



NORTH CAROLINA Museum of Natural Sciences

ADVISORY COMMISSION

Rhonda Hubbard Beatty
Raleigh, NC
Anthony G. Calamai, PhD
Boone, NC
Philip Carter, Ph.D.
Raleigh, NC
Jose Chavez
Charlotte, NC
Phillip Christofferson
Cary, NC
Hollins Clark, M.D.
Winton-Salem, NC
Allison Durham
Williamston, NC
Tom Earnhardt, Chair
Raleigh, NC
Thomas Easley, PhD
Raleigh, NC
Andrew Emanuels
Clayton, NC
Chloe Gossage
Cary, NC
Kelvin Harris, MD
Gastonia, NC
Emma Harrison
Mt. Airy, NC
Matthew Hebb
Raleigh, NC
Avery S. Knight
Raleigh, NC
Emlyn Koster, Ph.D.
Raleigh, NC
Ada Lopez
Raleigh, NC
Rick Luetlich, PhD
Morehead City, NC
Theresa McCoy, MD.
Durham, NC
Janis V. McLaughlin
Raleigh, NC
Maria Palamar, DVM, PhD
Raleigh, NC
Zeel Patel
Raleigh, NC
Danielle N. Peters
Raleigh, NC
Brenda Pollard
Durham, NC
Clark Riemer
Raleigh, NC
Kelley Rooney
Raleigh, NC
Anne Russell
Durham, NC
Kayla N. Saunders
Raleigh, NC
Lise Sherlin
Raleigh, NC
Adrienne Shrieves
Raleigh, NC
Ann Smith
Raleigh, NC
Wylie Beckman Smith, III
Wilmington, NC
Kenneth B Taylor
Raleigh, NC
Kurt D. Tressler
Wilmington, NC
Deante R. Tyler
Raleigh, NC
Beverly Vance
Raleigh, NC
Dorothy G. Warren
Ash, NC
Phillip R. Westmoreland, Ph.D.
Chapel Hill, NC
Emmanuel J. Wilder
Raleigh, NC
Carl L. Wilkins
Raleigh, NC
Christina N. Williams
Raleigh, NC
Reid Wilson
Raleigh, NC
Kent Yelverton
Raleigh, NC

TO: Members of the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations

FROM: Tom Earnhardt, Chair, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Advisory Commission

RE: North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Advisory Commission, Report FY 2017-18

DATE: September 24, 2018

Introduction

In accordance with General Statute §143B-344.21, the Advisory Commission (“the Commission”) of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences (“the Museum” or “the NCMNS”) is pleased to submit this 2017-18 Report. Following discussions at the Commission meeting of September 6, 2018, we offer this report as the advisory body of the Museum, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

Facilities and Outreach

Few places in North Carolina can confidently claim two distinct roles: (1) The North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences is one of Raleigh’s and North Carolina’s premier visitor attractions, and (2) this institution, founded in 1879, continues to maintain and expand its role as a state, regional, and national leader in research and education in the natural sciences.

As in previous years, the NCMNS again surpassed one million (1,000,000) visitors in FY 2017-18, was North Carolina’s top school field-trip destination, and continues to be one of the region’s major visitor attractions. When industry is recruited and when new employers look at the Triangle and North Carolina, the NCMNS invariably captures their attention. The Museum’s two iconic, state-of the-art buildings (dedicated in 2000 and 2012), located on Jones Street across from the Administration Building and the North Carolina General Assembly, also hold some of the finest meeting and theatre facilities in the region. By any standard, we believe the Museum is both a portal to the natural history of North Carolina and a welcoming “front porch and meeting space” where science and innovation come alive.

Less visible to visitors is the Museum’s Research Collection, which holds more than four million specimens, documenting the rich biological and geological diversity of North Carolina, the southeast region, and beyond. These collections are located below ground on Jones Street and in the Museum’s Research Lab in west Raleigh. Also located in west Raleigh is the Museum’s 40-acre “living classroom,” Prairie Ridge Ecostation, with an on-site daytime facility for visiting students.

Over the years the Museum has brought many important science conferences to the Raleigh-Durham area, and 2019 will be no different when the US Citizen Science Association Conference comes to the Triangle. The Museum and members of its talented staff have long been leaders in the world of “citizen science.”

When viewing the facilities in downtown Raleigh it is easy to forget that the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences is a statewide educational resource. The Museum currently has a satellite facility in Whiteville, Columbus County, in the southeastern part of our state. An additional branch is in the planning stages for the northeastern part of North Carolina. Perhaps most important, the Museum administers a grant program (\$2.4 million in FY 2017-18) that helps science education facilities/programs in 53 communities across North Carolina. The Advisory Commission is also proud of the fact that the Museum serves as a major resource for science educators at all academic levels across the state through programs such as “Educators of Excellence.” The Museum also continues to be a leader in STEM programs and initiatives.

Staff and Volunteers

At the heart of the Museum is a talented staff of specialists, communicators, scientists and researchers. Many members of the staff have made a career of serving the people of North Carolina. In the last decade, the Museum has also entered into agreements with several universities in the UNC System to create joint-appointment positions—men and women who teach and do research at both the Museum and their respective educational institutions. This win-win situation has benefitted the Museum and the great universities of our state.

A museum of the caliber of NCMNS would not be possible without its volunteers. In fact, in FY 2017-18 volunteers gave more than 80,000 hours of their time to work myriad jobs in Museum facilities, providing needed services and saving taxpayers millions of dollars. At the heart of the volunteer effort of the Museum is the Board of Directors of the Friends of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, women and men who give their time, talent and raise substantial amounts of money for Museum programs. In fact, over the years, the “Friends,” working in conjunction with the Museum’s Director and staff, helped raise much of the money to build the downtown facilities and exhibits now visible on Jones Street.

Recent Initiatives and Coming Attractions

A great institution never sleeps. The NCMNS continues to serve the community and plan for the future. In 2017, from April to October, a powerful exhibit, “Race: Are we so different?” attracted 87,000 visitors. Area corporations and the community leaders provided some \$320,000 to help make this offering at the NCMNC one of the most successful in the exhibit’s 10-year national tour. As a follow-up to this successful exhibit on race in America, the Museum is planning to continue this important dialogue in North Carolina in a program titled “Race 2.0.”

The coming exhibit, “Dueling Dinosaurs,” about which we reported to you last year, will soon be a reality. So far, the funding campaign has raised \$10.2 million (\$10,200,000), and we gratefully know that \$2 million (\$2,000,000) provided through appropriations from the North Carolina General Assembly. The acquisition of two spectacular fossils in the same exhibit, *Tyrannosaurus* and *Triceratops*, will provide the Museum new opportunities for research and education, while providing an attraction with significant economic benefit to the region.

Needs and Concerns

As mentioned earlier, the Advisory Commission believes that the Museum is the “front porch and meeting space” where education, science and innovation come alive for North Carolina. After 16 million (16,000,000) visitors in the last 18 years, some of our buildings and exhibits have begun to show their age. The Museum’s Nature Exploration Center building across from the General Assembly is in special need of attention — including replacement of carpeting in high traffic areas, replacing elevators/escalators, and the updating of restroom facilities. Because of their age, the elevators and escalators have often needed extensive repairs, causing lengthy downtime. These needs

touch on safety and the delivery of services, and are simply unworthy of a world-class institution directly across from key facilities of North Carolina State Government.

In the coming months the Advisory Commission will work hand-in-hand with the Director of the Museum and officials of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to identify and prioritize maintenance needs of the Museum and their costs. Currently, this Museum costs each North Carolina resident approximately \$1.12 per year in direct appropriations, which in our opinion is an incredible bargain. We will not “get into the weeds” as to whether the Museum should receive additional annual appropriations to cover the maintenance items listed above, or whether there should be a one-time (nonrecurring) appropriation to meet critical needs. Suffice-it-to-say, we urge The Joint Legislative Commission on Legislative Operations to work with us to meet the identified needs of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, one of this state’s major attractions and an educational treasure.

This report is respectfully submitted this day, 24 September 2018 on behalf of the Advisory Commission of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences.

For the Advisory Commission,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tom Earnhardt". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "T" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Earnhardt, Chair