

Minutes:

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

Meeting: May 19, 2022

Greg Velzy: Chair – Presiding

Call to Order: 12:09 PM

Attending Committee Members: Ralph Hambrick, Leighton Powell, Greg Velzy, Tricia Pearsall, Jim Hill, Anne Wright.
Community members present: Giles Garrison (Superintendent, James River Park System, Shawna Shade, Assistant to Director, Friends of the James River Park, Emi Endo, Senior Public Relations and Marketing Specialist, DCR (briefly)

Minutes: Minutes of April 21, 2022 (Approval overlooked. Will vote next meeting)

Current Issues:

- **James River Park:** Giles Garrison
 - Huguenot Flatwater access is completed. Ribbon cutting opening (with Mayor) tentatively June 27, 2022- 2:30pm. Concerns from the Invasive Task Force about the plantings (inappropriate species, placement and mulch) have been discussed with Shamar Young and others. Modifications to landscaping will be made in the fall. Now working on a watering program for the summer.
 - Greg Velzy reported on a new program in the JRP. Richmond Police Department can work overtime in the JRP. He saw one giving tickets for parking violations at HFW. The parking lot needs new striping.
 - Giles reported that Summer programs were ongoing working closely with rec centers for ages 6-16. She also announced that another program similar to a Youth Conservation Corps was being instigated to assist staff.
 - Trails update – Northbank under Riverview Cemetery has a portion which has new armoring and improvement to a runoff area. 21st Street entrance improvements involve rerouting to eliminate a rooty trail. The trails team is now transitioning to maintenance for the Summer.
 - JRPS Masterplan: There has been no movement on Master Plan Strategy but hopefully with greater funding for the new fiscal year, a priority procedure can begin. Looking for an even healthier budget in 2023. Greg stated that the Falls Committee needed to be part of the MasterPlan discussion and how it relates to the JRP as the Committee is comprised of members who have expertise in many facets that can help guide the Park's future.
 - Giles announced that there was some funding to assist in launching a Park Ranger Program as law enforcement within the Park is needed, particularly with increased attendance. That conversation is ongoing now.
 - Greg V. asked about status of new easements. Giles stated that she thought it was underway but would report next time on progress including the Dock Street properties and when the JRP would be responsible for that.
 - When asked about her priorities for the Park, Giles stated that foremost was the hiring of a natural Resource Director and that might be able to be accomplished by combing funding from several parks to make that happen. Next she was prioritizing access to the JRP for diverse attendees; next was upgrading crumbling facilities. Greg asked if there was any news regarding the Texas Beach Tower proposal for being relocated upstream. Giles did not know but would find out for next meeting.
 - There was some discussion about the celebration of the JRP's 50th Anniversary. Leighton announced that Ralph White was going to be giving a firefly JRP tour for CRLC and the Sierra Club in June 17, 2022: <https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=7013q000002Gs6AAAS&mapLinkHref=https%3A%2F%2Fmaps.google.com%2Fmaps&daddr=Richmond%20->

- **Virginia Scenic Rivers:** Incorporation of the Scenic Rivers agenda + field evaluation into the River Management Program at VCU is progressing smoothly. Lynn also reported that the Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers would like to be evaluated for inclusion in the Scenic River Program, but she had not heard if they had sent a formal request for evaluation to DCR. Leighton reported that Lynn was poised to come on board to Scenic Virginia and assist with their Viewshed Project.
- **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 Tricia and Greg reported on their on-site meeting with him May 4, 2022. They walked west along the Floodwall walk to the Railroad steps and discussed the unsightliness of the chain link fences and bank of the Manchester Canal (the Hull Street Bridge and other areas are on the National Register of Historic Places) Vonck reported that the South Falls Tower would soon be getting a North falls Tower just west and west of that an additional 20 townhouses, so the area was essentially a construction site. He did say that something could be done to 'neaten' the area along the Canal. We then walked back to Diversity park which now is essentially a very wide access gravel road to the South Falls Tower parking garage. Looking at the approved plans, Kevin said that road would remain and should be converted to pervious pavers. He did say he would see to the repositioning of the Diversity Park stone and surrounds, moving it toward the access ramp to the Floodwall overlook. He also counted the public parking spaces and agreed there were fewer than called for in the plans.
 - We then crossed over Hull to the Hydro Apartment complex to look at the lack of public parking along Manchester Road and the possibility of a walking path along both sides of the Manchester Canal. He acknowledged that he knew nothing of those plans, nor was he aware of the status of the extension of Decatur Street . He would look into it. He also knew nothing about the VDOT survey of the Manchester Canal improvements along Hull Street or the survey concerning the improvements to Hull Street from the Bridge to Commerce Road. He acknowledged that departments don't work well together at the moment and is working to try to improve that so that all City divisions such as Planning, DPW and DPU are on the same page. He knew little about the Mayo Bridge plans other than a large sum of money had been allocated for its replacement.
- **CRLC Updates:** Parker Agelasto not present.
- **JRA:** Justin Doyle not present
- **DPU updates:** Jenn Clarke, Grace LeRose not present. Leighton Added that she was representing her district on the RVA-H2O advisory committee.
- **Invasive Task Force Update:** Anne Wright – Anne stated that HFW needs to be totally relandscaped. She also was very concerned about the paved road entrance to the Northbank trail and the need for vegetative remediation to the hillside to arrest runoff issues. She explained how they planned to address a very steep area along her section of the Buttermilk Trail where most invasives have been removed and the growth of natives is a model example of how invasive removal should look. They plan to establish the steep bank with coir matting such that it will hold the newly planted natives until they can become rooted.
- **BridgePark:** Jim said that he knew little beyond the survey which was sent to all members concerning the desire to make the BridgePark the Fall Line Trail Connector over the James River. He will try to find out the survey results.
- **Friends of James River Park:** Shawna announced the launch of Ragin' James beer by Legends, May 19, 2022 6-8pm. Proceeds will go to FOJRP to aid with projects in the JRP.

New Business: Plans are on to have the June 16, 2022 meeting 5th Floor Conference Room, City Hall. A list must be submitted to Planning Department by June 8, 2022 to list who is coming and times in/out. All efforts will be made to make this a hybrid In Person/Zoom meeting

List Attending to date:

Greg Velzy in: 11:43am out: 1:30pm
Anne Wright
Tricia Pearsall
Ralph Hambrick (maybe)
Leighton Powell

Reports:

JRAC: none
JROC: None

Open discussion:

Adjourn: 1:20pm

Next Public Meeting: June 16, 2022

Meetings begin at 12:00 noon in the Conference Room on the 5th floor of Richmond City Hall and 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