

**Minutes:**

**Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
City Hall – Richmond VA**

**Meeting:** September 19, 2019

**Greg Velzy:** Chair– Presiding

**Call to Order:** 12:00 PM

**Attending:** Committee members: John Heerwald, Greg Velzy, Leighton Powell, Jim Hill, Alex Dahm, John Thompson, Ralph Hambrick; Guests—Shawna Shade, Friends of James River Park and Mark Olinger, Director of Richmond Planning and Development Review

**Minutes** - Minutes of June 20, 2019 unanimously approved on a motion by G. Velzy, 2<sup>nd</sup> by L. Powell

**Current Issues:**

- **2020 Budget:** Ord. No. 2019-250 would direct that surplus funds will go to fulfill a commitment of complete riverfront access projects at Huguenot Flatwater and Tredegar Street sidewalk installation/improvements. L. Powell will represent us at Council's Finance Committee meeting. J. Hill moved for group's support for the projects and their funding, L. Powell 2<sup>nd</sup>. The motion was approved. Of note, the matching grant for these projects requires that the entire \$50,000 be raised.
- **Potterfield Bridge and Brown's Island:** Alex Dahm of Venture Richmond (VR), Staff of James River Park System (JRPS) and contractor (Moffatt & Nichol) have been inspecting the bridge to address failure of the fasteners intended to keep the surface panels firmly in place. VR is examining the older portion of the bridge, especially the wood decking and stringers, with an eye to replacement/reconfiguring the north end connection with Brown's Island, including repositioning the now-stationary flow-control equipment to parallel the river. J. Hill stated that moving the equipment in such a way would be counter to the clearest historical interpretation of its use. A second issue concerns views of the river from Brown's Island and removal of opportunistic/invasive trees and brush to open the views. Max Hepp-Buchanan of Venture Richmond is coordinating development of an internal action plan for improving Brown's Island, working with 3North. Venture Richmond will bring the proposal to Falls of the James when ready for review. VR recognizes that the river bank at the head of the Pipeline Walk trail needs stabilization but any improvements need to strike a balance between engineering and the appeal of the hidden nature of the trail.
- **Report of the Director of Planning and Development Review:** Mark Olinger
  - M. Olinger reported no progress on **Intermediate Terminal** with Stone Brewing and the Economic Development Authority and that they have heard nothing from USP landowners since the roundabout went in.
  - Hargreaves has completed the **Missing Link area survey** and proposed six options for the trail (both low-route and high-route), each with momentous challenges. Staff are working to pare down to three best options and Kirt Rieder of Hargreaves will return to vet the options with the public in a meeting with format similar to that of the JRPS Master Plan meeting.
  - Inspection of the **Potterfield Bridge** seems to indicate the fasteners are not engineered for the high level of use the bridge gets. The fasteners have been successful in similar design applications elsewhere.
  - G. Velzy asked about the new parking lot at **14<sup>th</sup> Street** near the Whitewater takeout and concerns that lack of distinction between the existing and new lots would result in loss of spaces for recreational users versus commuters. M. Olinger said the city has negotiated for a path along the river at the new lot but that although city departments are currently united in favor of the Chapel Island access trail, there is no current funding for its pursuit.

- **Riverfront Development Plan:** The two priorities are to advance on the Missing Link and to move improvements at the former Lehigh Cement site past the schematic design stage. Subsequently would like to make improvements from USP to Gillies Creek first and then east to Sugar Pad/Intermediate Terminal.
- **Additional issues mentioned:**
  - Norfolk-Southern is removing vegetation along the north edge of Chapel Island on the south bank of the canal
  - the Richmond Metropolitan Transportation Authority (RMTA) will formally lend the city the use of a number of stockpiled canal stones for placement at the LowLine
  - New Market Corporation is partially filling a portion of the canal on its property in a reversible manner approved by the Department of Historic Resources
  - RMTA needs to address a number of trees that construction workers have dropped in the river, as well as metal construction debris in the river under the Powhite Bridge in the boating/paddling path
  - M. Olinger will forward the link to the Downriver Plan
  - construction has begun at the Manchester Paper Mill site
  - the city needs to develop an Open Space/Public Amenity plan for the Manchester Canal and Walker's Creek
  - Mayo Bridge replacement at this time is looking only at replacing the portion spanning the Manchester Canal
  - public parking at Diversity Park now closed due to construction should reopen in about a year's time
- **James River & Kanawha Canal:** Alex Dahm.
  - VR has been in discussions with Public Works (DPW) and Public Utilities (DPU) concerning future watering of the canal below the Pump House and getting DPU up to speed. Once work at New Market Corporation is completed, it may be possible to water a portion of the canal as far as the Pump House, contingent upon the level control at Park Hydro. The canal could be paddle-able from the dyke that serves as Dominion's emergency egress route at Park Hydro to the Pump House. (This raised the question of when the dyke went in . . .)
  - Paddling in the canal beside Chapel Island is forbidden by city ordinance but there is talk of improving access with a boat/barge connection to Great Shiplock Park and paths, letting people off at the Low Line.
  - Construction along the north bank of the canal in the vicinity of 10<sup>th</sup> Street will result in a continuous path connecting the Casa del Barco area of the Canal Walk with the existing paths below the Federal Reserve as well as stairs up to the level of 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The developer, WVS, is building commercial space facing the canal.
- **VA Scenic Rivers Program 50th Anniversary:** Ralph Hambrick
  - T. Pearsall's report on proposals for commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Scenic Rivers program on and about April 22, 2010. (Here are some of his recommendations for both the Falls Committee and State Steering Committee from meeting with Jon Lugbill:
    - 1. Get resolutions from Richmond City Council Chesterfield Board of Supervisors and Henrico Board of Supervisors supporting the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Scenic Rivers Program and their Scenic River: James, Appomattox, Chickahominy.
    - 2. Maybe support an event such as Paddle for the 50<sup>th</sup> to be held in/around April 22, 2020, the date of the Kick-Off in Richmond.
    - 3. Write and share content regarding the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on the myriad FB groups – paddle, river connections and conservation throughout the State.
    - 4. Cluster events and written pieces around the same time (do everything at once) such as April 22, 2020 instead of spreading throughout the year. Write an Op-Ed around this time celebrating the benefits and promises of the program.
    - 5. Share all 50<sup>th</sup> content with Sports Backers, Riverside Outfitters, etc as both publish weekly newsletters.
    - 6. Work with Metro Richmond Tourism – Jack Beery - to get them to put a sign on the James River - I-95 Bridge . Jon Lugbill sits on that board and can help facilitate. Would do wonders to promote tourism in the direction they're emphasizing at the moment.
    - 7. Take State leaders down the James on a raft trip.

- **R. Hambrick:** announced the coming publication (March/April 2020) of his book, *Transforming the James River in Richmond*, describing the evolution of the James River and its waterfront through Richmond from the late 1940s to the present.
- **CRLC:** Capital Region Land Conservancy received its accreditation.

#### **New Business:**

- John Moeser has resigned from the Falls Advisory Committee. His position needs to be filled.

#### **Reports:**

James River Park System – no report

JRA - no report

JRAC - James River Cleanup – September 14, 2019

JROC - Vista clearing will take place at Huguenot Flatwater Saturday, September 21.

FoJRP - Friends of James River Park will present a preview of the JRPS Master Plan at a membership event Thursday, September 26, 6pm at Legends Brewery.

#### **Open discussion:**

**Adjourn:** 1:09PM

#### **Next Public Meeting: October 17, 2019**

Meetings begin at 12:00 noon in the Conference Room on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of Richmond City Hall. Meetings are scheduled for the THIRD Thursday of each month. All meetings are open to the public. If you are not now receiving e-mail meeting notices and wish to receive them, please provide your name and e-mail address to [velzyg@verizon.net](mailto:velzyg@verizon.net). If you would like to be removed from the list, so indicate at the above e-mail address.

James Hill – acting secretary