

Minutes:

Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee

Meeting: - February 15, 2018, 5th Floor Conference Room – City Hall – Richmond, VA

Greg Velzy – Chair Presiding

Call to Order: 12:10 PM

Minutes - January 18, 2018 minutes – approved as amended.

Attending: Greg Velzy, Tricia Pearsall, Anne Wright, John Moeser, Ralph Hambrick, Grace LeRose – DPU - TMDL Coordinator at City of Richmond.

Current Issues:

- **JRP Master Plan Support Statement** – Members of the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee met with Nathan Burrell and Katherine Mitchell on February 2, 2018 at the JRP Headquarters. After a lengthy discussion concerning issues which arose at the December Falls Meeting, the Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee enthusiastically endorsed the preparation of a James River Park System Master Plan with the following letter of support:

In 1972, the Virginia General Assembly designated this stretch of the river as an historic river with ‘noteworthy scenic and ecological qualities’ under the Historic Falls of the James Act, and it was incorporated into the State Scenic River Program in 1984, an extraordinary accomplishment for an urban setting. The James River Park System has been an essential reason the James River in Richmond still meets the standards required for such designation. The Master Plan will provide concrete guidance for the continued protection of this wilderness park as an accessible environment in the face of a dramatic increase in popularity.

The Advisory Committee is comprised of state appointed members who have extensive experience with the James River and its' surroundings and is charged with advising on all matters related to such. The Committee is fully committed to assisting with this master planning process.

*Sincerely,
Gregory J. Velzy*

Also as a result of our meeting, changes were made to the script of the James River Park promotional video: <https://youtu.be/ycyYbWu0T8g> Any other recommendations or notations should be made to Katherine Mitchell [804-560-8261](tel:804-560-8261) [804-920-5912](tel:804-920-5912) kmitchell@ideastations.org

- **Follow-up to January 18, 2018 Joint Scenic River Advisory Committees Meeting with Catoctin and Goose Creek:** Lynn Crump sent a letter following the joint meeting asking that the Falls Committee respond by February 23, 2018 to the items below: See response in red.

Specific recommendations discussed are:

- Notify the committees whenever there is a field evaluation for a Scenic River designation, in case any are available to participate. **There will be field evaluations on the Upper James and Catoctin Creek in March and April. Tricia Pearsall (Upper James) and Greg Velzy indicated interest in assisting with these evaluations.**
- Create a regular meeting with representatives of all three committees, perhaps every quarter.
 - § Include Scenic Virginia in these meetings
 - § Purpose of these meetings is to create a unified voice for the Scenic Rivers program

The Falls Committee stated that quarterly meetings are too much involvement, since the Falls Committee meets monthly (and more often members attend planning and other James River affiliated meetings) and suggested that an annual meeting might be sufficient

- Ask the Board of Conservation and Recreation (BCR) to have Scenic River Advisory Committee representatives meet with BCR to discuss the development of the BCR scenic sub-committee and how to move forward with Scenic River desired activities. **The Falls Committee supports this.**
- Develop plans for a robust 50th Anniversary celebration of the VA Scenic River Program and the beginning of the Historic Falls of the James Committee in 2020. Lynn Crump asked that 3 members of each Scenic River committee be recommended to sit on a state committee to help with prepare and advance 50th Anniversary plans. **The Falls Committee recommended John Heerwald, Ralph Hambrick and Justin Doyle to sit on that state committee with Greg Velzy, the alternate. ~~being an alternate should Ralph be out of the state.~~** Also Tricia asked Virginia Living magazine to do a 50th Anniversary piece. They said they would do so.
- Develop a common educational program that members of the committees can use as a basis for discussions and presentations with other groups or interested citizens. **The Falls Committee absolutely supports this and suggested that James Vonesh (VCU) could help with this presentation.**
- Work on getting VDOT signage code changed so that the Scenic River signs, which are TODS (Tourist Orientation Destination Signs), become identifying signs, like the ones for small communities throughout the state. **Excellent idea !!**

At this time, additional input is needed from each committee on how to move forward with which initiatives.

The Committee asked that their be a discussion as to how much the State would be involved (lead) or could make change (such as with VDOT) vs. volunteer effort? Tricia said she would ask Lynn.

- **Riverfront Development Plan:**

- **Downriver Updates – Main Street work and Dock St. closure:** No news. Greg said that Justin was meeting with Mark Olinger this afternoon and might give us an update. Much construction going on with War Memorial and Tredegar (Civil War Museum). Belle Isle Lot always full. Nothing being done to prevent workers or commuters parking there as opposed to JRP users.
- **Missing Link Phase** – Nathan has asked that the scope of this project continue from the T-Pott Bridge to the 22nd Street tower. Members who were present all agreed that the section along the river be left alone. Focus on making a trail on the south side of the railroad tracks.
- Other discussion reflected that the park needs bike free zone.

- **Enrichmond – Vauxhall Island** - Cede to City of Richmond Update – Nothing. Same old. Same old.

- Venture Richmond Canal Committee plans – Update – nothing from Alex. Also it was reported that steps were being taken by New Market to develop on top of the JR & K Canal path – on their property.

New Business:

- **Falls of the James on Social Media:** After some discussion about Facebook and Instagram, it was decided to consult with Lynn Crump first to see if the State has a FB presence and if there were any restrictions before launching. Anne Wright said she could help with this. Tricia added that Falls meeting notices are now on the James River Park global calendar.

Reports:

James River Park System – Nathan Burrell – not present.

JRA - Justin Doyle not present.

JRAC - Stewards of the River nominations are due.

JROC - Cleanup around old Westham Bridge site at Huguenot Flatwater – February 23, 2018

March 14, 2018 – Vasen Brewery – Wild & Scenic Film Festival with VCU (also 50th Anniversary of Wild & Scenic Rivers Program)

FoJRP - See above

CRCLC – The Whittens along Riverside Drive have put their land under Conservation Easement.

Open Discussion:

There was discussion about anything that can be done concerning clearing of habitat and trees on private property along the river. Specifically clearing and planting of grass along Riverside Drive (where sand now runs onto the highway after a rain) and the Rice property (Neutra House) which has seen totally clearing from the house down to the river.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:52 pm

******Next Public Meeting: - March 15, 2018******

Meetings are scheduled for the THIRD Thursday of each month. All meetings begin at noon and 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.