

Minutes:

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

Meeting: May 18, 2023

Greg Velzy Chair – Presiding

Call to Order: 12:03 PM

Attending Committee Members: Ralph Hambrick, Leighton Powell (Zoom), Tricia Pearsall, Jim Hill, Greg Velzy, Justin Doyle (Zoom), **Community members present:** Parker Agelasto-Executive Director, Capital Regional Land Conservancy, Giles Garrison-Superintendent of James River Park, City of Richmond, Josh Stutz, Executive Director-Friends of the James River Park, Shawna Shade-Office Administrator, Friends of the James River Park, Grace LeRose-Program Manager, City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities, James Vonesh-Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies, Center for Environmental Studies-VCU Life Sciences and adviser for River Studies and Leadership Certificate, Lynn Crump-Viewshed Projects Manager, Scenic Virginia, and Megan Black-VCU Environments Studies graduate student and research assistant. Not Present: John Heerwald, Ralph White, Alex Dahm, Anne Wright and Samantha Wangsgard.

Minutes: Minutes of February 16, 2022 - approval moved to June 15, 2023 meeting .

Current Issues:

- **James Riverfront Development Updates:** *Kevin Vonck, Director, Dept. of Planning & Development Review, City Of Richmond:* Kevin could not be present and had no updates except to express excitement at the groundbreaking of the
- **Mayo Bridge:** Discussion of priorities for consideration in new Mayo Bridge conceptual plans: *Justin Doyle, UDC.* Justin told us that he had attended an open house in the Train Shed of Main Street Station soliciting input for the Mayo Bridge replacement. Grace LeRose added that the City was struggling to get the project up and going. Justin said he thought VDOT would be circling back with conceptual plans soon, but committee members voiced that they wanted their suggestions to at least be heard before conceptual plans were drawn. Justin thought it appropriate to write to Will Wheeler, VDOT with our comments and suggestions. Grace suggested we copy Bobby Vincent, Director of DPW. Suggestions:
 - Greg Velzy
 - Install flashing light crosswalks at both ends of the bridge, particularly at the blind curve at the Manchester end connecting at Hull Street.
 - Place bump-outs for fishermen on the downstream side of the bridge, but no-fishing at bump-outs on the north end of the bridge. That's the area where rafts and kayaks come through to the 14th Street takeout and can't see fishing line, i.e., hazardous.
 - Lynn Crump
 - Bump-outs are needed up and down the bridge to allow pedestrians to get out of the way of pedestrian traffic. They should have benches and interpretive signage.
 - Fenestrate the sides of the bridge instead of the 'jersey wall' so drivers can see the Scenic River (Lynn will send more visual examples)
 - Consider textured pavement to slow traffic
 - Josh Stutz
 - Since Mayo Island will contain a park on both sides of the bridge, there must be a walkway crossing in the middle of the bridge as well.
 - Tricia Pearsall
 - Mayo Bridge pretty much spans the exact location of fall line intersection where the rapids or gravitational flow meets sea level and becomes tidal. This an extremely environmentally sensitive spot in the river for aquatic species, particularly for spawning migration of anadromous and other fish as well as the endangered

sturgeon. This action in the spring and summer provides a hot spot for feasting osprey, heron and myriad other birds as well as prime nesting area. Constriction of this span must not upset this environmental balance.

- Concerned about construction debris falling in the river. I'm certain netting will be mandatory, but given the fact that the railroads feel fine throwing their spikes, clips, rails and even ties in the river, always on guard. This area also has a flow pattern that seems to always be changing given flooding detritus, silting and erratic tides, so no construction debris or worker's trash in the river.
- Jim Hill
 - Will get many suggestions to you digitally
 - Reduce lanes to 3.
 - Particularly concerned by safety issues. Consider traffic circle or roundabout in the center of the island.
- **CRLC Updates:** *Parker Agelasto*
 - JRA held a groundbreaking ceremony on May 8, 2023 for its James A. Buzzard Education Center at 3021 Dock St.
 - Transfer of Dock Street properties and conservation easement to the City should be complete by this Friday. This is quite a feat, considering we sat in a room about 5 years ago and just decide to make this happen! The conservation easement for the remaining 4.3 acres at Dock Street is complete and our partners at The Conservation Fund can now transfer it to the City of Richmond. This last step will complete our effort to provide public access to the riverfront by way of a new park and to permanently preserve the View that Named Richmond. The View preservation is an extremely important facet of the easement as it will protect the 'View' with exceptions of historic properties using the last GIS model.
 - No updates on Mayo Island purchase other than City Council voted to accept the award of \$7.5 million from the DCR Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF) towards the purchase of Mayo Island. City Council also authorized the Chief Administrative Officer to complete the necessary steps in taking ownership of Mayo Island for a future park. Waiting on the City to move on accepting various steps of the purchase agreement. CRLC will co-hold a conservation easement with DCR on the property.
 - Parker also mentioned that another piece of property being considered for purchase/transfer to the JRP is in negotiations and waiting for the City attorneys to provide feedback.
 - CRLC Board is meeting next week and one item for consideration is the transfer of the Historic James Greenbelt Corporation into CRLC. This corporation was formed in the 1970's to accept property intended to be given to the city for public use. Properties included Huguenot Flatwater and Riverside Meadows. These properties hold certain easement restrictions and protections which would be transferred to CRLC. Should these protections be violated the property would, therefore, be returned to CRLC. These easements have been in place for 50 years. Giles asked about the number and extent of viewshed protections. Parker sent two maps showing the protected viewshed. See the attachments below (1.). Josh said he would address some of the homeowners about having those restrictions annulled.
 - Members of the Committee asked if Parker could send us a copy of an Easement Deed: See below in the Attachments (2.).
- **Brown's Island Improvement Plan:** Alex Dahm was not present. There was a charette to provide feedback as to possible revamping Brown's Island, but no report has been issued to date.
 - Giles mentioned that plans were underway to provide an accessible ramp at Tredegar.
 - Greg asked Grace if the DPU pumps on the sidewalk along Tredegar St. could be moved, as he had received a complaint that a family with a wheelchair bound child could not get around them. Grace said she would look into it.
- **Virginia Scenic Rivers:** Samantha Wangsgard was not present.
 - Lynn said that the MOU between VCU and DCR had not been renewed and to her knowledge no rivers were in the Scenic River review pipeline.
 - Leighton added that as Scenic Virginia conducted the Viewshed Projects around the state, they would also highlight the Scenic Rivers Program as well.
 - James Vonesh added that he was going ahead with teaching Scenic Natural Resources Policy and Assessment in 2024 (every other Fall). They had talked about doing reassessments of designated rivers as well. He will coordinate with our Committee.

- **Scenic Virginia:** Lynn Crump led a Viewshed focus group in Rappahannock County on identifying and valuing scenic resources and currently working on one in Halifax. She also inquired about securing the University of Virginia's work in Richmond. She is also in conversation with FOLAR.
- **JRA Update:** Justin Doyle
 - James A. Buzzard River Education Center: Construction is underway at the river education center site and we are working closely with the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation to ensure the trail remains open for use and is safe for users. Construction is scheduled to be complete in summer 2024.
- **James River Park:** Giles Garrison, Superintendent, James River Park. Giles' report is attached. See below. Highlights include:
 - Texas Beach Bridge: Planning to rebuild in place. Hoping to have completed in 12-18 months from start. Hope to begin in Fall of 2024.
 - Urban Rangers – Second round of hiring underway.
 - Potterfield Bridge repairs to surface will be happening sometime soon.
 - ADA ramp at the Pumphouse has been stalled due to increase in costs. Once this is underway, there will be a loss of tree canopy, but new trees will be planted. The ramp will require a large footprint.
 - The Pipeline Trail may be closed by CSX . There is no legal way forward at the moment. It will stay on the maps.
 - Belle Isle (with Josh Stutz) Public engagement will begin soon on the island's redesign. This will be a major fund raising effort and focus for Friends of the JRP. We will be working on:
 - Reimagining the turbine building
 - Perhaps constructing a walkway path around the inside of the quarry
 - Interpretive signage at the Old Dominion Iron and Steel ruins
 - Redefining the Wedge Building.
 - Pumphouse-Developing concept designs for 2nd Floor of the Pumphouse with funding from NPS grant and HRF . Working on replacing roof first.
 - Invasive Plant Taskforce – grant for \$25,000 to remove invasive trees from Riverside Drive.
 - Big Safety on the River push from the City and regional partners.
- **DPU:** Grace LeRose:
 - Currently working on Interim Plans Project 04 along Williamsburg Road (See slide in Attachment (4) Traffic will be reduced but not closed. Pipe will then go under old gasworks building and will rework parking area near roundabout. Work will reduce overflow by 40%. Cost has now doubled. Start in July and continue for 18 mos.
 - Next project will be in the Maymont neighborhood CSO-10
 - Then the next project, CSO-40 will be 22nd Street , beginning sometime Fall of 2023 – Winter 2024.
 - Tricia asked Grace about Diversity Park rework and potential JROC cleanup. She suggested to send proposal to Louis Evans – DPU head of Floodwall.
- **Friends of James River Park Report:** Josh Stutz – in addition to Belle isle input above:
 - Purchased new Jeep for Urban Ranger to use.
 - Working on Reedy Creek Bypass Trail
 - Starting to focus Friends' resources on large JRP projects. They are rapidly approaching a \$1 million budget.
- **BridgePark Update:** Jim Hill – no information, no sign of life
- **Falls of the James Bridge Signs:** Tricia: With support from JROC and City of Richmond Traffic Division, six new signs have been fabricated and are in the hands of Traffic Engineering for placement on both sides of all City bridges. Also working with the RMA to place signs on the Boulevard Bridge and the Powhite Parkway

New Business: None

Reports:

Dominion RiverRock this weekend!

Open discussion: None

Adjourn: 1:48 pm

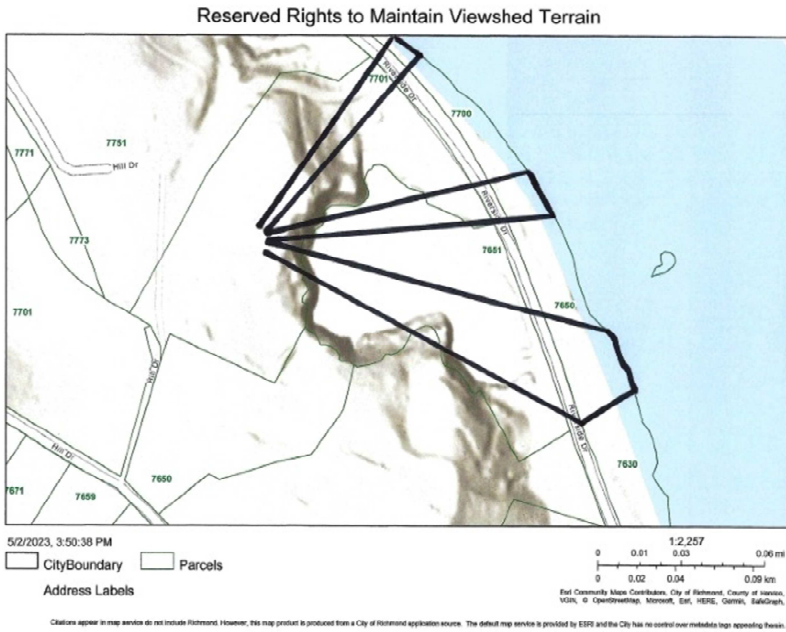
Next Public Meeting: June 15, 2023

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

ATTACHMENTS:

1. CRLC: Retained Viewsheds – Historic James Greenbelt Corporation



2. CRLC: Recorded Deed of Easement for Dock Street Property – Digital Attachment

3. JRPS Updates – April/May 2023 - Digital Attachment

4. DPU – Interim Plan Projects CSO-04

Interim Plan Projects
CSO 04

Purpose
Relocate Regulator Structure and store flow in the 60" pipe

Major Improvements
Relocation of Regulator Structure
New connecting sewers

Overflow Volume Reduction (MG)	5.1
Overflow Event Reduction (#)	48
Capital Cost	\$8.7M
Construction Completion	Summer 2023