

Minutes:

**Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee
Legends Brewery
Richmond VA**

Meeting: December 12, 2019

Greg Velzy: Chair– Presiding

Call to Order: 12:15 PM

Attending: Committee members: Leighton Powell, Jim Hill, Tricia Pearsall, Greg Velzy, John Thompson, Anne Wright, Jane Myers, Tricia Pearsall, Bryce Wilk-Superintendent James River Park, Mark Olinger-Director of Planning and Development Review City of Richmond, Parker Agelasto-Director Capital Region Land Conservancy

Minutes - Minutes of October 17, 2019 unanimously approved as amended.

Current Issues:

- **Riverfront Development Plan:** Mark Olinger, Department of Planning and Development Review. Kirt Rieder from Hargreaves-Jones presented the viable options concerning the Missing Link connector on Wednesday, December 11, 2019 at City Hall to an audience of 35-40 people. Options were narrowed to version E (4.5million) & F (8.5 million), E being a trail built on bank fill into the river. F would be a combination viaduct/land trail. F is the preferable trail, but considerably more expensive. Mark Olinger will prepare the briefing papers as a capitol budget request after conferring with the Mayor. He needs a minimum for design development and construction documentation. The information should be available to the public shortly. There are still connector issues to be worked out at 21st Street such that the least amount of fill is used as is possible. Anne Wright stated that she had recently had a renowned botanist do a tour of the area and he stated that the area was a natural community called a dry-down community and that at the Eastern end of Belle Isle there is an endangered plant species, so be aware of this when using fill. Mark said that they had coordination with DHR (Department of Historic Resources) but not with DEQ as of yet.
- **Report Planning and Development Review:** Mark Olinger reported that he continues to work on construction documents for the Downriver portion. He also reported on an upcoming resolution of intent for the Libby Hill viewshed looking downriver as requested by the Church Hill Association. Leighton questioned why the viewshed as drawn on the diagram does not include the USP properties. Mark said that USP still has development rights. Mark was asked to please include this Committee in any further consideration of a viewshed. The possibility will be considered at Planning Committee meeting December 16, 2019 at 1:30pm. It was suggested to increase the mandatory viewshed downriver as well as upriver. He also stated that nothing has been adopted to date that doesn't preclude buildings.

Both Parker and Leighton mentioned the ASLA viewshed digitally trained model made of the important Richmond views a few years back by UVA professors using a LIDAR system, and said that ARC GIS Pro is used by a group at University of Richmond.

- **Downriver Updates:**
 - Greg asked who was responsible for the former 'sugar pad'. His concern was: in the case that someone should fall into the river, how would they be retrieved from the water. He suggested that tires with rope ladders - a la Ralph White - be installed. Mark said the site is administered by DPW and person to contact is Torrence Robinson, Deputy Director of Operations - 804.646.6333 – Department of Public Works.
 - Plans for a Rowing Center to be housed at Ancarrows were discussed. It was mentioned that any development similar to this be aware of the current use of this facility to be inclusive, as well as respecting the Slave Trail presence.
 - Mark said he had heard nothing about plans for housing The Rivers Center or Whitewater Hall of Fame.

- Mark also added that on Southside of the River, the construction parking for the Walker Creek Development should ease soon and parking at Diversity Park should reopen. He stated that over 2100 units were in the pipeline for development in Manchester near the river.
 - Bryce Wilk informed that construction at the Nickel Bridge would begin shortly and last a year. There will be a curtain from Northbank under the bridge due to sandblasting.
 - The Haxall Mill Race is being dredged.
 - 14th Street Parking Lot: Needs to be a meeting of all parties involved in the 14th Street Takeout to discuss the cut for access to a walkway from 14th Street to Chapel Island. The City, developers of the new parking lot, kayakers and Department of Public Utilities need to confer to talk about how this will impact the 'free' parking for kayakers and perhaps abuse the arrangement between boaters and DRU.
- **VA Scenic Rivers Program 50th Anniversary:**
 - The 50th Anniversary Committee met December 6 at Covenant Woods to discuss plans for the 2020 celebration. Seven rivers have been declared eligible for Scenic River status and authorization by the Virginia General Assembly in 2020 should they be submitted but their local delegates. There are eight river segments that are slated for evaluation in 2020 for adoption in the 2021 General Assembly. Because of the demands on Lynn Crump, it was suggested that teams be trained to carry out field evaluations.
 - Julie Buchanan is the media coordinator for the 50th Anniversary celebration and she announced a new website that is being prepared. That website is not launched yet, but everyone can sign up to be a supporter at the following website: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/srform>
 - After much discussion, it was decided to approach Main Street Station to see if it would be feasible to host the 50th Anniversary launch there on April 22, 2020.
 - The JRP will conduct all informative (history/geology/etc) raft trips down the scenic portion of the James River for Richmond residents in honor of the 50th Anniversary.
 - Also a piece in Virginia Living featuring photos of many of the Scenic Rivers is underway for publication in May 2020.
 - The 50th Anniversary website will also host a space for interviews of people who were instrumental in the program's development or other essays or podcasts.
 - **Mountain Creeks to Metro Canals - River Management Symposium - May 12-15, 2020** is being hosted by VCU and held in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of Virginia's Scenic River Program. Greg Velzy suggested that we try to schedule a paddle of the James River and Kanawha Canal segment as part of the symposium.
- **James River Park Update:** Bryce Wilk
 - Will introduce the James River Park Master Plan to City Council Land Use Committee on December 17 at 1:00PM. Assuming it passes, should be on the agenda for January 13th 2020. Final edit is on the Friend's website: https://jamesriverpark.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/JRPS_Master_Plan-2019_10_16-final.pdf
 - There will be a retreat in January to develop a strategy for action items to implement the plan.
 - Park visitation should top 2million by the end of 2019.
 - Operations staff has been added
 - A winter camp will be held at Patrick Henry Elementary School over the holidays.
 - JRAC Parade of Lights will be held Saturday December 14, 2019 with light parade beginning at 6:00pm. Cider and cookies to be served atop Libby Hill.
 - Winter Solstice event will be held on Belle Isle Saturday, December 21, 2019 4-6pm.
 - Anne Wright brought up the fact that the Invasive Task Force had done an incredible amount of work using volunteers and now was the time to obtain some serious grant monies such that the work can continue in the manner that could eradicate invasives from the JRP.
- **CRLCC:** Parker Agelasto
 - Working on easements for the addition of 17 islands to the James River Park including Vauxhall Island.
 - Greg Velzy said that volunteers are being coordinated for training for monitoring the Annual JRP Easement review.
 - Mayor's Assistant, Lincoln Saunders recognized JRA and the James River as the 2019 **Thiess** International Riverprize Winner

- There was discussion about Parker and Tricia meeting with Jack Berry at Metro Richmond Convention and Visitors Bureau to discuss possible funding for a sign over the James River on I-95 stating a Virginia Scenic River.
- Parker also described the unique easement worked out with Louis Salomonsky to protect the viewshed on development at the foot of Church Hill.

New Business: The Committee was tasked with submitting names of likely candidates for Falls Committee vacancies.

Reports:

James River Park System – see above

JRA - State of the James annual report is out and online. READ!

JRAC - Boat Parade - Saturday, Dec. 14, 2019 – 6:00PM

JROC – Park Bridge Cleanup and Christmas gift to Hillsdale residents , Saturday December 21, 2019

FoJRP – see above

Open discussion:

Adjourn: 1:25PM

Next Public Meeting: Thursday, January 16, 2020

Meetings begin at 12:00 noon in the Conference Room on the 5th 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. If you would like to be removed from the list, so indicate at the above e-mail address.

Tricia Pearsall - Secretary