

Minutes:

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

Meeting: January 18, 2024

Greg Velzy, Chair – Presiding

Call to Order: 12:04 PM

Attending Committee Members: Greg Velzy, Jim Hill, Tricia Pearsall, Ralph Hambrick, Lynn Crump, Shawna Shade (nominee), Nathan Burrell (nominee), Christina Spohn (nominee), Will Isenberg (nominee). **Attending Community Guests:** Kevin Vonck (Director, Dept. of Planning & Development Review, City Of Richmond) Giles Garrison (Superintendent, James River Park), Josh Stutz (Director, Friends of the James River Park), Grace LeRose (Program Manager, City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities), Adam Poser (Deputy Council Chief of Staff for the City of Richmond, Virginia), Charles Ware (Environment Coordinator, Coastal Canoeists)

Minutes: Minutes of November 16, 2023: Motion to approve, Ralph Hambrick, Seconded, Lynn Crump-approved

Current Issues:

- **Riverfront Development Updates:** Kevin Vonck, Director, Dept. of Planning & Development Review, City Of Richmond:
 - Kevin reported that many efforts for change and refocus are underway. This will be possible because the Planning Department is adding to its staff. Marianne Pitts is coming aboard as Deputy Director. This public announcement will be made shortly.
 - Update to the Richmond 300 Plan is underway as it had been 5 years since its approval. One focus will be improvements in the Oak Grove and Bellmeade areas.
 - Planning will create advisory committees to assist with reordering or redesignating Richmond neighborhoods or districts, looking for identifying factors as to what makes neighborhoods special.
 - Will be rewriting zoning codes to protect and enhance neighborhoods citing what makes Richmond, Richmond, or neighborhoods special – hope to create a framework or a pattern book and framework to identify ‘place’ factors and to simplify conservation and development, “How do we move from Richmond 300 to the all-inclusive spirit and intent of neighborhoods, particularly looking at RF1 and Rf2 zoning implications.
 - Trying to integrate comprehensive financial forecasts and realities with planning and development so as to not make a plan which sits because no financial or capital funds are available....And include funds for maintenance to lands given to JRP, etc.
 - Riverfront plan is on hold until monies are provided to bond with development – Marianne will be championing this effort.
 - Incorporate all aspects of planning when a site is developed or improved, such that private developers can make conservation and improvements while their construction is ongoing
 - The acquisition of Mayo Island is very exciting. No impervious surface will be added. The design and planning of the construction for the Mayo Bridge is now more important than ever. This is a VDOT build and the community engagement is coming in the near future.
 - Jim Hill (our liaison with Mr. Chris Shephard (VDOT) had put in a request for more information concerning the engagement process. No information as of yet.
- DPU – Grace LeRose: **“Presentation of the Combined Sewer Systems Interim Plan Projects and Combined Sewer System Final Plan”**

- Grace presented her slide show: Link to a similar slide presentation below: <https://rvah2o.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RVAH2O-Technical-Stakeholder-Meeting-for-12.05.2023.pdf> and to the rain event video: <https://rvah2o.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Rain-Event-Animation.pptx> Grace explained the 2020 law passed by the General Assembly which moves the CSO Investment timeline up: 10 projects of the Interim Plan to 2027 and Final Plan to 2035. Other regulations to be met include the Chesapeake Bay TMDL and James River TMDL - Bacteria Reduction Projects as well as the CSO 'Law'. DPU has studied many ways to analyze cost effectiveness with maximum bacteria reduction benefits and CSO processing abilities. Ranking all the data, DPU is submitting 3 projects for approval as part of the Final Plan. City of Richmond needs roughly at least \$650 million dollars to finish this investment. Thus far, the project has not been included in the Virginia State's budget despite demands and promises. Climate change effectiveness also was a vital part of the Final Plan as they used the MARISA database (<https://www.midatlanticrisa.org/data-tools/climate-data-tools.html>) to project 2100 climate change scenario including tidal change. DPU is submitting Southside #1 Canoe Run), Shockoe #1 structure and Southside #3. Gillies Creek and Hilton Street will be paid for with ARPA funds.
- Grace encouraged everyone to contact their Virginia representatives and ask to allocate funds for Richmond's CSO improvement.
- **CRLC Updates:** Parker Agelasto not present.
 - Josh Stutz reported that the Brander Street property transfer is progressing. They (FJRP) have helped to fund an overlay map thanks to VDOF grants. Norfolk Southern will keep the tracks, but hopefully land to be transferred to JRP.
 - The big news is the City's purchase of Mayo Island made possible by Parker and CRLC. There will soon be public sessions to consider how to make the land into a park + insuring maintenance funding for JRP, but first the construction of the 14th Street-Mayo Bridge must be completed.
- **Brown's Island Improvement Plan:** Alex Dahm: Operations Manager, Venture Richmond, Inc. not present. It was reported that Dominion is keeping the Brown's Island Canal and Walk open while working on the transformer station. The Canal Walk will be improved along with the Back Stage area under the Manchester Bridge and be reconfigured for greater community use and access.
- **Virginia Scenic Rivers:** Samantha Wangsgard was not present. No DCR report.
 - Regarding the letter written to DCR (November 7, 2023) to request that Melissa Lesh be able to use the unused film footage she shot for the 50th Anniversary film in order to create a short video promoting Virginia's Scenic Rivers Program. Tricia talked to Dave Neudeck (Communications and Marketing Director, DCR) and he basically reported that they would very much like to work with Melissa and other Virginia Scenic Rivers' groups to produce such a video, but at the moment they simply don't have staff to devote to any Scenic Rivers programs. They are looking to hire additional personnel this spring and Tricia is to reconnect with him in June 2024.
- **Scenic Virginia:** Lynn Crump reported that the View that Named Richmond has been given the highest ranking and added to the Viewshed Register for Virginia. This came after a stringent analysis for this designation involving 3 levels of ranking and requirements. In the future, they would like to incorporate this register into DCR's programs.
- **JRA Update:** Justin Doyle not present. Tricia will work with Justin to find another date for a tour of the Education Center since the last was cancelled because of bad weather.
- **James River Park:** Giles Garrison, Superintendent, James River Park.
 - Giles reported that the JRP is working with Marvel Designs on a plan to re-interpret and improve Belle Isle. This will involve removing the wedge building, building new bathrooms, improving interpretation of the Rolling Mill and Prison sites as well as repurposing the turbine structure. But first the decking on the southside Belle Isle bridge must be replaced. Nathan Burrell (former JRPS Superintendent offered a bit of history concerning the inferior wood used for the current decking. All of this is working in tandem with FOJRP. Plans are to update the Bike pump track, upgrade the nail Shed and build a Ranger outpost.
 - Andrew Ali – Trails manager is working to upgrade the Northbank Trail around and at the western base of Hollywood. It will remain open while work is completed.

- Also, working to secure grants from VDOF to fund a Natural Resource Plan for the JRP and perhaps a Natural resource person or team.
- There was some discussion regarding Timmons work at Huguenot Flatwater. Recommendation was given that engineered projects need an extra level of review, particularly given all levels of consideration involving shorelines, river, tide, invasive species and visitor use.
- **Friends of James River Park Report:** Josh Stutz, Director
 - Josh reported that most of what they've done has been reported above. They are accomplishing amazing progress and working to best incorporate interest and support from funders, corporations and patrons. He also reported that FOJRP purchased a bike trailer for the Educations team.
- **New Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee Members:** Resumés and letter of nomination have been sent to DCR for appointment to the Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee for Parker Agelasto, Nathan Burrell, Will Isenberg, Shawna Shade and Christina Spohn.
- **New Business:**
 - Jim Hill asked about the horrid condition of the Canal Locks Park at 13th Street and what could be done about it. He also asked if anyone knew where the tunnel under the Canal (near Park Hydro) was and what state it was in. No one had any information

Reports:

JROC: Work Project on January 27, 2024 at 9:00am

Open discussion: None

Adjourn: 1:47 pm

Next Public Meeting: February 15, 2024

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