

Minutes
Board of Trustees Meeting
Chippokes Plantation Farm Foundation
Wednesday, November 12, 2008
10:30 a.m.
Stoner Building
Chippokes Farm & Forestry Museum
Chippokes Plantation State Park
Surry, Virginia

Present:

Mr. E. C. Michael Abley
Delegate William K. Barlow
Senator Harry B. Blevins
Mrs. Nancy Smith Bradshaw
Mr. Joe Elton
Mrs. Judy S. Lyttle

Mr. Alan V. Monette
Mrs. Linda D. Morse
Dr. Craig L. Nessler
Senator Frederick M. Quayle
Delegate Edward T. Scott

Absent:

Mrs. Shirley Davis
Mr. E. Henry Doggett, III
Mr. Tyrone Franklin

Mr. Todd Haymore
Mr. Robert Soble

Staff:

Mrs. Carol B. Bowman
Mr. Jim W. Burden
Mr. Brian C. Frye
Mrs. Linda Guntharp

Dr. Carla A. Kirts
Mrs. Danette Poole
Mr. Rudy D. Russo

Quests :

Mr. Wallace D. Bowman
Mr. A. G. Bradshaw
Mr. Bobby Flippen

Mr. Adolph U. Honkala (Al)
Mrs. Adolph U. Honkala
Mr. John A. Soderberg

Senator Frederick M. Quayle, Chairman, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. He introduced Linda Guntharp as the new Executive Director of the Chippokes Plantation Farm Foundation. She has been on the job since mid August and is maintaining her office at the Farm & Forestry Museum. Senator Quayle also introduced the newest Board member, Delegate Edward T. Scott, representing the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources. He also noted we were glad to have with us Dr. Craig Nessler, Director of the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Stations and Associate Dean for Research at the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech.

Mrs. Guntharp thanked the Board for the warm welcome she had received from them and everyone associated with Chippokes since she started her employment August 18. It has been a busy past few months.

Mrs. Guntharp took this opportunity to introduce the Museum Staff and share a bit of background and responsibilities of each: Carol Bowman, Administrative Assistant in the Richmond Office; Jim Burden, Farm Manager; Rudy Russo, Maintenance Manager; Brian Frye & Dr. Carla Kirts, Program Coordinators.

Public Comment

When Chairman Quayle called for public comment, no one responded.

Past Minutes

The minutes of the November 26, 2007 Board Meeting were previously distributed. There were no corrections to the minutes, and Senator Quayle stated they would be filed as circulated.

Financial Report

Mrs. Guntharp passed out two financial statements, which are attached. The first is for the Fiscal year 2008 which ended June 30, 2008. The balances are: 09 Contribution Fund \$ 425,824.16; Checking Account \$ 20,466.55; 01 General Fund \$ 0.00; Endowment Fund \$ 22,326.09; for a grand total of cash on hand of \$ 468,616.80 as of June 30, 2008.

The current financial statement for Fiscal Year 2009 covers the period July 1, 2008 to October 31, 2008. The balances are: 09 Contribution Fund \$ 411,008.19; Checking Account \$ 7,579.42; 01 General Fund \$ 105,276.45; Endowment Fund \$ 22,326.09; for a grand total of cash on hand of \$ 546,190.15 as of October 31, 2008.

Mrs. Guntharp went on to explain our current budget reduction stands at \$ 24,000.00 plus the fact that we will not be receiving interest on the 09 Contributions Fund as in years past. This would be equal to approximately another \$ 20,000.00 reduction. Depending upon the economy, there may be further reductions and restructure of Foundation employees.

Foundation/Museum Report

Mrs. Guntharp stated that Mrs. Danette Poole will be leaving Chippokes as of December 31, 2008. During the orientation tour of Chippokes that Danette and Linda took in August, Danette shared her dream of rebuilding the plantation orchard. So, in honor of Danette's 30 years of service to State Parks, the Foundation is making that dream come true. Volunteers and staff have planted 30 peach trees and 30 apple trees, one of each for her 30 years.

Another project will be to establish a Community Garden in the Spring of 2009. The American Community Garden Association has been contacted with the idea of establishing a Chapter in the Surry area.

Educational Center Update

Mrs. Guntharp stated the date of Monday, March 8, 2010, has been announced as Ground Breaking Day for the Chippokes Educational Center. This gives us a definite goal to work towards.

She has met with architect Carlton Abbott and discussed the idea of concentrating on the Multipurpose Building as Phase I. Mrs. Guntharp displayed some of Mr. Abbott's drawings showing this would contain a large area (with a stage) that could be rented for community meetings when not in use by the Museum. There would also be classrooms, a Weather Station, Rest Rooms, screened porch and a Research Library. She also mentioned that we have the potential donation of a library of Agriculture books and materials. The parking lot would feature a new "green" construction.

Mr. Monette mentioned that it was his understanding that we were not going to limit the first Phase to just one area. This was followed by much discussion as to just what the best approach would be at this point with regard to Fund Raising and scope of the project.

It was established there would be no overnight facilities. If this one building were erected, there would be space to host Fund Raising Events with the slant of 'come see what we have done'. However, if this is only 1/3 of the project, it would be necessary to make several visits to potential large donors. This was not appealing to several of the Board Members.

Mrs. Poole mentioned that before any construction may be done, major water and power lines would need to be moved. The four inch water line that was part of the 2002 Bond package has the capacity to service the area.

For the attendees who were not familiar with the history of the proposed Center, Delegate Barlow recapped the entire plan as depicted in one of Mr. Abbott's drawings. This included the lobby, country store (Farmer's Market), service areas, catering kitchen, breezeway hall containing an exhibit of tractors, covered pavilion, space to display all of the Museum's collection and of course the flexible use multipurpose building mentioned before.

The basic premise for the Educational Center is to feature the Past, Present and Future of Agriculture and Forestry, with the idea that it would become self-sustaining and eco-friendly. The current Museum represents the past, the fields are the present and the classrooms and other high-tech portions would be presenting the future.

Brian Frye asked about the size of the classrooms. Mrs. Guntharp said the drawings showed areas of 3,300 square ft, 761 square ft and two classrooms of 620 square ft. The Rest Rooms would be 1,700 square ft times two.

The drawing also shows additional classrooms at the end of the proposed building with an adjacent school bus drop off.

Senator Quayle said it appears that Mr. Abbott has done some additional work and we should see if he can send us an updated plan.

Mrs. Guntharp restated her feeling that we have to begin somewhere and she would like to see us move forward. Her feeling is to have a continuing fund raising project and set immediate dates for Phase I, II, & III. She also said she likes to have all the cards on the table, so to speak, so she knows where things stand – what the Board likes or doesn't like.

Mr. Soderberg asked to "go first". He reminded the group that if the building were available to move into today, there would still not be room for the entire Museum collection. Items are stored several places around the park as well as in a rented Quonset Hut in the Courtland area. He mentioned he has a contact associated with the State Fair for a possible large donation of agriculture items. Mr. Soderberg would like to see the barns that formerly housed the park maintenance area be made available to the Museum for storage.

Mrs. Poole indicated the park also has storage problems and they still have items in the barns. She stated that we should designate the most important pieces to be displayed. She also wondered if there are rules with regard to deleting items from the collection. Mrs. Guntharp said it would be possible to deaccession some.

Mrs. Lyttle agreed that we should only accept donations that we have space to house. Mrs. Guntharp said we have turned down some things. However there are some things we would like to add to the collection re: milking equipment John mentioned.

Mr. Abley asked why the education building was selected as the first project. His thinking is housing and displaying the collection should be the main concern. However, he did agree that we need to do "something". He has had some experience in fund raising, and doesn't like to "go to the well" more than once. One of the most successful fund raising events he ever attended was in a horse barn.

Mr. Joe Elton shared there are always tough times. This is not the beginning of the Chippokes Dream. It goes back to two gentlemen who are no longer with us, Virginia Governor Mills Godwin and Ben Bolen. Mr. Bolen was the first State Park Manager at Claytor Lake and the 3rd Director of Virginia State Parks (1961-1981). There have been different revisions, but the concept is still fresh today. We are rich in our collections and now have opportunity to put the cap stone on the dream.

Mr. Elton continued by saying our mission should be to create/protect/showcase what we now have in hand. It is his feeling that we should go for the entire project at one time, rather than take "baby steps". We should emphasize how critical farming and forestry is to the quality of life we enjoy. This would not just be Surry County or Virginia's showcase, but a showcase of and for America.

Mr. Elton also put a positive spin on the situation by saying construction costs are going down. Eco science is a very important part of this plan. Possibly there are solar companies who would want their name associated with a project like this.

Delegate Barlow stated his feelings in three points. 1) Believes going for the full project is best. 2) Need to sharpen our sales package and be prepared for reluctant donors with facts and figures. 3) We may be on the verge because of a renewed interest in Agriculture. He cited how city people had Victory Gardens during WWII and he thinks there is a resurgence in gardening again today.

As the discussion continued it was becoming apparent that the consensus of opinion was to revisit our plans. Senator Quayle stated we have had some false starts in times past and we now need to get our "ducks in a row". Therefore he asked for a motion to set up some committees to consider just how we do want to proceed. After the motion was made and carried, Senator Quayle said he would make the committee appointments and they will in turn, report to the Board of Trustees at the next meeting after the first of the year. In the meanwhile, Senator Quayle will meet with Delegate Barlow and Mr. Monette to set up a organizational structure for the Board, including Standing Committees etc.

501C3 Report

Senator Quayle reported that a firm has been hired by the Foundation to prepare 501C3 papers and represent us to the IRS. Our part of the paperwork will be sent later today.

Chippokes Plantation State Park Report

Mrs. Danette Poole, Park Manager expressed her appreciation for the Foundation rebuilding the plantation orchard in her honor. She said the best tribute to a person is to “plant a tree”. She also expressed what a pleasure it has been to work with Linda Guntharp during the past few months.

Mrs. Poole said 2007 was a hard act to follow with the celebration of American’s 400th Anniversary. Another highlight was successfully hosting the National Park Directors Meeting.

However, 2008 didn’t continue on such a grand scale. With gas prices up, park attendance was down. And the 12 ½% budget reduction has required a cutback of employee hours and expenses. The brighter side is the fact that program attendance has stayed at almost the same level. Mrs. Poole believes the mandate of “Children in Nature” is being met with their programming that gets children outside. Also the volunteer program remains strong.

Mrs. Poole spoke of other successful programs – African American Reunion in August, Archaeology Certification Field School in October and completing almost all of the 2002 Bond Package projects. This included restoring two cabins as rentals. Now the hope is to have monies to furnish them for the next season.

On the personal front, Mrs. Poole said her new challenge will be working with the John Smith Waterway program. Although she is leaving Chippokes, she will still be with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

Mrs. Poole said she believes it would be best for the Foundation to go with the whole Educational Center at one time. And she closed by saying she is looking forward to picking the apples from the “new” orchard and getting the distillery going.

Senator Quayle complimented Danette on her years of service at Chippokes. Mr. Elton added his thoughts. He said Chippokes has come a long way under her guidance. She has overseen the projects dealing with the 1992 and 2002 Bond Packages and today the park is in the best shape ever.

Mr. Elton also addressed the budget cuts. The State Park system lost 2.1 million in this latest cut, and it may be worse in the next go round. The parks are under a hiring freeze and there are 25 positions vacant. At Chippokes the vacancies include Manager, Assistant Manager and the possibility of another staff person. At this point, Mr. Elton only has the authority to fill Danette’s position. He hopes they won’t have to close any parks but there is no guarantee at this time.

Mr. Elton said he likes to share with the public the State Parks Story. In 1936 Governor Perry opened Hungry Mother State Park, the same day that five other parks were opened. These parks were a cooperative effort of the Federal Government, CCC and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Five Thousand people took the train trip to Hungry Mother that day. State Parks are special places in the public eye – an outdoor space the working man can enjoy. Continuing this good quality of life means there will never be a place for Communism or any other “ism” to get a foothold in America.

Mr. Elton further stated we are following in big footsteps of past visionaries. In 1936 Virginia had the worse road system, and yet six parks were opened to the public that year as the beginning of the Virginia Department of State Parks. Let us continue the vision!

Mr. Elton asked if there were any questions and there being none, he closed by thanking the Board for opportunity to recount this bit of history.

Delegate Barlow shared an experience during WWII with German prisoners that were brought to Sussex County to work on farms and how one fellow who later became a top official in West Germany returned to America and reunited with the farmer he had worked for. This is a good oral history story!

Mr. Honkala stated he wanted to thank the Board for the invitation to this meeting. He served on the Board 1970-1978 and 1980-1984. He added that he was distressed to learn storage is a continuing problem at Chippokes.

There being no further business, Senator Quayle declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol B. Bowman
Administrative Assistant

Attachments are available from DCR.

1. Financial Statement FY 2007-2008
2. Financial Statement FY 2008-2009 to October 31, 2008