

# Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee

## November 19, 2020 Zoom Meeting Minutes

### Committee Members:

- Greg Velzy, Chair
- Justin Doyle
- Ralph Hambrick
- John Heerwald
- James “Jim” Hill
- Leighton Powell
- Anne Wright

### Guests:

- Max Hepp-Buchanan, Venture Richmond
- Mary Kay Martin, Friends of the James River Park
- Shawna Shade, Friends of the James River Park
- Bryce Wilk, James River Park System

**October 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes:** Ralph Hambrick motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the October meeting. Leighton Powell seconded the motion and it carried.

**Brown’s Island Improvement Plan and Community Survey:** Max Hepp-Buchanan, Director of Riverfront and Downtown Placemaking, joined the meeting and gave a presentation on the Brown’s Island Improvement Plan and associated community survey. The plan was approved by the Urban Design Committee and Planning Commission at a conceptual level. Brown’s Island Improvement Plan implements recommendations included in the Richmond Riverfront Plan, which was adopted in 2012. Community engagement activities associated with the plan began in March 2019. The community survey launched in April 2020 and closed this fall. 75% of survey respondents live in the City of Richmond, many respondents work downtown. Top preferences for the arrival plaza area are permanent restrooms, better viewing of the river, and trellis swings that overlook the river. Top preferences for the canal area are terraces, creative seating and gathering spaces (possibly hammocks), and floating wetlands. Top preferences for the 7th Street island access are ADA accessibility, shade structures, and a water feature. Top preferences for the James River Terraces are connecting trail, terraces, and beautification. Top preferences for under the Manchester Bridge are better access to Pipeline Walk, public art, and permanent restrooms. Top preferences for the bayscapes area are pedestrian improvements, boardwalks and walkways, and improvements to the existing boat launch. The top preference in the Tredegar Street area is a complete streets approach to improving Tredegar Street. Funding exists for Tredegar Street improvements. Overall, permanent restrooms, canal and river access, and accessibility are top priorities. Shade, play features, and gathering spaces are also priorities. Respondents prefer a natural/rustic design aesthetic, natural materials, and native plantings. There is a lot of potential to increase visitation to Brown’s Island through the implementation of the plan. Committee members asked a

few questions and Greg Velzy applauded Venture Richmond for a successful planning process. Anne Wright asked Max questions about tree plantings on Brown's Island. Greg asked Max about financial impacts to the James River Park System as a result of improvements. Improvements will largely occur within the Venture Richmond's operations and maintenance area. Venture Richmond has a good relationship with the James River Park System. Ralph Hambrick asked a question about the lawn event space. Planned landscaping will accommodate events and result in a better recreation and premier outdoor event space. Ralph asked about funding implementation. Venture Richmond intends to launch a capital campaign to fund improvements. The City of Richmond may fund some improvements. Greg mentioned a beautification project planned for the north bank of the James River along Tredegar Street and invited Venture Richmond to participate. Max was unaware of the project and offered to help spread the word about it. Bryce Wilk mentioned fence rehabilitation is also planned.

**Richmond Riverfront Plan Updates from Mark Olinger:** Mark Olinger, Department of Planning and Development Review, was absent. Justin Doyle reported that Mark is requesting \$350,000 to support planning activities at East Riverfront.

**50th Anniversary of the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program:** Greg Velzy reported the special exhibit on display at Main Street Station will run through December. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Scenic River Program Celebration was held virtually on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Here is a video link to that program:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbZr6YT9VLv7Gf8TUdUyL2-yyKp\\_w09nb](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbZr6YT9VLv7Gf8TUdUyL2-yyKp_w09nb)

**2020 Virginia Vistas Photo Contest:** Leighton Powell reported that the Scenic Virginia judges are reviewing the photo entries, Winners will be revealed in the Richmond Times-Dispatch Culture section in December and will mention that the Rivers & Waterways Category was reserved for photos taken along designated Scenic Rivers.

**BridgePark Updates:** Jim Hill did not have any updates to share.

**Capital Region Land Conservancy Updates:** Parker Agelasto of the Capital Region Land Conservancy was absent.

**RVAH2O Updates:** Jenn Clarke of RVAH2O was absent. Greg shared updates on the combined sewer system.

**James River Park System Updates:** Bryce Wilk of the James River Park System reported flood recovery is underway. Areas impacted include Pony Pasture, Belle Isle, Ancarrow's Landing, and 42nd Street. Debris accumulation was not too bad. The Potterfield Memorial Bridge was closed during the flood event. Recovery efforts include clearing and regarding the parking area at Pony Pasture. The parking area should reopen this weekend.

Bryce reported that 1.84 million visits to the James River Park System were counted through October -- a significant increase from 2019!. The Friends of the Pump House

are working on roof repairs. The James River Association oversaw clearing of non-native and invasive plant species on Chapel Island. Work associated with the Invasive Plant Task Force continues across the James River Park System.

Bryce reported that the Parade of Lights will not be an in-person event in 2020.

**James River Outdoor Coalition Updates:** Greg reported that they helped out on the 22nd Street tower access. King of the James event did not take place. It is now a virtual event through mid-December 2020. December 12 event to clear vistas will occur at Tredegar Street. Removing brush from sidewalks. Partner organizations are welcome.

River Management Society (RMS) symposium will take place virtually in April 2021.

**Friends of James River Park Updates:** Mary Kay Martin reported that FoJRP just revealed its new logo. She is grateful for recent project to remove invasive species. She will continue to update us as the Master Plan rolls out. Bill Draper has published a new book of James River photos that is fantastic. She encouraged group to pre-order the book for holiday gifts. All proceeds will benefit the Park. 300+ have been ordered. Cost is \$41.00 for in-person pick-up or \$46.00 to have it shipped.

#### **Other Business:**

Ralph Hambrick reported that he is scheduled to present the Banner Lecture at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture on December 10 at noon. He encouraged all to tune in or watch later.

**Adjournment.** With no other business to discuss, Chair Greg Velzy adjourned the meeting at 1:06 pm.

#### **Next Public Meeting: December 17, 2020 at Main Street Station**

Meetings begin at 12:00 noon in the Conference Room on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of Richmond City Hall, on Zoom or alternative site announced. 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](mailto:velzyg@verizon.net). If you would like to be removed from the list, so indicate at the above e-mail address.