

Agenda for  
Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee  
5th Floor Conference Room Richmond City Hall  
February 19, 2025

**Call to Order: 12:10pm**

**K Schmidt, W Isenberg, G Velzy, S Shade, J Doyle, L Crump, C Spohn**

**Guests: M Pitts**

**Minutes:** [January 15, 2026](#), approved.

**Current Issues:**

- **Code Refresh Richmond City Planning Department:** Marianne Pitts, *City of Richmond Planning Department*
  - Code draft #2 deadline extended until March 1 2026
  - Existing zoning along river corridor in Manchester has been a point of much discussion - viewshed of points
  - DPU and Planning having conversations about how the infrastructure will handle zoning changes, how development can pay for infrastructure upgrades. Some big picture discussions about Manchester, Scott's & Shockoe and impacts there
  - Once Code Refresh comes back with Draft 3, Marianne would like to present again - maybe June?
  
- **CRLC Richmond Updates:** Parker Agelasto, *Executive Director, Capital Regional Land Conservancy*
  - Not present, but Greg Velzy shared updates
  - Belle Isle parking lot discussion at Venture Richmond meeting- maybe funded by LWCF money? That would affect the activities in the parking lot if funded by LWCF. Parker & Alex Dahm have been talking about this - LWCF is very restrictive in what can/can't happen. There is some grey area there. Date of lot construction - 1980's-1990's, paved in 2010's.
  - Greg will share emails from Parker.
  
- **VA Scenic Rivers Update:** Joshua Bateman, *Environmental Program Planner, DCR*
  - Not present
  
- **James River Park Update:** Andrew Alli, *JRP and Richmond Trails Superintendent*
  - JRP Update
    - report coming via email, P Davenport last minute cancelled on meeting attendance
  
- **JRA Update:** Justin Doyle, *Director of Community Conservation, James River Association*
  - CSO Funding Advocacy
    - City meeting of stakeholders. Katie and Justin both attended. 19 orgs/businesses in the city wrote a letter to both senate & house for \$100m for CSO projects - Canoe run park storage project & Shockoe high rate disinfection project (in Shockoe basin). Letters have been circulated. State decision coming soon. The City will probably get some funding, but unclear how much. Will determine how much the city asks for in the future.
    - Should FTJSRC sign on?
      - Motion to sign - W Isenberg. Velzy second, all present motion to sign on.
    - Does JRAC exist? Kind of.
    - Outfitters signed on? yes!
  - PRCF is working to organize a community meeting in March about Dock St. Park (@ Powhatan Community Center). Public comment about Marvel's conceptual planning and future ideas at Dock St.
  - JRA is installing a nature exploration area at the Buzzard Nature Center under the ramp to activate the space. Had a conversation with PRCF about having more nature exploration areas at Dock St., which has driven forward some more conversation about the plans for Dock St. park. Has to come under 2500 sq ft to keep under minimal land disturbance, fall into UDC guidelines, etc. Batteau or indigenous history are also a consideration to add into natural areas.
  - Parking needs at Buzzard Center? VTCF and Capital Trees and JRA were all in discussion about parking at Shiplock Park lot. There are about 20 spaces within the bus ramp and under the building. On Street parking on

*Pear and Cary nearby, too. Parking hasn't been a huge issue, but is still challenging on nice days. Could be a challenge to add more infrastructure to Dock St / Buzzard Center but not having parking spaces.*

- *RVA Green Drinks is tonight (2/19, 5:30pm, Buzzard Center)*
  
- **American Rivers:** *Katie Schmidt, Director, National Dam Removal Program, American Rivers*
  - *No specific updates for this group.*
  - *Big bill (house and senate co bills) at a national meeting next week is about FEMA no rise rules. Currently prevents lots of restoration projects (like at Mayo island). Hoping to advance some legislation about updating some of the no rise rules. Wetlands and river people are aligned.*
  - *State law could make it more stringent, but cannot make no rise any less stringent.*
  - *Katie will share American River's fact sheet about the no rise rule.*
  
- **DPU/RVA H2O Updates:** *Scott Morris, Director, Department of Public Utilities*
  - *Not present.*
  
- **Scenic Virginia Updates:** *Lynn Crump, Viewshed Project Manager*
  - *New board, new partnership with PEC to help with digital recordings.*
  - *New viewshed announcements in June.*
  - *Looking for viewshed proposals for the coastal region. Will and Lynn to connect outside of meeting to connect with some local groups to help advance that. Nomination process is relatively simple.*
  - *Link to map of current views:  
<https://scenicvaviewshed.maps.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?webmap=84a1aafc5c3a4d76b2d1d4785e09756a>*
  
- **Friends of James River Park Report:** *Shawna Shade, Office Administrator, Friends of the James River Park*
  - *Executive director announcement coming soon*
  - *Nature play area on belle isle is underway. Scott Turner from True Timber, also working alongside the Park staff to prep the area.*
  - *Last speaker series - tonight, 6pm, Matt Balaczak (VCU Sturgeon Researcher)*
  
- **James River Outdoor Coalition:** *Greg Velzy, Vice President*
  - *Tredegar St. ramp has challenged RFD with their boat rentals. Fleximat (concrete/metal/plastic mesh material) to be laid down to help ease the transition at lower water. Hoping to bring similar technology to Huguenot to make the transition to the water from the ramp more accessible. Hoping it would silt over - concrete in its installed state is rough and can be challenging to maneuver on.*
  - *14th st takeout repairs - hoping to widen the walkway to make it 10 feet wide the whole way from river to the gravel lot, and replacing the timber steps. First workday is 3/2*
  - *VCU study (master's class in data analytics) with RFD to see what the hot spots/types of incidents in swift water rescue. RFD reports up to 200 call outs every summer. Working with RPD, RFD to go through data, then do some education / proactive signage and such. VCU asking for an honorarium, hoping to get JRPS and RFD to financially support.*
  - *RFD's current data is in narrative form, so they are looking for some thematic analysis to see what the themes are.*
  
- **Brown's Island Renovation Update:** *Alex Dahm, Operations Manager, Venture Richmond*
  - *Not present.*
  - *Parking lot project outlined above.*
  - *Construction is well underway. Some times that TPott bridge will be shut down for work, they will put out on social media when it is closed.*
  - *Riverrock?*

### **New Business:**

*VCU Sustainability speaker series Fridays in Spring*

*American Rivers webinar on dam removals in the US - 3/18*

*New DCR head is Nikki Rovner (former The Nature Conservancy). This committee has hoped to present to the DCR board, but the Spring meeting is in April in Shenandoah State Park. We hope to present to them at the Fall meeting. We need to reach out to Joshua Bateman before we present to make sure that he has buy in.*

*History of the scenic rivers program - priority for a future meeting. Hope to present on the history of the whole program, with specifics on our Falls of the James segment. Lynn, Ralph et. al. would be able to present in August, to prep for the Fall meeting.*

*\*Every scenic river used to have a committee - the only 2 that continued were Goose Creek and Falls of the James. In 2006, there was an amendment to state code to remove the need for the governor to appoint people to committees, and committees did not have to be appointed. Currently this role is often filled by friends of rivers. A statewide board of scenic rivers was created in 2006, but disbanded in 2012 to move it to the DCR board. DCR board currently does not hear much about scenic rivers.*

*If you want to have someone come to our meeting to present, connect with Katie so we can let everyone know to bring folks to meetings.*

*Downriver updates - Pat from American Rivers.*

*Extending the designation through the rest of the city. Would involve committee work.*

*CSO work presentation from DPU*

*Mayo Island updates*

*Meeting on JRA pontoon boat? Meeting at the Buzzard Center on 5th floor conflict dates*

*Additions to the committee - Penelope Davenport and Kelly Powers. Penelope has the paperwork and is working on it. Will to connect with Kelly. When we send in Penelope and Kelly nominations, we will also let DCR know about Anne and Nathan wanting to resign from the committee.*

*Katie, Will and Christina met to divide roles! It was great!*

### **Reports:**

### **Open Discussion:**

### **Adjourn: 1:07pm**

#### **Next Public Meeting: March 19, 2026**

Meetings usually begin at 12:00 noon in the Conference Room on the 5th floor of Richmond City Hall. 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 [kschmidt@americanrivers.org](mailto:kschmidt@americanrivers.org). If you would like to be removed from the list, so indicate at the above e-mail address.