

Minutes:

Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee Zoom Richmond VA

Meeting: January 20, 2022

Greg Velzy: Chair – Presiding

Call to Order: 12:08 PM

Attending Committee Members: Ralph Hambrick, Leighton Powell, Justin Doyle, Anne Wright, Greg Velzy, Parker Agelasto, Tricia Pearsall. Community attending: Bryce Wilk (Senior Superintendent-South District Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities), Giles Garrison (Superintendent James River Park), Josh Stutz (Executive Director, Friends of the James River Park), Shawna Shade (Office Administrator, Friends of the James River Park), James Vonesh PhD (VCU Center for Environmental Studies and Director, [River Studies and Leadership Certificate](#) program), Jennifer Wampler (Trails Coordinator, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation), Pat Bradley (Deputy Director, City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities), Jenn Clarke (Public Education and Outreach Coordinator, City of Richmond), Grace LeRose (Program Manager for Regulatory Compliance, City of Richmond), April Bingham (Director of Public Utilities, City of Richmond), Rhonda Johnson (Public Information Manager, Department of Public Utilities, City of Richmond), Joseph Crook.

Minutes: Minutes of December 16, 2021. Motion to approve-Leighton Powell, Second-Ralph Hambrick. Approved.

Current Issues:

- Bryce Wilk made an announcement that he has accepted a position as Manager of the 4th District, Virginia State Parks and will be leaving City Parks and Recreation as of February 1, 2022. We wish him all the very best in his new role and certainly appreciate his leadership as Superintendent both of the James River Park System and of South District Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities. He will be missed, but fortunately he and family will remain in the Richmond community.
- **Riverfront Development Plan** (and other James River related) updates: Kevin Vonck, (Director, Department of Planning and Community Review, City of Richmond. Kevin was not present but sent Leighton an email with the following report: “In my absence, a report on a few items:
 - **Missing Link:** PDR is working with PRCF to bring the project to the Urban Design Committee (UDC) for conceptual review sometime this spring. Project responsibility will then shift to PRCF for funding. To my knowledge, there is not funding for it at this time. Direction from Budget is that we are not to submit for design of capital projects if we do not have funding to actually construct it. Designs expire and then we end up paying for it twice.
 - **Libby Hill Viewshed Zone:** continuing to work internally with the City Attorney on enabling language. They have a lot on their plate, so it has been delayed.
 - **Manchester Road Public Parking** spots: should be under construction or close to completion.
 - **2022 Funding for Riverfront Projects:** Mayor should be introducing FY23 budget for consideration in early March.
 - **Access ramp:** A ramp is called for in the Master Plan under the 95 bridge, but it is not slated as a PRCF project.
 - **Potterfield Bridge planking:** We have to fix the planking every year, but have no plans on replacing it. The contractor we used to use for fixing it each year is no longer in the area, so PRCF is in search of a new contractor to fix the planking.”
 - Discussion followed:
 - **Manchester Road Public Parking:** There seems to me no public parking along Manchester Road nor along the road behind the silos. This is not good news with the arrival of shad season. The

parking spaces across Hull Street near Diversity Park seem to be taken by residents of the new South Falls tower. Justin contributed via chat, "FYI, I conducted a survey of JRPS parking areas in 2017. There were 15 parking spaces at the Diversity Park parking area at that time." Tricia said she would go count the spaces next week. (Tricia counted 15 spaces with one additional disabled parking spot all the way at the far western end-not exactly thoughtful for Floodwall access. The access to this lot from Hull Street has been blocked such that one has to go into the South Falls drive before turning into the parking lot. There are 4 additional spaces across the South Falls drive before crossing over the Manchester Canal, but these look to be occupied by residents. The Committee feels that now public parking is all but eliminated for the fishing crowd that uses the 14th Street Bridge and Floodwall walk).

- **Potterfield Bridge planking:** Bryce said he has a contractor looking at the planking retrofit for the T-Pott and hopes to have it completed before spring. Also looking to find another type of clip that doesn't require fitting underneath as that's not something his staff can do.
- **South Falls access:** There was discussion about a curb cut at Diversity park which has been used by South Falls' contractors and some folks moving in. It was thought that this property belongs to DPW. (There's a very wide gravel road now cutting across Diversity Park which goes to loading door bays at South Falls.)

- **CRLC- Parker Agelasto:**

- Parker stated that the Planning Commission got the same report from Kevin Vonck at their meeting
- Parker said that Jane Meyer is in charge of scheduling the Conservation Easement Annual monitoring of the James River Park to be completed by March 1, 2022.
- Title work for the parcels to be added to the James River Park System will hopefully be assisted (due diligence funding) by the Virginia Land Conservation Fund. The Fund was slated in Northam's budget in the amount of \$20 million. Parker hopes this amount is retained or increased. Still working on the greenlight for survey to be completed.
- VLCF pre-application submissions for the following possible additions to the JRPS received favorable scores:
 - Possible transfer of CSX parcel between Pumphouse and Texas Beach
 - Rogers' Property (West Buttermilk) still in talks
 - Blue Shingles Property near Carillon along a bluff across from Willow Oaks. (FYI: <https://theshockoeexaminer.blogspot.com/2015/09/the-last-gasp-of-blue-shingles.html>)
- Dock Street property with Justin Doyle: With JRA working on boundary line adjustment to be finalized on January 31, 2022. Still working on items such as appropriate signage and native plants to use in green infrastructure components.
- Parker also brought up efforts to rename the Lee Bridge and gave a very interesting lesson concerning Ballard Trent Edwards as a name worth pursuing. (FYI http://mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov/lincoln/pdfs/bios/edwards_ballard_trent.pdf)

- **Virginia Scenic Rivers:**

- **James River – A Scenic River** sign has been placed on the I-95 Bridge, thanks to Rick Burgess VDOT.
- Introduction of **Jennifer Wampler:** Trails Coordinator at Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. Jennifer relayed that a replacement for Lynn Crump's position had been identified but then the recipient declined so the process has started all over again with advertisement, etc. Jennifer did confirm that the Director of the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program was in the job description. The intent is to upgrade this position to that of a supervisor. She will definitely keep us in the loop about this position.
- Jennifer also informed us of that the land and water conservation grants are active February 1, 2022: Here is the link: Land and Water Conservation Grant information: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/lwcf>
- Jennifer also informed that the Outdoor Recreation Caucus is meeting Feb. 3 at 8 a.m. Eventbrite: [bit.ly/vaoutdoors22](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/outdoor-recreation-caucus-2022-tickets-29888888888)
- She also provided links to grants concerning Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities:

Link to FEMA BRIC grant: <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities> and grants from the Virginia Outdoors Foundation: PTF and GO grants from the VA Outdoors Foundation, closes March 11- <https://www.vof.org/>

- To date there are 3 Scenic River bills before the General Assembly:
 - [HB 28](#) and [VA SB292](#) **Maury River**; extends portion previously designated as scenic river by an additional 23.2 miles.
 - [HB 49](#) **James River**; designates an additional 44-mile portion as a component of Va. Scenic Rivers System.
 - [HB1223](#) **Shenandoah River**; scenic river designates an 8.8-mile portion of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River as the North Fork of the Shenandoah State Scenic River.
- **James Vonesh – Virginia Scenic Rivers’ Field Survey** – River Studies Program VCU. James Vonesh, is a full professor with the VCU Center for Environmental Studies and Director of the River Management Society’s [River Studies and Leadership Certificate](#) program. James made a presentation on the current program’s work to assist the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program through field evaluations of rivers. <https://news.vcu.edu/article/2022/01/vcu-students-to-assess-rivers-on-behalf-of-virginias-scenic-rivers-program> His program reaches students who pursue Masters degrees, as well as internships and classes. He is also a part of the River Field Study’s Network. Other programs he offers are the Footprints on the James trip/course in the summer, rock pools research outreach and a liaison with Master River Management policy. By teaching a course: Scenic Natural Resource and Policy, Lynn Crump would assist and present a case study. This process creates a pipeline for the procedure to be fine tooled and standardized for evaluation criteria. This is definitely an asset for the state of Virginia. They plan to evaluate one to two rivers each year.
- **JRA:** Justin Doyle: Concerning the Dock Street property, JRA met with Cat Anthony about the Cap Trail placement and easement. Since JRA is building in the flood zone, they want to present a model for such construction as it will be a water dependent building. They will also have to dredge the area of the boat launch and dock and have selected Harbor Dredge and Dock, a company they have used before. Also, to make certain the dock is functional, it will need to make accessible and to continue such maintenance. Justin added in the Chat: (Re: the river center, feel free to reach out via email (jdoyle@thejamesriver.org) or (804) 572-4667 if you have any questions or concerns. I’m happy to listen and answer questions.)
- **James River Park update:** Bryce Wilk and Giles Garrison: the new Superintendent of the James River Park System. Welcome!
 - Visitation 2021 was slightly down from the 2020 numbers
 - Ancarrows dredging to remove silt from the ramp area will be done the first week of February 2022. It must be completed before February 14, 2022 per fish spawning migration. This dredging will now be done every year.
 - T-Pott grates (mentioned above): Bryce has bids from two new contractors for improving the clips and adding additional hardware.
 - Huguenot Flatwater Access Ramp is going nowhere. Nothing is happening.
 - Greg and Giles suggested that we try to identify areas where habitat is being degraded and eroded or destroyed via social trails or trails that are way too wide, human involvement, etc. Anne Wright presented a Biodiversity in the JRP in 2017. Perhaps this baseline needs an update.
- **DPU updates:** Grace LeRose (Unfortunately many of the DPU staff which were on the call earlier had to leave). Grace reported that Senator Richard Stuart(R) had introduced a Bill (with support of Senator Joe Morrissey[D]) which states: “James River watershed; timeline for compliance with regulations of certain combined sewer overflow outfalls. Advances the timeline from 2035 to 2030 for work on construction related to any consent special order issued by the State Water Control Board for certain combined sewer overflow systems east of Charlottesville that discharge into the James River. The dates of interim steps to completion are also advanced.”

Senator Stuart was very critical of the City and DPU, obviously not having information on what steps are/have been taken in the Interim and proposed Final CSO Plan or offering money to make this happen. Currently the necessary steps to the 2035 deadline are costing billions. There was discussion concerning the politics of this proposal as well as the realities. Grace stated that what Senator Stuart said about the City and its progress or lack thereof was

Next Public Meeting: February 17, 2022

Meetings begin at 12:00 noon in the Conference Room on the 5th floor of Richmond City Hall if City Hall is open. If not, meetings conducted via Zoom. 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