

**Board of Conservation and Recreation  
September 23, 2016  
Natural Bridge, Virginia**

**TIME AND PLACE**

The meeting of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation convened at 10:12 a.m. on Friday, September 23, 2016 in the Washington Ballroom of the Natural Bridge Historic Hotel, Natural Bridge, Virginia.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

W. Bruce Wingo, Chair	Vivek Patil
Patricia A. Jackson, Vice Chair	Michael P. Reynold
Danielle Heisler	Isaac J. Sarver
Andrew C. Jennison	

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Vincent M. Burgess	Dexter C. Hurt
Linwood M. Cobb, III	Harvey B. Morgan
Nancy Hull Davison	

**STAFF PRESENT**

Clyde E. Cristman, Director  
Tom Smith, Deputy Director for Operations  
Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration  
Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage  
George Chieffo, Confidential Policy Assistant  
Dave Collett, Western Field Operations Director for State Parks  
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison  
Lisa McGee, Director, Policy and Planning  
Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources  
Craig Seaver, Director, Division of State Parks  
Suzanne Swinson, Business Administration Manager, Division of State Parks  
Timothy Shrader, Eastern Field Operations Director for State Parks  
Christine Watlington, Senior Policy and Planning Analyst

**QUORUM**

With seven (7) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

**CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Chairman Wingo called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m. and asked for member and staff introductions.

**MINUTES**

Mr. Sarver moved for the approval of the minutes of the July 22, 2016 meeting with no changes. Ms. Jackson seconded and the minutes were approved as submitted by staff.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT** – *Clyde E. Cristman, DCR Director*

Mr. Cristman welcomed members to the new Natural Bridge State Park. He noted that new signage was now installed on I-81 approaching the park.

Mr. Cristman to the board that this was a historic weekend with the opening of Natural Bridge State Park as Virginia's 37<sup>th</sup> park. He noted that the main item on the Board agenda was discussion of the Public-Private Partnership study and that the opening of Natural Bridge was a great example of that partnership. Two years prior the property was up for sale and the Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund stepped forward to purchase the property with the intent of making Natural Bridge a state park. The property includes the bridge and about 1500 acres.

Mr. Reynold asked if there had been concern with local campgrounds.

Mr. Cristman responded that DCR staff had met with local campground owners. The master planning process for the park has begun but, at this time since DCR does not own the property, there are no plans for capital improvements. There are several private camping opportunities nearby.

Mr. Cristman reported that, during the McDonnell administration, DCR was gifted 600 acres in Loudoun County for a new state park. DCR currently does not have funding to develop and open the park. The Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship will continue to operate the property and maintain the trails through their volunteer network until such time that DCR can move forward with development and staffing.

**INVESTIGATING PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FOR VIRGINIA STATE PARKS** - *Suzanne Swinson, Business Administration Manager, Division of State Parks*

Ms. Swinson presented an overview of the report entitled "Examination of Public-Private Partnerships in Virginia State Parks." Members were provided with a draft copy of the report due to the General Assembly on November 15, 2016.

Appropriation Act Item 365

The Board of Conservation and Recreation was directed to consider whether public-private partnerships would:

1. Result in operational efficiencies in planning. Development, construction, and operation of new state parks and management of existing parks.
2. Generate cost savings.
3. Allow for additional state park amenities.
4. Increase operational revenues for state parks.

Current trends

- U.S. Forest Service
  - Created private management contracts for campgrounds
- National Park Service

- Use private concessionaires for lodging, merchandise, and food operations at Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and Yellowstone
- State level
  - A couple of states have used private management companies to operate resort-style parks

#### Public-Private Landscape in Virginia

- Legal framework
  - Code of Virginia § 56.575.1 – allows use of PPEA
  - Code § 10.1-112 and § 10.1-104 – authority for approval of revenue generating facilities and activities
  - Special event permits
- Cost and Employment
  - Virginia State parks wages compared to statewide averages
- Specialized Situations requiring specific skills
  - Examples: power boat rentals, zip-line operations

#### Challenges and Limitations

- Use of tax exempt bonds (both GOB and PPEA)
  - IRS restrictions on bond proceeds for private use
  - Virginia Department of Treasury closely monitors
- Land and Water Conservation funding
  - Require that lands and facilities developed for outdoor recreation be maintained in perpetuity
- Virginia Capital Outlay Process
  - Commonwealth's process can be costly and time consuming
- Park Locations
  - Remote, lack public utilities, development challenges, limited workforce
- Public Perception
  - Survey results of park visitors not positive towards privatization
  - Cost was a consideration

#### Current Public-Private Partnerships

- Park Concessions
  - Boating – sailboats at Leesylvania; power boats, jet-skis, kayaks at Occoneechee, Smith Mountain and Claytor Lake
  - Retail – First Landing
  - Wi-Fi – Kiptopeke
  - Other – Virginia Canopy Tours at Shenandoah
- Infrastructure Partnerships
  - POS system
  - ReserveAmerica
  - Grounds keeping and landscape management

- Capital Projects
  - Professional architectural and engineering contracts
- Natural Bridge State Park
  - Partnership with Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund (VCLF)
    - § DCR will manage property and personnel to operate bridge
    - § VCFL will continue to manage the hotel
- Loudoun County State Park (working name)
  - Partnership with the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship
- Private business partnerships and volunteers

#### Potential Partnerships for VSP

- Operation of park by private management
  - Favorable conditions for success are not present
- Operation of existing park services by private management
  - Favorable conditions exist to support privatization of specialized services
- Development of new parks
  - High development costs and tax free bond use make potential low
- Development of new specialty features
  - Greatest potential for public private partnership
  - Department will continue to identify activities and amenities that enhance state park experience
- Development of communications infrastructure
  - Highly desired amenity
  - Department has recently issued Request for Information to investigate possible solutions and partnerships

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Department will proactively consider and identify additional facilities and services that could be offered through public-private partnerships consistent with its mission and in conjunction with the Master Planning process.
2. Explore potential partnerships with nonprofit organizations.
3. Continue to explore potential partnerships for improved electronic communications and connectivity.

#### Next Steps

1. Review draft report (electronic copy to follow)
2. Provide comments by Friday, October 7, 2016
  - Send to [bcr@virginia.gov](mailto:bcr@virginia.gov)
  - Subject: Legislative report comments
3. Follow up meeting will be scheduled for Board final approval

#### BOARD DISCUSSION

Chairman Wingo led a discussion of the report as presented. Board members expressed the following comments and concerns.

- Was the question asked if there was public support for increased funding for state parks? Ms. Poole noted that in the Virginia Outdoors Survey of 14,000 households over 78% of respondents support public funding for parks.
- Bond referendums in 1992 and 2002 passed in support of state parks. Most recently the Governor proposed a \$140 million bond referendum for state parks. The General Assembly approved \$40 million.
- Regarding existing public-private partnerships are there examples where the vendor had to walk away and the state had to assume responsibility? Is there a financial commitment on the part of the vendor? Mr. Cristman noted that the concert series at Pocahontas State Park is run by a private promoter with proceeds going to a non-profit organization. DCR is putting out a new Request for Proposals for that series. The promoter is responsible for booking the acts, security, and set up.
- The value of volunteer hours should be added to the report.
- The report should consider how to make public-private partnerships more business friendly.

#### **RECOGNITION OF FORMER BOARD MEMBERS**

##### **BOARD ACTION**

Ms. Jackson moved that the Board adopt the following resolutions. Mr. Reynold seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **WILLIAM E. SMALL**

At a regular meeting of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation held on Friday, September 23, 2016 at Natural Bridge Park Historic Hotel in Natural Bridge, Virginia, the following resolution was unanimously adopted.

WHEREAS, William E. Small was appointed by Governor Bob McDonnell to serve as a member of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation from 2012 through 2016;

WHEREAS, Mr. Small owns and operates Small Country Campground in Louisa County providing camping and amenities to Virginia families and out-of-state visitors;

WHEREAS, Mr. Small has been an active member of the Virginia Campground Association; and

WHEREAS, the insight Mr. Small provided regarding the relationship between Virginia State Parks and private campground owners was helpful; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation recognizes and applauds Mr. Small for his commitment to the recreational and natural resources of the Commonwealth; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Conservation and Recreation prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to William E. Small as an expression of the Board of Conservation and Recreation's deep appreciation for his years of service.

**ALEXANDER I. VANEGAS**

At a regular meeting of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation held on Friday, September 23, 2016 at Natural Bridge Park Historic Hotel in Natural Bridge, Virginia, the following resolution was unanimously adopted.

WHEREAS, Alexander I. Vanegas was appointed by Governor Bob McDonnell to serve as a member of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation from 2012 through 2016;

WHEREAS, Mr. Vanegas serves as Chairman of the Prince William County Planning Commission;

WHEREAS, Mr. Vanegas serves as a member of the Latino Advisory Board;

WHEREAS, Mr. Vanegas serves as Director of Public Works and Director of Operations for the Town of Purcellville; and

WHEREAS, the insight Mr. Vanegas provided into Virginia State Park master plans and Natural Area Preserves was of great value; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation recognizes and applauds Mr. Vanegas for his commitment to the recreational and natural resources of the Commonwealth; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Department of Conservation and Recreation prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Alexander I. Vanegas as an expression of the Board of Conservation and Recreation's deep appreciation for his years of service.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Wingo appointed Nancy Davidson to serve as the BCR representative on the Virginia Outdoors Plan Technical Advisory Committee.

Appoint Nancy Davidson to VOP TAC

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation will be held on Wednesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 at Westmoreland State Park in Montross, Virginia.

**ADJOURN**

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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W. Bruce Wingo  
Chair

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Clyde E. Cristman  
DCR Director