

Minutes of South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum Commission

(August 15, 2024)

The South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum Commission met on August 15, 2024, at 10:3 am in the Main Gallery located in the Columbia Mills Building at 301 Gervais Street. A notice was put on the website August 13, 2024 and sent out to the news media. The meeting was conducted in person.

Commission Members present: Voight Shealy, Alex Miller, Sam Howell, Walter Curry and Leland Summers

Staff Members present: Allen Roberson, Rachel Cockrell

A copy of the Agenda and Summary Notes of the February 22, 2024 meeting, as well as all other handouts, were emailed to each Commissioner prior to the meeting.

I. Greetings to the Commission, Members of the Media, and Visitors

Chairperson Voight Shealy called the meeting to order at 11:48AM. Mr. Shealy commended the staff for work on flood recovery efforts. A quorum was present. Mr. Roberson proposed a motion for the Commission to direct the Executive Director to pursue all reasonable means to ensure that flooding problems as experienced during July and August be prevented in the future. Mr. Summers moved, Mr. Miller and Dr. Curry seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

II. A tour of the Vietnam exhibit and the Collections work area preceded the beginning of the meeting.

III. Review of February 22 Meeting Summary Notes

The Notes were approved for information. Mr. Howell moved and Mr. Miller seconded.

IV. Old Business

- A.** Mr. Roberson is continuing to work on getting two new Commissioners. Mr. Roberson has been in touch with the Governor's Office and they have been very receptive to discussing new appointments to the Commission. He will be following up in the next week. There is also one appointment from the Senate who may need to be replaced. Discussions which Mr. Roberson has had indicate that vacant appointment slots are an ongoing problem throughout state government and that staff of the Governor's Office and General Assembly are working to rectify that.
- B.** Election of new officers according to the By-Laws occurs in odd-numbered years. Mr. Shealy will serve as Chairman until next year.
- C.** The Atrium Construction Project which has caused the closure of the Museum is

still scheduled for completion so that the Museum can reopen October 3. Mr. Roberson will call a meeting with the Department of Administration to discuss an estimate of the repair work, insurance payments, and what the timeline is for completion. The condition of the carpet is a major concern, in the Main Gallery as well as the lobby and Gift Shop. The amount of work necessary could stretch the closure out for months. We are hopeful that we can open by the end of October, but Mr. Roberson should definitely have a date by the next meeting. Insurance should cover our losses from the sprinkler riser break. Mr. Summers proposed having a grand reopening event for the Museum and inviting the legislators. Mr. Roberson reminded the Commission of the difficulty of getting the legislators to attend in the past.

V. Ongoing Museum Operation - FY 25 Budget

A. FY25 Budget Request Funded

1. Budget Request Priority 1: Recurring Funding for Existing Unfunded Vacant Position: As a Program Manager I Band 7 Chief Curator budgeted at \$75,000 with Fringe Benefits at 44.88% or \$33,660, totaling \$108,660. This position will free up Mr. Roberson to focus on working with the Commission, the Foundation and outside entities.
2. Budget Request Priority 2: \$108,413 (Recurring) or 10% increase needed for the Museum's Annual Base FY24 Operating Budget of \$1,084,130, because of the rising costs of our monthly bills. One increasing cost is off-site storage, which housed many items which need to be deaccessioned. Mr. Summers moved and Dr. Curry seconded a proposal to have Mr. Roberson pursue a legislative change in the law or proviso which would allow authority for deaccessioning to be changed from the Legislature to the Commission. Dr. Curry pointed out that pre-filing begins in December. Mr. Howell recommended that wording of the proposal emphasize the current language of the policy and standards to avoid any headwinds regarding concerns of capricious disposal of the Collection. Our Accredited status assures that we already have the proper policies for these issues. Mr. Miller reinforced that our procedures and documentation will be important. The proposal passed unanimously.
3. Budget Request Priority 3: \$177,000 (Nonrecurring) to complete the purchase of selected rare SC military artifacts from the Joe Edens Collection.
4. Budget Request Priority 4: \$213,425 (Nonrecurring) to renovate the 365 square foot "Gist" rotating exhibit gallery, including raising the ceiling, modifying duct work, installing track lighting, and building a large built-in exhibit case to display the Congaree River Collection of recently recovered Civil War artifacts by Dominion Energy of South Carolina. This archeological project received substantial news coverage and attracted the interest of the Governor. The Museum will lobby Dominion to for funds for the eventual exhibit.

- B. FY25 Budget Request Not Funded - Budget Request Priority 5: \$15,000 (Nonrecurring) to update the 2020 Feasibility Study on renovating the upstairs Congaree Room for expansion. This introduced the Legislature to the idea that we are interested in expansion and this is the logical space to do it.

VI. Ongoing Museum Operation – FY24 Annual Attendance

- A. **27,142** FY23 SC Confederate Relic Room & Military Museum Annual Attendance
- B. **41,198** FY24 Attendance, primarily because of the Vietnam exhibit, better programs, and better PR. This is the highest attendance in 50 years.
- C. **41,431** The Museum was open only 11 months because we closed in June because of the Atrium Construction.

VII. FY24 Museum Programs

A. Programs

- 1. Lunch & Learn is now the Noon Debrief.
- 2. While we are closed, we have partnered with the Richland County Library to have our summer programs there.
- 3. June 28, Joe Long gave a great program on North Vietnam's Hoa Lo Prison, known as the "Hanoi Hilton." We had good attendance and reviews!
- 4. On August 16, Joe will do another program on American Revolutionary War Polish hero, Thaddeus Kosciuszko.
- 5. Will be developing more off-site programs to be held at area libraries while we are closed. When we reopen, we will have our usual programs plus additional Teacher Workshops like we had during the last school year, that Commissioner Walter Curry participated in. We had strong attendance and great reviews! Dr. Curry recommended following up with the teachers from the last workshop. Mr. Summers attended and related there were very good comments relating to knowing that the Museum existed and what it had to offer. Dr. Curry recommended reaching out to ROTC instructions.

B. Collections:

- 1. Museum Uniform Conservation Program is ongoing. Received approximately \$12,000 from SCV for uniform conservation.
- 2. Conserved Bomar and Bland uniforms were viewed on the pre-meeting tour.
 - a. Costs: \$52,830.00
 - b. Donations totaling \$20,382
- 3. SCV National Conference in North Charleston

VIII. Palmetto State Military History Foundation Status and Report

The Financial Report showed the donation to the Museum for the conservation of the Bland coat. The Foundation is trying to recruit new members.

IX. Next Commission Meeting Date and 2025 Meeting Schedule

Original schedule for next meeting is October 17. The next meeting after that is supposed to be December 12, but Mr. Roberson recommended that be postponed until January because it is so close the Christmas. The January meeting is when officers may be nominated, and the election of new officers can occur at the March meeting. Mr. Roberson will send out a new schedule for 2025. Mr. Curry requested that the October meeting would be a time to discuss getting the Legislature involved. The meeting schedule change was approved by common consent. Mr. Shealy emphasized the importance of regular attendance at meetings.

Item not on the agenda relating to the exit of Alex Miller from the Commission. He expressed his thankfulness for the ten years he spent as a Commissioner. He thanked the other commissioners for their partnerships over the years, and volunteered to assist with the fundraising for Dominion's involvement in developing the exhibit in the renovated Gist Gallery. The other Commissioners expressed deep appreciation for all the good work Mr. Miller has done. He was presented with a gift of State House bookends by the Museum for his service.

Mr. Summers brought as a matter of information that the B3, the national Sons of Confederate Veterans Conference, was held in Charleston. The reunion consisted of almost 800 descendants of soldiers who fought for the Confederacy. They were very positive regarding the small exhibit that Mr. Roberson and Joe Long, Curator of Education, had set up there. Other states were expressing a wish that their state could be as supportive. The Bland and Bomar Uniforms were greatly admired.

Mr. Summers made the motion to adjourn, and Dr. Curry and Mr. Miller seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:47.