



Arizona Mining, Mineral & Natural Resources Education Museum

Minutes of the Public Meeting of the AMMNRE Museum Advisory Council July 10, 2025

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

Date: **July 10, 2025**

Time: **4:25pm (delayed from 4:00pm)**

Location: **Virtual, via Zoom**

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

Members Absent: Nicole LaSlavic

U of A Staff Present: Marta Bones, Catie Sandoval

I. Welcome

- Vice Chair Les Presmyk welcomed attendees.
- The official meeting start was delayed due to lack of quorum.
- While waiting for quorum to be established, status/informational reports were provided.

II. Open Advisory Council Positions

- Reports on actions taken since March:
 - Rep. Griffin reported that a former State Forester is applying for the forestry position and requested that the application link along with the list of remaining open positions be resent to members.
 - Marta confirmed that applications have been submitted for the second mining role and one public role.
 - It is still unclear whether applications for the livestock position or the second public role have been submitted.

III. AMMNRE Museum Updates from the Director

- Marta reported about changes within the University of Arizona, including the rebranding of the Office of Research, Innovation, and Impact (RII) to the Office of Research and Partnerships (ORP), which reflects a focus on research with societal impact through intentional collaborations.

- ORP is currently focused on work related to departmental restructuring.
- Marta reported that President Garimella's leadership team directed renovation and design projects to be paused, including the Center for Advanced Molecular & Immunological Therapies (CAMI) in downtown Phoenix, the AMMNRE Museum, and other museums on the University's Tucson campus.
 - The University is re-evaluating priorities, and Marta believes that projects will restart with revised scopes.
- Rep. Griffin noted that she will meet with Richard Cate in early August.
 - Marta confirmed that Cate is the relatively-newly appointed Special Advisor to the President for Operations and that Human Resources, Information & Technology Services, and Facilities Management & Planning have been restructured to fall under Cate's oversight.

A quorum was established at this point, and the meeting officially began (at approximately 4:25pm)

- There was discussion about the status of the \$12 million state appropriation and questions were raised about where the funds are held, their use, and the rising costs/decreasing buying power of those dollars over time.
 - Marta explained that the funds are at the University and spending them is on hold due to the University-wide design pause.
 - The design-build team has stated that existing funds are insufficient to fully rehabilitate the building. The University is hesitant to commit without a clear plan for raising additional funds.
- Members raised concerns about challenges related to fundraising given the project's uncertain status and questions about whether the funds can revert to the state.
- While it is unclear where the museum project stands among University priorities, there was agreement that the University must support the project and dedicate resources to support fundraising efforts.
- The group discussed strategies for approaching University of Arizona leadership.
 - There was agreement that the project's \$12 million state allocation and the Senate Bill establishing the museum should be emphasized, and that there are potential negative consequences for delaying movement; also that the museum is of value to the entire state and would showcase the University's work, particularly as the state's land-grant university.
- There was discussion about the urgency of moving forward due to inflation eroding the project's buying power.

- There was discussion about proposing alternative approaches to fundraising to separate the museum from the University's broader budgetary issues, including exploring naming rights, contracting with a capital campaign consultant, and potentially funding a dedicated position within the University Foundation to raise funds for the museum.
- Marta reaffirmed the objectives for the upcoming August meeting: clarifying where the museum stands among University priorities and suggesting alternate solutions for development.
- There was discussion about moving the project to other Universities and how to achieve that through a legislative bill.
 - There were questions about a sunset date in the original legislation or in the budget bill that appropriated the \$12 million.
 - **Action item**: Senate research analyst Sawyer Bessler will research provisions in the different legislative bills.
- There was consensus about the need for a preparatory strategy session before the upcoming August 1st meeting. Rep. Griffin, Sen. Gowan, Trussell, and Marta were identified as key participants.
 - **Action item**: plan a meeting for the week of July 21st.
- The next full museum Advisory Council meeting is scheduled for Friday, August 15th at 9am.
 - **Action item**: Catie will confirm that members are available at this time or find an alternate time to meet in August.