

**Minutes:**

**Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee  
On-Site Meeting – 3 Manchester Road  
Richmond VA**

**Meeting:** August 20, 2020

**Greg Velzy:** Chair – Presiding

**Call to Order:** 12:04 PM

**Attending:** Committee members: Jim Hill, Tricia Pearsall, Greg Velzy, Ralph Hambrick, John Heerwald, Alex Dahm, Mark Olinger, Director of Planning and Development Review City of Richmond

**Minutes** - Minutes of July 16 , 2020 approved

**Current Issues:**

• **Riverfront – Planning and Development Issues:**

- **Manchester Canal/Walker Creek Public Improvements:** Mark Olinger, Department of Planning and Development Review.
  - Mark shared a map of all the projects under way and consideration in the Manchester area. See below. The meeting was held at 3 Manchester Road the site of the new Hydro residential development across from the Southern State silos. Most new Manchester development is housing and mixed use. It's a huge amount of building and change. Mark stated that a streetscape project was underway to slow traffic coming from the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. There will also be a redo of 1<sup>st</sup> Street ( to make it an actual thoroughfare) and construction of a new bridge over the Manchester Canal as an extension of Decatur Street. It will span the creek east of the witch building. This development will see an increase of 400-500 units. Needless to say, there is concern with traffic getting out to Hull Street. Traffic in general is still a big issue for this development and for this number of units.
  - In the plan there is a proposal for pedestrian walkways and there is discussion about having them on both sides of the Canal and Walker's Creek and linking to the existing Floodwall Walk. Also, Manchester Road will be paved just to a point where the eastern end of the silos are now.
  - There are parking concerns for fishermen and other users of the Floodwall Walk. The public parking lot on the west side of Hull Street at 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge will be restored but that is certain to be filled with overflow parking from the high-density development on both sides of the street at this point.
  - The Southern States silos will be dismantled for the new development – residential + commercial - on that site. For that project there is an architect who might have a better design than the ones currently under construction.
  - Plans are under way to replace the Hull Street Bridge over the Canal. They're also looking to improve the Mayo or 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge (but that's been in discussion for some time). Plans are also in the works to open up paths and move traffic and people toward Maury Street. A new roundabout is planned for the I-95 interchange which may make traffic on Maury flow more smoothly.
  - Greg Velzy mentioned that they might remove on-street parking on Hull to make traffic flow better, but Mark said this was a caveat promised to developers, and that there are several parking decks going up with these new projects. He stated that there was more to come involving the current design process of the Hydro site and regarding the Dominion substation and he would keep us informed.
  - In the short term, the Manchester Bridge can take more truck traffic and there's a move underway to add a new interchange to I-95 at Bellemeade to take truck traffic. This would be approximately at the Luck Quarries site.
  - To sum it up, Olinger also added that it would be nice to see how the newly finished projects and ones in progress interact. Jim Hill also informed us that following a study done on traffic flow on the

bridge, that 2 lanes of traffic (one lane in opposite directions) flow much more smoothly than having one directional lanes. It was important to keep this on Hull Street. The Committee advocated for having pathways on both sides of Walker Creek. Olinger said that they're beginning to see a little softening in the housing market, but still very strong. The Decatur Street Bridge is still about 2 years out.

- **Libby Hill Viewshed Update:** The next time we meet, Mark Olinger said he would try to bring a 3-D model of the proposed viewshed to the September meeting. He needs to meet with EDA, Rockettes, the Woodward House owners (encourage them to keep their trees blocking the view of the Gasworks), DPU and DPW. So far everyone they have met with is on board. The only problem he sees is a new construction going up on the SE corner of Nicholson and Rt 5. He is very optimistic. Any zoning changes must be made by application.
- **Richmond 300 Survey update:** September 8<sup>th</sup> is final review. A document + comments will be released by that time. He added that some of these last comments were very good and they are working to include those ideas.
- **Brown's Island Improvement Plan – Venture Richmond:** Max Hepp-Buchanan. Via email, Max said that they were still struggling to reach and elicit survey comments from diverse citizens. He can make his presentation the next time we meet by computer.
- **BridgePark Proposal Restructure:** Jim Hill said that they were developing themes to take to their stakeholders such that they could reintroduce a plan which was more equitable, centered on equity for all, looking at reduced and more pragmatic engineering and financial feasibility. They want to focus on seeing the proposed park through Richmonders' lenses, not so much focused on the river, but more so on connecting and a bridge for exchange between pedestrians and bikes. They will then seek adoption into the Riverfront Plan. They have also suggested that 2 southbound lanes on the bridge may act as a buffer before the park part of the bridge to slow traffic. Also encouraging tree canopy along Commerce Road as connections to the Blackwell and Bellemeade communities.
- **CRLC – Riverfront Updates:** Parker Agelasto not present.
- **James River Park Update:** Bryce Wilk not present, but Greg announced that meetings had been held with City Park staff to think about priorities in the JRP Master Plan.
- **VA Scenic Rivers Program 50th Anniversary:**
  - Zoom meeting held August 4<sup>th</sup> revealed that coasters celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary are currently being distributed to breweries throughout the state. Exhibition Panels featuring various State Scenic Rivers are currently in production. The Exhibition date is scheduled for the month of November at Main Street Station The committee was very concerned about the exhibition not being seen by many, especially since major events have been cancelled. They wanted the exhibition be moved to May and June to coincide with the RMS conference. It was recommended that video be taken of it to show as a virtual event to get more visibility.
  - At the meeting there was consensus from all present that having a presentation event to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> was probably not going to happen in 2020, such that perhaps producing a quality video of the exhibition plus information on the new rivers and proposed ones might be the way to go. Distribution could be maximized plus the video could be used in following years.
  - The South River in Waynesboro was successfully evaluated for Scenic River status.

### New Business:

- Greg mentioned that the owners of the parking lot at the upper portion of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street takeout had offered free parking after 5 and on weekends.
- Mayo Island – no progress or information

### Reports:

**James River Park System:** No report

**JRA:** Justin not present. No report.

**JRAC:** September 12, 2020 has been scheduled as James River Cleanup. It will be a do-it-yourself event with bags deposited at certain sites.

**JROC:** River Safety Committee. Planning to devise river maps marking hazards and informing about highwater risks. JROC has started a discussion with various groups and users concerning greater use of more diverse peoples and representation from those users.

**FoJRP:** Management strategy of MasterPlan underway.

**Open discussion:** The Committee was encouraged to go to Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School to view the bayscape garden put in by Bob Argabright and his team of volunteers.

**Adjourn:** 1:30PM

**Next Public Meeting: August, September 17, 2020 at an outdoor space to be determined**

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

Tricia Pearsall – Secretary

Manchester Maps:



