

## **Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Board**

Minutes for September 12, 2002  
Richmond, Virginia

### **Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Board Members Present:**

Chairman Ralph Hambrick  
Louise Burke  
Greg Velzy

Vice Chairman Sue Cecil  
John Pearsall  
Jonathan Young

### **Others:**

Chris Dunn, Department of Public Utilities  
Andrew Thornton, La Difference, Inc.  
Lyn Lanier, ASV/IAS  
Edward Alleyne, DPU  
William Judy, Greeley and Hansen  
Janice Bailey, DPU  
Buzz Craft, Richmond Raft Co.  
Dave Seitz, City Attorney's Office  
Buddy Galli, DPU  
Lily Richards, Department of Historic Resources  
Patrick Roberts, City Managers Office  
Richard Gibbons, Department of Conservation and Recreation

Andy Thornton delivered a presentation regarding a proposed riverfront association of business representatives. John Pearsall recommended that Thornton's association consider including the Falls of the James and inviting a Falls member to attend the meetings.

Chairman Hambrick requested that the board recognize Department of Conservation and Recreation liaison Dick Gibbons for his contributions to the board. Hambrick encouraged Mr. Gibbons to continue to attend meetings and contribute to the board.

The Richmond City Department of Public Utilities delivered a presentation regarding the proposed Huguenot Road Water Transmission Main. The presentation included a detailed summary of the proposal and process whereby the Department decided on the proposed plan. The Department advocacy consisted of two arguments including the security and efficiency of transmission of water to the population on the southside of the James.

Board members asked several questions regarding the proposed project. Dick Gibbons inquired if the water main in the Kanawha canal would be buried and DPU responded in the affirmative. Dick Gibbons inquired about the intent of the City to

restore the bottom of the river to a natural appearance. DPU informed the board that such a concern would be considered. Gibbons requested information regarding silt flow and was informed that the finished project would accommodate such. Sue Cecil voiced several concerns including accessibility of the river during construction, the danger accompanying rock blasting and the subsequent disposal of that rock and sediment. In addition, Cecil inquired about a new Huguenot Bridge. DPU informed the board that the river will continue to be accessible, rock will be disposed of properly by the contractor and a new Huguenot Bridge was recently removed from the Virginia Department of Transportation's 10 year budget forecast. Greg Velzy inquired of the potential dangers associated with the proposed causeway and sixty-inch culverts. Jonathan Young asked DPU two questions concerning the lifespan of the water treatment plant and timeline associated with the recovery of project costs.

The Department of Public Utilities informed the board of an October 2 site meeting at 1:00.

Chairman Hambrick informed the board that he had been working with Patrick Roberts of the City Manager's office in an effort to facilitate the city's development of a joint use property that would provide parking and whitewater takeout. Roberts made a brief presentation to the board regarding the city's intent to acquire land adjacent to the river via a land swap with Norfolk Southern. The acquisition could provide up to 150 parking spaces lined with a green belt or buffer of vegetation. Roberts informed the board of an approximate \$250,000 projected cost. Jonathan Young communicated his concern for more parking in Shockoe Bottom and inquired if this project would stymie any momentum for more grandiose parking projects in the bottom. Roberts disagreed with that assertion.

Following discussion, the board voted unanimously to recommend the land acquisition for the joint purpose of parking and takeout subject to the project's inclusion of a greenbelt.

John Woodward, Director of the City's Department of Economic Development, addressed the board regarding the Cordish proposal on the Haxall canal. Woodward informed the board that the projected cost of the project is approximately \$80,000,000. The city's direct subsidy would cost approximately \$4,600,000. This subsidy would pay for two vehicular access bridges onto the island. Woodward explained that the project would include two towers, one reserved for apartments, the other reserved for offices. The old brick power plant would have to be demolished because of the absence of structural integrity while the concrete plant adjacent to the Reynolds property would be renovated. Further, Woodward informed the board that parking would provide for approximately 650 spaces though the city no longer had a right to dictate the use of those spaces as a result of the new subsidy.

The board engaged in a rather lengthy discussion regarding this project including comments from others attending the meeting. The Department of Historic Resources spokesman communicated the department's objections to the demolition of the brick

power plant. Sue Cecil objected to the plan's potential to "create a wall" along the river. The entire board discussed accessibility and though a consensus was not reached, numerous board members indicated that the current area is not accessible. Additional discussion concerned the likelihood of persons willing to live next to busy railroad tracks, density of the project, historical ramifications and others.

Woodward informed the board that the City's Economic Development Committee would discuss the Cordish proposal on September 17<sup>th</sup> at 3:30. The board elected to take no action on the project.

John Pearsall informed the board of his recent meeting with Councilman Joe Brooks regarding the Riverside Drive bank. Pearsall indicated that Brooks requested the City Manager to locate funds to study a design. In addition, Pearsall communicated Brooks' willingness to use the 4<sup>th</sup> District's discretionary funds in order to facilitate construction.

The board adjourned at 2:30.