Visitor Services - Brigette Thomas,
Visitor Services Manager, Brigette Thomas described the department as the face of the institution. Her staff, including volunteers and council members, ensures that all visitors have a good experience and communicates feedback to the rest of the museum. She explained how the group prepares for fluctuating attendance and the improvements made after Picasso. The new sales software has improved efficiency, communication, and data collection. Lastly, she described an objective to improve employee and volunteer training.

c. Marketing & Communication – Robert Tarren
Director of Marketing and Communications, Robert Tarren began his presentation with the work in progress for upcoming exhibitions Posing Beauty and Forbidden City. His department has been collaborating with their VMFA colleagues to generate content for regular events, update members regularly via emails, and promote museum programs. Mr. Tarren went on to talk about the five positioning themes Marketing and Communications use to shape their messaging: collections programs, the “it’s your art” tagline, visitor experience, the visitor’s positive perceptions, and lastly that membership is the best way to enjoy VMFA. He highlighted one advertising effort in which the museum spent $18,031 on Facebook Exchange and online display ads resulting in $170,000 in ticket revenue. Mr. Tarren closed by describing the department’s goals, which include enhancing VMFA’s reputation, driving increased visitation to the banner exhibitions, and transitioning the website from Ektron to WordPress content management.

d. Advancement – Jayne Shaw
Interim Deputy Director for Advancement, Jayne Shaw reviewed her department’s major activities which include fundraising, financial services, donor engagement, and Advancement marketing and communication. Examples of the last category included myVMFA as well as Advancement’s email campaign. She cited the success of the customized membership program, now in its second full year. Ms. Shaw said the Division expects to fully meet its Fiscal Year 2014 revenue goal of $4,908,000, explaining that the majority of these funds come from individuals. She noted that Forbidden City fundraising has been particularly successful, already surpassing its goal. She explained that the new datamart will allow the department to make much more accurate goals and projections this year. The Deputy Director reported that VMFA membership has exceeded 35,000, comprising the full range of membership levels from students at $10 up to Commonwealth Society at $25,000. The Advancement Division’s donor engagement efforts also include the member travel program, the Focus and Spotlight programs, (the latter geared toward a smaller group of people at higher levels). She then reported on progress towards Exhibition fundraising goals, showing that Hollywood Costume exceeded its goal as has Forbidden City, with fundraising somewhat below projections for Posing Beauty.

V. OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:24 pm by Meg Clement.

Recorded by: Austin Anderson
Interim Administrative Assistant to the Director