

## Minutes:

### Falls of the James State Scenic River Advisory Committee

**Meeting:** November 17, 2016 - 5<sup>th</sup> floor Conference Room, Richmond City Hall.

Greg Velzy – Chair presiding

Meeting called to order: 12:00 pm

#### **Attendance:**

Falls Members: Tricia Pearsall, Jane Myers, Anne Wright, John Heerwald, John Thompson, Greg Velzy, Ralph White, Justin Doyle, John Moeser, and Nathan Burrell — James River Park Manager and Kathleen Onufer —Assistant to the Director of Planning and Development Review, City of Richmond

Falls Members Not Present: Ralph Hambrick, Leighton Powell, Alex Dahm

**Minutes:** October 20, 2016 Minutes approved with revisions

#### **Current Issues:**

**Riverfront Development Plan Update:** Kathleen Onufer, Assistant to the Director of Planning and Development Review, City of Richmond

- **Downriver Riverfront Study Update:** Kathleen Onufer announced that the revisions to the Downriver addition to the Downtown Riverfront Plan had been presented yesterday to City personnel and stakeholders. (Justin Doyle, Greg Velzy, Leighton Powell, Tricia Pearsall and Anne Wright attended from the Falls Committee). Hargreaves will make additional changes to the plan following input from that meeting, to include such items as clear representation of pedestrian access, and should be ready to present it at a public hearing the first of 2017. The process of amending it to the Downtown Riverfront Plan will follow such that following adoption by City Council, construction plans and implementation can begin and hopefully in time to dovetail with the Main Street Project and Stone Brewery's restaurant renovation to the Upper Terminal building and garden. It will then be time to focus on the next phase of the Riverfront Plan, which might include the Missing Link Trail.
- **Potterfield Bridge Update:**
  - The entire project will likely be opening early to mid December 2016. Asphalt was being laid today. It will likely open without the interpretive signage completed, however. Kathleen and Nathan have discussed having a 'peoples' opening to feature multiple interest tours in spring and early summer, such that as many interest groups as possible can be included – a civic celebration.
  - Discussion ensued concerning the river way-sign – Ashland City Limits (which had been pulled from the bottom of the river) be replaced by a 'Falls of the James' sign. Nathan indicated that could happen.
  - Kathleen indicated that the replacement of the JROC-built steps to access the climbing wall at Manchester is not happening. The Potterfield bridge connection on the Southside is 10 feet higher than originally specified. A wooden stair connection has been built to tie into the existing JROC stairs. Cost for replacing the remaining wooden steps with metal stairs would be approximately an additional \$130,000. Letters from various user groups such as JROC and

FoJRP went out, but the monies were not allocated. Nathan stated that the JROC steps would be repainted and spring-loaded gates added to make users safety-aware.

- **James River and James River Park signage** was also discussed. Kathleen said that she hoped a new standard of signage for the riverfront would be established by the signage being used on the Potterfield Bridge. And that perhaps that signage could be incorporated into the current City-Way Program. When asked who determined the current City Way signs and the word James River and route determination on the current signs as well as the so-called 'James River District', Kathleen said that to her knowledge Mark Olinger, Director, Department of Planning and Development Review, was the director of the City Way signage program and had solely made the design and designation determinations. As a committee, we suggested that we meet with Nathan on December 7, 2016 at Legends at 4:00pm to discuss the optimum signage needed for the James River Park sections to include the perspective of pedestrians, vehicles and bikers. We will then submit those recommendations to Mark Olinger and any traffic-engineering consultant. The committee voiced concern over the implementation of signs and determination of how/why/what of sign information without input from City supervisors, tourism officials or the public. Placement of many signs complete with older versions in place. This process shows a lack of transparency. John Moeser added that there's a need for documentation and shared information such that the entire community can share ownership.
- Kathleen Onufer will return to the January 19<sup>th</sup> Falls meeting with more Riverfront updates.

**New Mayor – Levar Stoney** – The Falls Committee would like to show him the James River through the diverse eyes of committee members. It was suggested that we invite him to our December 15, 2016 meeting. Justin Doyle said he would deliver the invitation based on good turnout at that meeting by members. If he can attend, we will try to assemble many of Rich Young's photos and then cement times for him to take a river raft excursion with us, as well as hike some of the 'wilderness' trails.

#### **Dewatering Coal-Ash Pond Chesterfield Permit Approval Update and JRA Water Quality Monitoring**

Justin Doyle (JRA) - Justin reported that the de-watering permit had been issued and that JRA is water monitoring. Greg added that this area is not in the Falls Committee's purview. [That permit for the solid waste disposal and capping of the drained Coal Ash ponds has yet to be issued, and JRA is involved and monitoring that process closely.](#)

**EnRichmond** – Leighton Powell – Leighton was absent, but Nathan stated that the park is currently working to bring Vauxhall Island into the easement along with other islands to make up an additional 141 acres for the Park. At that time the billboard will come down. Nathan also was under the impression that the Island would then be transferred to the City. Jane Meyers indicated that that process is still in discussion and that EnRichmond seems to not be giving it up immediately. She also added that [the City of Richmond](#) can't receive the grant monies (to offset purchase funds) until it is handed over to the City and that the grant monies will disappear as of the fall of 2017, though [Richmond](#) could apply for an extension. Discussion ensued as to how this seemed to [be in contradiction to promises made when the island purchase was first being discussed.](#)

**Capital Region Land Conservancy Update:** Jane Myers said that they were planning for presentations to be given to riverside landowners, but in the counties.

**Stream Remediation and Restoration to James River tributaries – Reedy Creek** - City Council vetoed the project funding so DPU has ceased the Reedy Creek project and will focus on the other creeks which empty into the James River. Discussion revealed that some members thought it a flawed process. Nathan said that Jon Baliles had presented an alternate plan early on, but it seems not to have been considered. Utilities is still focused on a Watershed Management Plan.

## New Business:

### **James River Park Master Plan – Funding and Preparation: FOJRP**

- Nathan is working with the Timmons Group and Hargreaves to get a plan structure in order to start the fund raising process by the Friends of the James River Park.
- Friends of the James River Park has commissioned VCU to begin an economic impact study which should be completed by the end of December, 2016. Nathan may need assistance surveying local companies concerning the impact of the Park on their sales, etc.

## Reports:

### **James River Park – Nathan Burrell reported:**

- working on a budget to include \$1-million in capital improvement to include Park Headquarter sheds for storage and other uses.
- Plans are still underway for a redesign of Northbank Park entrance to include replacing **the asphalt** lot with pervious **pavers**, splitting the path for bike/hike users and a kiosk. He will send plans to the committee. The plan will also increase bike parking and hopefully can include repairs to the North bank Tower.

**JRAC** - There is a meeting on November 29, 2016 at the Maymont Nature Center

**JROC** - Project this weekend to repair erosion at the dog beach in the Wetlands portion of the Park.

**FoJRP** - (see above)

## Open discussion -

- Ralph White brought up management issues concerning the open meadows on Belle Isle and Pony Pasture . He cited that those meadows seemed to be shrinking and was there a plan to do something about this. Nathan indicated that he was doing the same thing that Ralph had done as far as management went, and there were no plans to change this strategy.
- Tricia told the committee about the visit by the Public Art Site Selection Committee to the Potterfield Bridge Project southside location to view the installation of Josh Weiner's "The Path Less Traveled" project – a series of Cor-Ten steel rings. The rings are up and secure and vegetation has been put in place.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 1:09pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tricia Pearsall