



## Arizona Mining, Mineral & Natural Resources Education Museum

### Minutes of the Public Meeting of the AMMNRE Museum Advisory Council August 15, 2025

A public meeting of the AMMNRE Museum Advisory Council was convened on:

Date: **August 15, 2025**

Time: **9:30am**

Location: **Virtual, via Zoom**

**Members Present:** Jim Ballinger, Sen. David Gowan, Rep. Gail Griffin, Nicole LaSlavic, Phil Pearthree, Les Presmyk, Stefanie Smallhouse, Steve Trussell

**Members Absent:** None

**U of A Staff Present:** Marta Bones, Richard Cate, Aundrea DeGravina, Catie Sandoval, Sabrina Vazquez, Steve Voeller

**A quorum was established.**

#### I. Welcome & Introductions

- Chairperson Stefanie Smallhouse welcomed attendees and led introductions.
- Meeting attendees included guests from the U of A's Government and Community Relations office, including Aundrea DeGravina, Sabrina Vazquez, and Steve Voeller.

#### II. AMMNRE Museum Project/Building Updates from Senior Advisor to U of A President

- The meeting began with a presentation from Richard Cate, Senior Advisor to the President for Operations.
  - Cate discussed the challenges of working to reestablish the museum in the historic building, which will require significantly more funds to modernize than currently allocated.
  - Therefore, Cate proposed an alternate solution: establishing the museum as part of a new building in downtown. The building would be completed by Spring 2027 and offer 13,000 square feet of gallery space, with additional storage, office space, café space and gift shop space available.
  - With this approach, the \$12 million state appropriation could be redirected to exhibition development in the new space.
- Questions and discussion about Cate's proposal followed, including:

- Concern about flexibility of the space and the ability to modify it to serve the museum's mission and meet its needs (including sufficient space for collections storage and back-of-house operations).
  - It was confirmed that modifications could be made to meet the museum's needs.
- Concern about the lack of free parking at the proposed location.
  - It was confirmed that a reasonable solution could be found.
- The current building's rehabilitation costs and the need to have an updated study with more specificity to understand the full costs.
- The legislation that would be necessary to allow the funds to be used in a new location, concerns about how challenging this may be, and the need for collaboration between the University and Rep. Griffin.
- Concern about the sustainability of the museum and whether future financial issues or challenges with attracting visitors to the proposed location could impact the museum's success.
- The U of A's commitment to maintaining the museum at a different location and concerns about moving the museum to a multi-purpose space.
  - It was confirmed that this would be a long-term commitment of the space to the museum and that the building could accommodate a museum and public-facing activities without disrupting its upper-floor activities.
  - It was also noted that a revised statute could protect the new location.
- Request for a "like for like" comparison of square footage in the proposed location versus original location.
- Request for an accounting of funds related to the museum, including the \$12M allocation for the building, state's annual appropriation to the museum, and interest earned on the funds.
- The landscape of museums and cultural institutions in downtown Phoenix and related synergies.
- The significance of the historic building and the original intent to rehabilitate the building so it could again function as a museum and gathering space.
- U of A's interest in promoting mining and natural resources and its interest in the project.

- Openness to moving forward in the historic building, contingent on securing funding, and willingness to discuss this at a future meeting if the group feels they can secure the funds needed.
- Concerns about future maintenance responsibilities and hours of operation.
  - It was confirmed that hours and related operational logistics would be determined by the museum.
- There was discussion of timing and the fact that the U of A will need to give direction about the construction of the new space in early October (specifically about whether it needs to be able to accommodate a museum).

### III. Discussion of Next Steps

- There were further comments about space use, long-term financial sustainability, ability for growth, how the museum's mission can succeed in a new building, and the challenges of changing the legislation.
- There was a discussion about exploring different operating models to ensure the future museum is financially self-sufficient regardless of location.
- There was a discussion about the need for financial planning and support from the U of A Foundation – regardless of the museum's location, millions more for the exhibitions themselves will need to be raised – and questions about next steps for fundraising.
- There were frustrations about the progress to date.
- There was confirmation of timing including that:
  - The U of A would like to know how the Advisory Council would like to proceed in early October, though there is some flexibility if more time is needed.
  - Any change in the museum's location would require a change in legislation, which would not go into effect until 90 days after its passage.
- **Action Item**: Schedule a Strategic Planning Subcommittee meeting to discuss logistics further.
- **Action Item**: Provide with an accounting of state funds related to the museum.

### IV. Future Meeting Dates

- The next full council meeting is scheduled for September 19 from 9:00-10:30am.