Williamsburg Advisory Council Minutes
Monday, November 4, 2024

Members Present: Judy Knudson, Clyde Haulman, Jim White, Patricia Rublein, Megan Rhyne, John Shulson, Leslie Coe, Sean Driscoll, Leslie Bowie

Staff Present: Tom Burton, Bert Schmidt, Mike Diller, Nick McNamara, Kate Pringle

I. WELCOME – Introduction of guests Mike Diller and Nick McNamara; Shared with committee that Nick will join every WAC meeting when he is able

II. PRESIDENT'S REPORT – Bert Schmidt shared that Nancy Rogan is no longer with WHRO and that Kate Pringle will now be point of contact for the committee. He reported that it's School Board visit time, so he's busy making the rounds to meetings. Olwen Herron of WJCC Schools will stay on WHRO board. The Environmental Science course was released statewide, as well as a data science course. WHRO has been in Williamsburg quite a bit lately, recently for Bray School coverage. *PBS News Hour* reached out to WHRO about story on Bray School…they will work together to get story out. Production crew members were out doing wrap up video on First Baptist Church. Bert also highlighted *Democracy at Work*, a series from the Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism at WHRO, which is available in the newsletter and podcasts. The series has also been featuring during news segments on WHRV and is covered Fridays at noon during *Weekly Edition*. WHRO programs are always available on demand, both on the app and on the website.

III. DEVELOPMENT REPORT – Tom Burton reported on numbers for the first quarter (July through September.) The number of families/individuals in Legacy Society has grown from 265 to 284. For financial data for first quarter, membership is down by appx. $68,000, so they continue to work to turn that around. Underwriting has a $1.365M goal for this fiscal year and has booked to date $897K. Tom shared that it gets harder to raise underwriting dollars as the year progresses. There are issues nationally with corporate support, so Diane Rogic, Director of Corporate Support, has developed a plan to keep revenue up, including working with historical data to reach back out to former sponsors and re-engage. The last FM Drive ended 9/27/24. Because listenership and viewership has changed dramatically over the year, the world of pledge is changing and needs to evolve. Despite those challenges, when a pledge drive goes well, we are happy! The last drive ended with $156K raised, with the year prior at $153K and two years prior at $163K. We are pleased, but working towards new elements. Patricia Rublein asked if these numbers are impacted by sustainers. Tom responded absolutely. With more members giving monthly, there's fewer people calling in. The phones aren't ringing as much, so it's tough to keep morale of volunteers up. Some station use audio of phones ringing to trick listeners, but we won't do it. At one point during pledge, when a gift was made online, a ding would be heard, but that is no longer used. Radio drives used to bring in $600K plus. Patricia also asked about data analysis of who is calling in – who are existing or lapsed members and who are the new members. Tom said that data is incredibly important to us,

and can be easily reviewed with the new capabilities of the new software. We also want to get more sophisticated in emails, like using first name, specifically using nicknames (i.e. member Tom receiving an email saying "Dear Tom" versus "Dear Thomas".) Clyde Haulman asked what we see in the future with pledge drives. Are we replacing them with something else? Tom said there could come a time when pledge drives are so different that we don't really recognize it. Tom shared, though, that adding 30 second spots on air here and there doesn't cause people to run to the phone…it's more impactful to hear from hosts and pledge talent. Tom shared, "Would we prefer to not to pledge? Absolutely," as our goal is to be effective in our efforts. Media consumption has changed with streaming. Bert shared that we are working on our own television app and that WHRO "needs to be everywhere." Patricia shared that one thing that impresses her are testimonials with more well-known people – like the Ken Burns Legacy Society spot. Megan Rhyne asked if we see any negative relationship with elections. Are less people donating to us since they are donating to political campaigns? We haven't seen it directly in membership, however underwriting is more impacted. Businesses want to wait until the dust settles. Tom wrapped up the development report by reminding members of our upcoming holiday receptions – November 14th in Norfolk at the station and December 12th in Williamsburg at the William & Mary Alumni House. Additional invitations were provided to WAC members to invite a friend along. Committee members did share concerns over parking at William & Mary. Kate Pringle shared that we are working closely with W&M on convenient parking for our guests and the availability of a golf cart to help get guests that are parked further away in the lot.

IV. CONTENT REPORT – Kate Pringle presented promotions for upcoming programs, including election night coverage on November 5th, *Leonardo Da Vinci* by Ken Burns, *Lucy Worsley's Holmes vs. Doyle*, and *Wolf Hall: The Mirror and the Light*. The final program highlight was about the next Goode documentary which will feature the Virginia Symphony Orchestras Fellows.

V. PRODUCTION PROJECT UPDATES – Mike Diller highlighted the latest Goode project. Williamsburg artist Wil Swink will be featured in upcoming season of Curate. Mike shared that he also recently toured the new arts hall at W&M hope to feature it in a future program, possibly in 2026. The Muscarelle Museum is slated to open in February, then production will follow up with David Brashear, Director of the museum, about what's ahead. Mike shared a clip of Curate which highlighted clay artist Chao Studio. The clip included footage from Stockley Gardens Arts Festival. The segment was created with Curate U, which is a partnership between WHRO and the Old Dominion University Cinema Department. The segment was suggested by a student. Chao Studio won best in show at Boardwalk Art Show. The upcoming season of Curate will be released digitally at the beginning of the new year, and the broadcast season will start in late winter '25 or early spring '26. Late next year, there will be a new Ken Burns documentary about the American Revolution. WHRO is working on the America 250 project, by working on a lot of content in conjunction. Production will include coverage of the Williamsburg Bray School as well as a story about George Withe, which will have a true crime vibe. Production's goal is to focus on people who were more marginalized at that time, like George Withe's cook. Patricia asked about talking to students about the importance of a signature…if there is a way we can highlight that.

VI. COMMUNITY DISCUSSION – Nick McNamara shared about the most recent news with the school division, with most response from James City County. The cities are working on contract. Megan shared that it would be interesting to research the overall cost of the study to split the schools and how much time and money was wasted. Tom shared that the goal with Nick being there is to broaden the pipeline by having Nick present to hear directly from our Williamsburg committee. Clyde mentioned immigration and suggested Nick spend some time looking at the immigration law clinic at the law school at W&M and looking at people in the immigration court system from a different angle. Williamsburg has the visitor Visa for staffing Busch Gardens and other tourist attractions/areas, which is a huge part of the city's economy and, in turn, impacts school system. Sean Driscoll brought up the sports complex and funding. Nick's understanding was that there is no local funding, except for tax funding. It's a long-term lease from Colonial Williamsburg. Clyde shared that there are many issues, most notably how it will get funded. Judy Knudson shared what the city is doing in regards to new city buildings like a police station, fire station, and libraries. Clyde asked, "Is the city's spending sustainable?" It was also shared that the city wants to convert some of the retail spaces in Town Row to residential. Retailers are unfortunately not staying long, and there are empty storefronts. Patricia suggested that Nick go to planning commission meetings. Megan brought up human trafficking issues at businesses like massage establishments and nail salons and shared that she doesn't understand why there hasn't been more attention from police or media. Jim mentioned *CBS Sunday Morning* and the segment that highlighted Williamsburg.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS – Reminder to join for the holiday reception and to bring a guest.

VIII. FUTURE MEETINGS – The next meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2025. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:50pm

Signature: Judy Knudson
Judy Knudson (Nov 5, 2024 08:47 EST)

Email: judyknudson20@gmail.com