

Minutes:

Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee

Meeting: January 16, 2020

Greg Velzy: Chair– Presiding

Call to Order: 12:09 PM

Attending: Committee members: Leighton Powell, Tricia Pearsall, Greg Velzy, John Thompson, John Heerwald, Ralph Hambrick, Bryce Wilk-Superintendent James River Park, Mark Olinger-Director of Planning and Development Review City of Richmond, Shawna Shade-Friends of the James River Park

Minutes - Minutes of December 12, 2019 unanimously approved.

Current Issues:

- **Riverfront Development Plan:** Mark Olinger, Department of Planning and Development Review.
 - **Missing Link:** Mark Olinger has submitted capitol budget language for the approach and has recommended to the Mayor the more expansive version of the three solutions presented by Kirt Rieder from Hargreaves-Jones on Wednesday, December 11, 2019 at City Hall, but not the suspension bridge connector. That version was the one, which was to be built out into the water with minimum impact, before connecting to the Belle Isle transport bridge. This project would cost about 8 million as opposed to 11-12 million for the suspension bridge piece under the Lee Bridge. He stated that he has conceptual drawings only, so will apply for funds for construction documents for 2021. Having to allow for cost raises per year, he is optimistic that construction might begin in 2022.
 - **Riverfront Improvements:** Mark has asked for funding for a study of public infrastructure improvements to improve the pathway near Walker Creek (Floodwall path Southside), reserving easement for a pathway in areas under construction on Southside and across Hull in the region of the Silos to the Substation and perhaps the road running behind the Floodwall to Brander Street. He anticipates 22-space parking lot to be re-established in the Diversity Park area to be used for fishermen and floodwall path users. He's asking for \$100,000 for improvements
 - **Lehigh Area – Capital Trail:** Schematics and 99% of the survey work has been accomplished for the relocation of the trail and rails in this area. Mark's working with the Department of Rails and Public Transportation. (Bryce stated that his contact at Norfolk Southern is Timothy Bentley)
 - **Accessible Path – Brown's Island:** Mark has made application to the State for a grant to construct an accessible path to Brown's Island. It came in at #0 in priority. If the funds come through, construction will begin July 2020.

- **Report Planning and Development Review:**
 - **Libby Hill:** Mark reported that as far back as the City's 1951 Plan the viewshed from Libby Hill had been mentioned but not defined. It has been under conversation since the 1960's. So Olinger said to pick a point as a means of getting started. The Church Hill Association gave him that point in a proposal about a month ago. This was a start in defining a pathway to be preserved. He passed out three visuals, one from Libby Hill Overlook and another defining a proposed Viewshed Overlay District, which would extend downriver including both sides of the river southward. He has presented this to Rocketts landing for review and comment as Rocketts asked for a continuance for 30 days. About 8 property parcels are left out of the viewshed including the USP properties. This would affect building massing, sign illumination and tree landscaping. He is currently working on a 3-D topo map showing buildings and will conduct a study from the river as well. A Resolution of Intent is being prepared to protect all of this land in the Overlay District from the Libby Hill viewpoint. It would be an Overlay District with teeth.

- **Site Visit – January 31 at 3:00pm – Libby Hill Overlook:** The Committee had many questions concerning modeling plans and the extension of the cone. It was agreed that the Falls Committee should conduct a site visit and questions could be asked at that time. The site visit was scheduled for Friday, January 31, 2020 at 3:00pm at Libby Hill Overlook.
- **James River Park Update:** Bryce Wilk
 - Will introduce the James River Park Master Plan to City Council Land Use Committee on January 21 at 3:00PM, then get to City Council after that. He will need everyone's support at that City Council meeting.
 - CRLC is conducting a JRP easement survey, training volunteer teams
 - The JRP easement is hopefully on its way to increasing by 150 acres to include the islands – Vauxhall and Williams.
 - Park visitation for 2019 was at 2 million.
 - Operations staff has been added – full time Crew Chief
 - Adriana is helping part time in the Wetlands heading teams removing invasive species.
 - Erosion is an issue at the Wetlands and Belle Isle west end as well. Looking for ways to contain.

- **VA Scenic Rivers Program 50th Anniversary:**

Six river segments are up for designation in the 2020 General Assembly!!!!!! Please reach out supporting these designations and share.

Scenic Rivers

MAURY

[HB 282](#) - [Campbell, R.R.](#)

[SB 288](#) - [Deeds](#)

CLINCH

[HB 5](#) - [Morefield](#)

POUND

[HB1145](#) Pound River – Wampler (R)

MIDDLE JAMES

[HB1598](#) – [Fariss](#) (R)– 20 miles

GRAYS CREEK

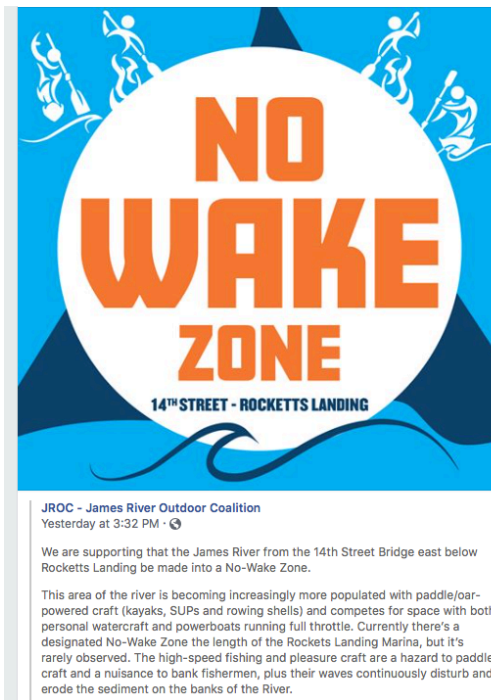
HB 1612 - [Brewer](#) (R) – 6 miles

STAUNTON RIVER

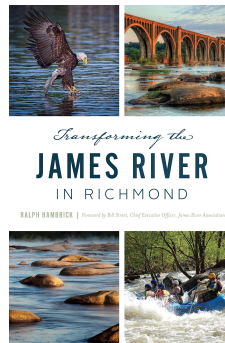
HB 1601 – [Edmunds](#) (R) – 11 miles

New Business:

- **Strategic Plan:** Greg Velzy reported that Friends of the James River Park held a retreat to consider a Strategic Plan for the organization to assist with implementation of the master Plan as well as the way forward for the organization
- **14th Street Parking Lot:** Several people met with the developers of the (PAY) parking lot above the 14th Street Take Out to discuss the connecting stairs and pathway. Greg reported that an 8' opening has been cut in the fence with wooden steps for carrying rafts, so raft companies can park on the upper level. There is still concern about people parking for free in the take-out lot. May have to institute a gate or screening. Will wait and see.
- **Huguenot Flatwater Accessible Ramp:** The Mary Morton Parsons grant has been matched and design approved . Construction should start this summer. Revamping of parking lot will also happen perhaps with running water and electricity. There will be no extra parking spots.
- **Conservation Easement Inspection Training:** Inspection training occurred Wednesday, January 15. Teams should be inspecting JRP parcels in the next few weeks.
- **No Wake Zone:** Proposing a no wake zone to extend from 14th Street east to Rocketts landing: Scoping Period for VDGIF for boating regulations extends until Feb 28, 2020. Please fill out and share:
https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/regulations/2019-2020-boating-regulations-scoping-period/?fbclid=IwAR1-HLbpswka05Ystay0sqjuNsj-ulzwFixLIVw7OPsIA9caNbV4_jSpaM



- **New Members:** Committee was tasked with submitting names of likely candidates for Falls Committee vacancies.
- **Business Cards:** It was suggested that each member carry business cards to promote the Falls Committee and the Scenic Rivers Program – In absentia, Anne Wright was appointed to look into this.
- **Anne Wright Retiring from VCU:** Congratulations!!!!
- **Transforming the James River in Richmond by Ralph Hambrick:** coming out in April 2020. Can pre-order on Amazon



Reports:

- James River Park System – see above
- JRA – No report
- JRAC - James River Days brochures should be out soon
- JROC – Park Bridge Cleanup Workday, January 18, 2020
- FoJRP – see above

Adjourn: 1:45PM

Next Public Meeting: Thursday, February 21, 2020

Meetings 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 velzyg@verizon.net. If you would like to be removed from the list, so indicate at the above e-mail address.

Tricia Pearsall - Secretary