

Minutes:

**Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee
5th Floor Conference Room, City Hall
Richmond VA**

Meeting: August 18, 2022

Greg Velzy: Chair – Presiding

Call to Order: 12:06 PM

Attending Committee Members: Ralph Hambrick, Leighton Powell, Greg Velzy, Tricia Pearsall, Anne Wright, Jim Hill (Zoom), Alex Dahm (Zoom), Community members present: Giles Garrison (Superintendent, James River Park System), Josh Stutz (Director, Friends of the James River Park) (Zoom), Shawna Shade, Assistant to Director, Friends of the James River Park, Emi Endo (Senior Public Relations and Marketing Specialist, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Grace LeRose (Policy Advisor, City of Richmond DPU), Charles Ware (James River advocate and river guide), David Hopkins (Scenic Maury River advocate and prospective committee founder) (Zoom)

Minutes: Minutes of June 16, 2022 - Leighton Powell motion to approve, Ralph Hambrick seconded. Approved.

Current Issues:

- **Riverfront Updates:** Kevin Vonck, Director Department of Planning & Review, City of Richmond. (Could not attend)
 - Charles Ware asked about the status and situation regarding the construction of the 14th Street Bridge and where the staging area would be for construction as he feared it would majorly disrupt raft company trips. We assured him that what had been related to us was that there would be 2 years of planning including stakeholder meetings, so there was plenty of time to get involved. To date no plans have been drawn.
- **CRLC Updates:** Parker Agelasto couldn't be present but sent an email stating:
 - There is not much to update since last month. We're working through the title report on the Brander Street property. Interestingly the deed to what is now Norfolk Southern was recorded in 1858.
 - Moving forward on the easement on islands but slow.
- **Virginia Scenic Rivers:**
 - Emi Endo was present from DCR. She was introduced and was fact finding about what the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee does. We look forward to having her attend more meetings.
 - Leighton announced that Lynn Crump, formerly with DCR and head of the Scenic River Program, would be joining Scenic Virginia as Project Manager of the Virginia Viewshed Project. Leighton also added that she hoped That Scenic Virginia could be more of a point organization for the Scenic Rivers Program in tandem with VCU's River Management Program. She also added that it was extremely important that all scenic River legislation had local approval before it went to the General Assembly.
 - We were delighted that David Hopkins from the Scenic Maury River could join us. The last portion of the Maury River was designated a Scenic River July 1, 2022. Rockbridge County has organized a celebration ceremony for the Maury Scenic designation on October 16, 2022.
- **JRA Update:** Justin Doyle was not present and sent no report.
- **James River Park:** Giles Garrison, Superintendent, James River Park.
 - Operations (Team is strong and working well together):
 - Huguenot Flatwater Access Ramp is completed and formally opened on July 20th.

- Looking to construct accessible ramp at the Pumphouse – have received a grant of \$200,000 toward that project.
 - Planning to add the Reedy Creek bypass trail – next big step. Too many vehicles in path of pedestrians walking.
 - Completed the 21st Street connector (high water trail) has been improved with funding from FOJRP.
- Looking to advertise for position of two Urban Rangers. Funding has been allocated. These Rangers would be trained to encourage park rules, act as ‘peace’ officers and work with RFD and RPD. Shamar Young, Deputy Director of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities (City of Richmond, VA) and Michael Burton, Trails and Greenways Superintendent for Richmond's Park and Recreation will, along with Giles, be in charge of hiring, training and supervising. Postings will be out next month.
- River Safety: Richmond City along with Counties of Henrico and Chesterfield will meet soon to look at river safety and develop a unified stand on safety procedures, signage and notices.
- Giles has reached out through Richmond's Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs and made a connection with the team manager, Karla Almendarez-Ramos. Karla also has a radio program (Richmond Metro Area Spanish Community Radio Show) and has invited Giles to be a guest on her talk show.
- T-Pott grates are to be put in place with better clips and an under beam being added for rigidity. This has been suggested by Timmons Group. It's hoped that these improvements will keep the grates from popping up all the time.
- Penelope Davenport (James River Park System Outdoor Education Program Supervisor) is developing and implementing an environmental literacy program working with the City of Richmond (and schools) and the James River Park.
- The Park is the recipient of an AmeriCorps position to assist with the Invasive Plant Taskforce management.
- Charles Ware asked Giles about the disruption and effect the CSO interim plan would have on the Southside Riverside trail system. He noted that there were at least 4 proposed sites and wanted to know what kind of impact this construction work would have on park trail usage. Giles responded that there is good communication between her office and DPU about the CSO project. She added that at the 21st Street Tower (west) site, there will be a trail diversion and that JRP needs to make/keep this site clean. Charles added that the Canoe Run site is being worked on now and suggested that the neighbors needed to be kept abreast of what was happening regarding engineering, technical plans, etc. Charles is a member of the CSO stakeholder group as is Leighton. Grace LeRose spoke up that the documents for the structure would be made more public as soon as the Final Plan was presented and that would be posted on RVA.H2O. The stakeholder group will meet and be part of that plan and information with documents. She suggested that Charles could then make the neighbors aware (maybe through newsletter or social media).
- **DPU: Grace LeRose:**
 - DPU and RVA are proceeding with 2 tracks as mandated by the General Assembly. The Interim Track and the Final Track. The Interim track must be in place by 2027, so time is of the essence. The biggest problem is what to do with (how to store for treatment) up to 5 billion gallons of water a year. (Interim Plan Report: <https://rvah2o.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Interim-Plan-Report-2021-0617-1.pdf>) and Public Stakeholder Meeting #1 Report: <https://rvah2o.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Public-Stakeholder-Meeting-1-05.05.2022-Slides-PDF.pdf>)
 - Greg asked if the rock being used at certain areas along the river (like Reedy Creek) which are being excavated for maintenance, could be covered with dirt so they don't stand out so much. Probably will get silted during next highwater event.
- **Invasive Plant Task Force: Ann Wright:**
 - She stated that there wasn't much to report on. They were developing a website and deciding whether to remain on Friends or do their own.
 - She also reported on the erosion mats that were being installed in an area near Riverside Drive once the invasives were removed. This has been a project in tandem with Andrew Ali and Trails management.
 - They will also try to get more information out as to the necessity of having natives in the JRP buffer area.
 - Giles said that goats were being used at the Manchester Wall to try to keep the kudzu down. It was choking the footpaths.
 - Alex Dahm brought up the problem that Venture Richmond was having at Brown's Island along the river with invasives which are relentless. Anne suggested that they work with the Invasive task Force in the early spring

to paint the tree stumps with herbicide when cut.

- **Friends of James River Park:** Josh Stutz
 - He reported that they had completed the 21st Street connector trail as mentioned above.
 - They are working with JRP to fund the Reedy Creek Bypass Trail.
 - Next project is to work on permanent bathrooms at Belle Isle
 - Also working with Friends of the Pumphouse to restore their funds and develop a long-range plan.
 - There will be a 50th Anniversary of the James River Park Day on September 17, 2022 on Belle Isle with tables for information and park awareness, a paddle in the pond event and another celebration at Legends to follow.
 - FoJRP is also assisting CRLC up to \$25,000 in reimbursement for legal work in the effort to add the Rogers' property to the JRP.
 - ArtWorks will host a 4th Friday opening on Friday August 26th from 6-8pm with Silent Auction and proceeds to go to FoJRP.
- **BridgePark:** Jim Hill: No new information, but he will try to find out where plans fall to use the BridgePark as the connector for the Fall Line Trail.

New Business:

- Tricia brought up the construction and denuding of the hillside property along Riverside Drive. The work, according to Catherine Harold, seems to violate state laws regarding erosion control as well as the Chesapeake Bay buffer legislation. Yet, it appears that they have permits from the City. They have eradicated a salamander pool as well and dumped the trees from the hill in the River. Tricia said she would reach out to Will Isenberg to see who made be the appropriate regulatory authority.
- Greg said that the counties and city were meeting next week to work together on consistent signage and etiquette as espoused by recommendations from the American Whitewater Signage Toolbox. This effort is being promoted and sponsored by the mother of one of the women drowned at Boshers' Dam early in the summer.

Reports:

JRAC: James River Cleanup – September 10, 2022 from Lynchburg to Charles City County and will kick off James River Week!

JROC: June project is restabilizing and improving the parking lot at Huguenot Flatwater.

Open discussion: Ralph Hambrick stated that VCU professor, John Kneebone, had started an oral history of the James River Park back in 2010. He apparently conducted 4 interviews and that they are available in the VCU archives. He doesn't know why he stopped, but these might be helpful toward the 50th Anniversary of the James River Park celebration.

Adjourn: 1:26pm

Next Public Meeting: September 15, 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