

Minutes:

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

Meeting: May 21, 2020

Greg Velzy: Chair– Presiding

Call to Order: 12:02 PM

Attending: Committee members: Leighton Powell, John Heerwald, Jim Hill, Tricia Pearsall, Greg Velzy, Anne Wright, Ralph Hambrick, Justin Doyle, Bryce Wilk-Superintendent James River Park, Lynn Crump- Landscape Architect - Environmental Programs Planner at VA DCR

Minutes - Minutes of February 20, 2020 unanimously approved.

Current Issues:

- **2020-2021 Budget – James River related City of Richmond Budget and Funding update:** Bryce Wilk first provided information on the City Budget Proposal.
 - Accessibility Projects for Universal Access at Huguenot Flatwater and Brown's Island Accessibility Projects that were partially funded in Richmond's FY 2020 budget should see more funding with this budget. City Council will consider restoring \$180,000 to Universal Access at Huguenot Flatwater and \$282,558 to Brown's Island Accessibility Projects at its meeting on Tuesday, May 26, 2020. It should be on the consent agenda. Justin Doyle will update us.
 - Budget for JRP and Parks & Rec funding is staying flat which is actually a positive.
 - No amounts for capital improvements
 - Top Projects (also looking for outside funding resources) are stability of Texas Beach tower and Pumphouse.
 - No funding for Missing Link or Lehigh Projects
- **Report Planning and Development Review:** Mark Olinger not in attendance. He reported that he will try to attend next month.
- **Brown's Island Improvement Plan:** After much discussion concerning some of the proposals and directions considered under this plan proposal, it was highly recommended that committee members review the plan and take the survey and encourage others to do the same: <https://venturerichmond.com/news/browns-island-improvement-plan-and-survey/>
- **Libby Hill Update:** Mark Olinger not present. The City is still working with CRLC to obtain proper restrictions. The offending tree blocking the silo view will be replaced.
- **VA Scenic Rivers Program 50th Anniversary:** Lynn Crump
 - 50th Anniversary Updates – Lynn reported that DCR administration has instructed that 50th Anniversary events must be completed by December 31, 2020.
 - There will be an exhibit focusing on some of Virginia's Scenic Rivers at the Exhibition Hall in Main Street Station featuring 12 panels. This will also coincide with a yet to be determined major event.
 - The Governor will declare June 2020, River Month in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the Scenic River Act.
 - New Scenic Rivers: Maury, Clinch, Middle James, Grey's Creek, Pound, Staunton Rivers become effective July 1, 2020
 - It is unclear when the 5-7 field evaluations of newly proposed scenic Rivers for 2021 will take place.
 - The Scenic Virginia photo contest will launch June 1, 2020 and the Rivers category will be solely devoted to designated Scenic Rivers.

- Virginia Living Magazine – June Issue with photographs and a different online segment has had good response: <http://www.virginaliving.com/the-daily-post/scenic-rivers/>
- **James River Park Update:** Bryce Wilk (challenges and solutions in the era of Covid-19)
 - The JRP saw a 71% increase in usage for the month of March 2020. This doubling of park visitation has come with many challenges. As a result, parking restrictions have been implemented on Weekends and holidays and Park staff has blanketed the JRP with signage concerning distancing, etc. All of these new efforts and guidelines have been made with the Mayor's approval and direction. All port-a-johns have been removed. Avoid peak usage times. Parking in the Forest Hills lot is encouraged.
 - As a result of closing restrooms, the ones at Pony Pasture are undergoing a facelift and being repainted.
 - Park monitors (Park employees from other facilities have been informing public of distancing and other rules. For the most part, they have received great marks for being these.
 - 21st Street Tower has become a trouble spot and will be closed for Memorial Day weekend.
 - At the moment, JRP is holding off on all new programming, but they are beginning to work again with volunteer groups limited to 5 persons.
 - Have been an increase in vandalism in JRP (along with trash) Bryce is making a map of hot spots and working with a police security detail in areas such as 14th Street Takeout, 21st Street Tower, etc. Vandalism at Manchester Wall and Z-Dam (removal of memorial bench to Warren Foster).
- **Meeting (Zoom) of Friends groups of Richmond City Parks & Recreation Staff – Wednesday May 13, 2020.** Excellent and informative meeting with non-profit groups which support the City Parks & Rec. Leighton Powell said that she would like to attend the next quarterly meeting.
- **CRLCC:** Parker Agelasto not present, but Greg reported that Parker said that all JRP appraisals must be redone as the old ones were no longer valid. Also he reported that all easement reviews had been completed.
- **DPU Updates:** Grace LeRose not present.
 - Justin Doyle (JRA) reported that the new expansion of the Sewage Treatment Plant was almost completed and would expand the sewage treatment of water/day from 75 million gallons to 140 million gallons which significantly reduces the amount of wastewater going directly into the river during overflow events. The new 2021 budget includes \$49,502,000 for [Combined Sewer Overflows](#), \$11,976,000 for Stormwater Facilities Improvements, and \$7,681,500 for Wastewater Treatment. This funding will support improvements to Richmond's combined sewer system, upgrades to the wastewater treatment plant, and stormwater management projects across the City.
 - This is the legislation supported/presented by JRA which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2020 concerning the CSO events and compliance in the James River Watershed: <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+CHAP0634>. Even though the goal is total reduction of combined sewer overflow events, it is almost impossible to completely eliminate them, thus the goal is to reduce 1 billion gallons to 35,000 gallons by 2035.
- **New Business:**
 - Ask Chris Frelke, Director for the City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities to the next in person meeting.
 - City of Richmond – River Keeper – a City government employee who can monitor water and access both whitewater and flatwater below falls. Justin suggested that we consult Jamie Brunkow who is the JRA RIVERKEEPER for the entire length of the James River, a program supported by JRA. Jamie is assisted by volunteer groups called River Rats who monitor events, happenings, and water quality, etc. in designated areas of the James.

Reports:

James River Park System: Currently working to establish an Implementation Team for the Park Masterplan.
JRA – See above

JRAC - James River Days not published. Greg will find out if an abbreviated version will be published. No information on Cleanup in Fall 2020 as staff on furlough

JROC – JROC Virtual Ride in honor of RVA Bike Month of JROC James River Park Projects;

<https://www.facebook.com/jroc.rva/videos/275869170238980/>

FoJRP – Working on implementation strategy of JRP Masterplan.

Open discussion:

Adjourn: 1:20PM

Next Public Meeting: Thursday, June 18, 2020

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