

Minutes:

**Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee
Stone House-Forest Hills Park
Richmond VA**

Meeting: July 15 , 2021

Greg Velzy: Chair – Presiding

Call to Order: 12:02 PM

Attending Committee Members: Anne Wright, Tricia Pearsall, John Heerwald, Greg Velzy, Bryce Wilk (Superintendent of the Southern District of Parks Recreation Facilities), Shawna Shade (Friends of the James River Park), Josh Stutz (Friends of the James River Park)

Minutes: Minutes of June 17, 2021. Motion to approve-John Heerwald, Second- Greg Velzy. Approved.

Current Issues:

- **Introduction of Josh Stutz** – first Executive Director Friends of the James River Park. Brief history of Scenic Rivers Program
- **Riverfront Development Plan (and other James River related) budget proposals and in-progress updates:** Kevin Vonck, Acting Director, Department of Planning and Community Review, City of Richmond not present.
 - Manchester development update:
 - Parking – Diversity Park – 20–21 public parking spaces seem to be allocated and although entrance is difficult, these seem to be used by general public.
 - Discussion (Bryce Wilk) of changes to the Fall Line path through Richmond have been raised. Changes are being made to avoid high traffic areas and reflect on parks.
 - Justin Doyle (who sits on UDC) said that staffing at Planning and Development is an issue. They are discussing Manchester: Hull Street around the Mayo Bridge and the Manchester Canal.
- **DPU updates:** No DPU representatives present. Greg said he wanted to ask Grace LeRose about moving the boulders at 14th Street Takeout just a bit back so that trailers with boats can pass or that two cars can pass.
- **CRLC Updates:** Parker Agelasto not present. Via e-mail, he wrote, “CRLC is participating in a citywide urban heat watch to collect data for another round of analysis. We are also joining Congressman McEachin at 4:00 pm at Great Shiplock Park to discuss the 30x30 campaign and the America the Beautiful initiative and Land and Water Conservation Fund projects such as Dock Street. It’s great that he wants to highlight these efforts and expand on them for future public park lands throughout the City.”
- **JRA-Dock Street Greenspace:** Justin Doyle reported that JRA had led 2 focus groups for the River Center Educational Project involving stakeholders in the area. He said JRA received great information from both groups. JRA is looking to get greater East End community engagement in August + a survey (online) should be available as well. JRA will probably present a schematic design and public announcement by the end of July 2021.
- **VA Scenic Rivers:** No report. I-95 Bridge signage update: Both Greg and Tricia have reached out to Rick Burgess, VDOT. We will next attempt a phone call.

- **James River Park: Bryce Wilk:**
 - JRP staff will be responsible for cutting grass at new Dock Street site.
 - Currently interviewing for new position: Superintendent James River Park. There are 5 candidates.
 - Decrease in Mayor's budget of \$70,000 for personnel. \$18.5million for parks & recreation overall - \$925,000 for James River Park. No capital improvement budget. Bryce looking for federal funding.
 - Discussion: Need to reup Economic Impact Survey from 2017 which stated: [2017 report's findings: Based on validated visitation counts and accepted Virginia-based visitor spending quotients, the James River Park System has potential to generate \$33,582,801 per year in tourism. Given the park system's FY17 budget of \$557,337, every James River Park System budget dollar is associated with \$60.26 in visitor spending. In-person interviews conducted with a sample of 32 park-related businesses found their aggregated annual revenue exceeded \$15,850,000. The local businesses estimated a 32.7 percent loss of revenue if the James River Park System did not exist. That represents a potential loss of \$5,182,950 in revenue from the 32 local businesses alone.] Mayor Stoney needs to articulate the importance of the James River Park and include in his budget. The Park and River are being used for promotions and attractions yet funding both staff and capital improvement are reduced or non-existent.
 - There are 3 operations full time staff now.
 - Programming (Tyler and Penelope) currently running camps in the JRFP with community centers including biking and in-water activities.
 - JRP is partnering with Richmond Public Schools to increase environmental education in the classroom using NOAA and BIWAC grants. There was discussion among committee member pointing to a program back in the 80's involving the Math and Science Center and JRP's Science in the Park: <https://jamesriverpark.org/about-the-james-river-park-system/science-in-the-park/>
 - Volunteerism needs to increase. Currently the Invasive Task Force needs a head and more volunteers. Matt also needs to look for other sources of volunteers other than Hands On Greater Richmond. There are many corporate groups coming to help in the Park
 - Huguenot Flatwater Accessibility Project is due to start in September.
 - Ancarrows will be dredged this year by Park staff some time between November 16, 2021 and Feb 15 2022 at a cost of \$15,000 to the JRP.
 - A sign in 14th Street to notify everyone of parking permissions is being done by Brad Camp through JROC.
 - Regarding easement on islands, etc: Title searches and surveys have delayed the easement progress. DCR is waiting to hear results along with CRLC.
 - Netherwood Quarry Proposal: There was much discussion regarding the JROC climbing committee proposal to open Netherwood Quarry to climbing. Anne Wright, Greg Velzy and Tricia Pearsall gave arguments against going ahead with the project at this time. Objections raised involved permanent anchors in the walls, enforcement of climbing, protection of habitat at the site to going ahead with any amenities or "improvements or extensions" in the park until a strategy for park management has been adopted to manage increase in numbers of visitors and maintaining JRP natural habitat which was the number one priority in the James River Park MasterPlan.
 - JRA and JRP working with City Councilwoman Stephanie Lynch to seek funding for the MasterPlan implementation through funding from the Virginia General Assembly. The Falls Committee agreed to be signatures of a letter supporting such action after Justin submits the letter to all Committee members and they give their approval. There were some issues with the letter's wording. Funding priorities include: Texas Beach tower and Pumphouse.
 - Bryce is seeking to have all JRP bridges inspected.

- **BridgePark Proposal Restructure: Jim Hill not present**

New Business:

Reports:

JRA: Watering trees on Chapel Island. Looks like some may make it!

JRAC: James River Cleanup scheduled for second weekend in September, 2021.

JROC: JROC is volunteering at Music at Maymont. Saturday July 17, 2021 – Cleaning up Ready Creek area – gravel, etc. Thursday July 22, 2021 – Cleanup facilities at 14th Street Takeout.

FOJRP: Meet the Director – see above

Open discussion: none

Adjourn: 1:25PM

Next Public Meeting: August 19, 2021 at City Hall if it is Open

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