

Agenda for
Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee
5th Floor Conference Room, Richmond City Hall• Richmond, VA 23219
May 21, 2026

Call to Order:

Attendance: G Velzy, T Pearsall, J Heerwald, S Shade, C Spohn, A Alli, B Kells, J Doyle,
Guests:

Minutes: April 16, 2026. T Pearsall move to approve, G Velzy second.

Current Issues:

.CRLC Richmond Updates: Parker Agelasto, *Executive Director, Capital Regional Land Conservancy*

- *Not present, will send an update next month, specifically about Vauxhall Island (trash and easement/ownership). City owned property, trash is really bad these days. Will require broader coordination for cleanup. ~8-10 people living there, depending on the season. The living areas are clean, but the garbage under the bridge has been rough. Aimee (JRP ranger) has been giving trash bags to the residents to leave at the pipeline for pickup. Tredegar had trash issues in the past, Cooper was contracted to clean that up years ago. Need a quote and some \$\$ to pay for a contracted cleanup.*

.VA Scenic Rivers Update: Joshua Bateman, *Environmental Program Planner, DCR*

- *Not present.*
- *Will Isenberg has an action item to follow up with Josh to see if we can have a better line of connection with this team.*

.James River Park Update: Andrew Alli, *JRP and Richmond Trails Superintendent*

- *Dock St plan notice*
 - *UDC meeting went well for phase 2. Prioritizes the ramp for getting down to the dock itself. Working on engineering and design on this.*
 - *Only parking is at shiplock. The distance from the parking lot to the dock is pretty long. Parking is at a premium.*
 - *Justin and Andrew to meet to talk about trail connection, maybe there is some reworked landscaping around the buzzard center.*
 - *CSO work to be done end of summer 26.*
 - *Falls Group didn't give input on phase 2 of the plan. There have been public meetings around this, but notice of these meetings didn't make it to this committee.*
 - *The river access is not necessarily intended for paddling access. It is intended for pedestrian access.*
 - *Questions about the future of the DPW site next to dock st - maybe potential for boat access there.*
 - *Is there potential for paddlecraft access at the canal bridge by the intermediate terminal? Developer that owns the volleyball court and UR boat dock is changing everything around there. Worth having a convo with these folks about it.*
- *Mayo Island*
 - *In procurement, contractor has been selected for the demo (phase 1). Deadline is October for park to be open to the public. Hoping sooner rather than later!*
- *Texas beach*
 - *On schedule to be complete end of summer 26*
- *Crooked branch ravine park*
 - *107 ft bridge will be delivered via crane on 5/28, dropped into place*
- *Salamander pool on riverside between Meadow and Pony Pasture*
 - *New landowner is excited to continue to maintain it.*

- Its on the JRP maintenance schedule.
- NEA (nature exploration area) is open!
 - More trees will be planted in the fall/cooler times. Belle Isle gateway project is next (reworking the entrance to the pedestrian bridge). Will be a drastic improvement for access. Gate will be moved into the lot, benches & landscaping added. Projected due end of summer 2026.
- Busy season starts this weekend!
 - River safety messaging has been a highlight
- Where can volunteers be useful?
 - Pony pasture & Ancarrow's trash cleanup are hotspots.
 - Folks use the cleanup stations at Belle, which is great.
- Huguenot Flatwater
 - Bed cleared of weeds, did some initial planting, more plants to come.
- Graffiti
 - Specifically on safety signs. Mayoral interview? VCU Brand Center?
- Ancarrow's
 - Dredging to happen soon. Contracting it out. Scope for current project is just at Ancarrow's for now.
 - Will address dredging in the channel near Dock St. parking during the phase 2 of Dock St. park project.
 - There is a grant available that may be able to support the Dock St. dredging. Ancarrow's dredging money is already allocated.

.DPU/RVA H20: Brad Kells, Director & Assistant Director, Department of Public Utilities

- TPott debris pile removal update
 - The contractor (John George) is really busy. He is working on the crooked branch creek park bridge, and will work on TPott afterwards.
 - This removal is phase 1. The grant is paying only for phase 1. This is a pilot of the process. Not many companies are willing to do the work. Many variables.
- Stones @ 14th St. takeout
 - Rocks were moved by the most recent contractor and they are too close to the road so it's hard to move up and down the driveway on the driveway.
- Cars under I95 budge and along the floodwall
 - Tricia sent pictures to Scott Morris at DPU. Haven't heard back. A gate was put in, but removed within a day.
- **Brad to reserve room @ DPU for October 15th meeting!**

.JRA Update: Justin Doyle, Director of Community Conservation, James River Association

- CSO Funding
 - 20+ organizations signed on to the advocacy for \$100 million. What was the account allocated from the general assembly? State budget won't be finalized till June. \$50million is the current projected amount. City is content with that. The city will decide what the 2027 ask will be once the 2026 budget is finalized.
- James River Watch
 - Underway for the season. All sites passed last week (did a soft launch during RiverRock).
- Riverside trail at Buzzard Center
 - Looking to coordinate with JRP to get the trail hardened.
- Buzzard Center -
 - Shifting from field trips to summer camp mode. Adding more landscaping.
- 50th anniversary Fundraiser event June 13, (VA Museum of History & culture)

- Mayo Bridge-
 - City is still not set on how many vehicle vs. bike lanes on the new bridge. Justin has been meeting with city officials to advocate for good pedestrian access.
 - Advocacy letter to be drafted by Tricia, with information from Justin.
 - The project is led by VDOT (because it's a state route), but the Mayor ultimately decides because it is a city owned project.
 - Currently some budgetary stalls on the bridge.
 - JRP concerns for the bridge -
 - Fishing access (bumpouts)
 - Interpretation for the Trail of the Enslaved.
 - Similar feel to Dock St., - trails, grass, interpretation (historical and ecological)

● **Brown's Island Renovation Update:** Alex Dahm, Operations Manager, Venture Richmond

- Not present.

● **American Rivers:** Katie Schmidt, Director, National Dam Removal Program, American Rivers

- Not present.

● **Scenic Virginia Updates:** Lynn Crump, Viewshed Project Manager

- Scenic Virginia's **Value the View** was very well received. The 4 speakers addressed the importance of recording Treasured Views and showed how having them mapped can help with utility and building development placement and mitigation. Due to this value to attendees, we will be holding a similar event, hopefully in April 2027. About 60 attendees included government officials, land trusts, and other nonprofits and private landowners.
- Photo contest ends 5/31
- Treasured Views submissions until Mid-June.

Reports:

● **Friends of James River Park:** Shawna Shade, Office Administrator, Friends of the James River Park

- Received a grant to clear out ash trees at the Wetlands - doing some reforestation projects and clearing out dangerous snags. Area is on the trails between the beach and the middle trail, behind the duck blind.
- Debris removal at the Manchester end of the TPott (phased remediation of the hillside behind the Manchester climbing wall). Hoping to reforest - first have to reseed for slope stabilization (Fall 2026), then can work on reforestation for longterm.
- Please share the river safety video on social media!
- Had a busy weekend at RiverRock. Penelope Gorman & Justin Doyle sat on a panel about preserving Richmond's Riverfront. DWR representative talked a lot about invasive catfish.

● **James River Outdoor Coalition (JROC):** Greg Velzy, Co- President

- First Music at Maymont was 5/20. Looking for more volunteers for future events.
- Trying to collect data on river rescues so more targeted messaging can be done.
- Fleximat is on order, John George will be placing it in the coming months. Flipped upside down, it will be less damaging for kayaks and pedestrian use. Found some extra funding to support it.

New Business:

- Richmond Sailfest, June 12-14, Dock St., fireworks 9pm 6/13
- Add Nissa Richardson to our meeting invites
- Add Tricia Pearsall to the meeting minutes from April & double check location, send out revised?
- Potential to cancel 7/16 meeting
- October 15 meeting @ DPU? Brad to report back.

Open Discussion:

- **Trisha to start a draft of a letter in support for Mayo Bridge pedestrian/bike safety. Send to Christina, Will & Greg 7-10 days before due for editing and signing.**

Adjourn:

Next Public Meeting: June 18, 2026

Meetings usually 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 wisenberg88@gmail.com and spohncl@vcu.edu. If you would like to be removed from the list, so indicate at the above e-mail address.