

Friends of the James River Park  
Board Meeting  
Tuesday, Dec. 6, 6 p.m.  
Visitors Center – Park Headquarters

Attendance: Betsy, Phil, Elaine, Matt, Mary Helen, Anne, Laura, Ralph, Warren, Vicky, Maureen, Larry

Guests: Mary Lois, Larry (General Manager operations)

I. Welcome & Introductions

A. Introduction and questions for Dr. Merrifield – Betsy Slade, Co-President

Dr. Merrifield had a conflicting obligation (a function with the Mayor's Office) and was unable to attend tonight's FoJRP meeting. He will reschedule with our group. In his place, Mary Lois and Larry (who has worked with 23 previous Directors) represented the City of Richmond Department of Parks and Recreation.

They began with a brief overview of Dr. Merrifield's tenure, which began on June 1, 2011. He attends to the City's needs both in Recreation and in Parks. He has considerable experience and expertise, having held previous positions in Cincinnati, OH and El Paso, TX Recreation, as well as in Bloomington IN. He sits on several National committees. Dr. Merrifield's charge is to make sure there is balance in the system. One strong focus is service delivery to children.

Larry and Mary Lois then took questions from the Board. Please see attached summary of that discussion.

B. FoJRP Top 10 Accomplishments – Warren Foster, Board Member

II. Minutes of previous meeting - November 2011 minutes were lost from V. Shivy's laptop due to a computer virus (malware) and replacement minutes will be reconstructed from Board Members' notes.

III. Treasurer's Report – Myrna Hartley, Treasurer

A proposed budget compiled by Myrna and Mary Helen, and a related vote will be needed from FoJRP members (please watch your e-mail). With regard to recent disbursements, \$10K for the pumphouse toilet but this is on hold. Questions were raised about the pins – for event and volunteer support – such that Board Members can be identified (using the FoJRP salamander). This expenditure will come under General Event supplies. Also discussed were funds associated with the Underhill donation (\$990), and a desire to construct a bench (\$200) and a trash container (\$250).

New budget goal is to have set expenditure items / categories to allow us to get us through the fiscal year with a minimum number of votes required of Board Members (for specific,

individual, items). If spending approaches the predetermined ceiling in any category, then we'll have to revisit.

#### IV. Committee Reports -- approximately 5 minutes each

A. Communication/Publicity – Maureen Egan, Chair , made updates to the FoJRP website, and minutes dating back to 2010 now are available. We will try and keep these as current as possible. Also posted is the 501c 3 letter, and a COI statement. The IRS Form 990 for taxes may be posted with some personal addresses obscured for privacy.

B. Events - Mary Helen Sullivan, Chair –Members decided to support the Winter Solstice event on Belle Island, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December. Plans for hot cider, a wood bonfire, and other festivities were made. Event will begin around 4:30 or so on the Tredegar side of the Island. Monetary gifts and verbal recognition will be extended to park staff. The Annual Picnic will be May 19<sup>th</sup>. This year it will be on a Saturday and the pumphouse is available – 6-8 or so. Gifts also are given at this event. Dollar amounts and a plan for twice-yearly recognition of Park Staff was discussed. On January 20<sup>th</sup> Members will be needed to staff an information table at Crossroads Art Center 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays. Also discussed was a possibility that FoJRP could be a designated charity for a month... we would need to staff it from 6 to 9 pm near Staples Mill.

C. Finance/Fundraising – Warren Foster, Chair – Warren made an argument for fundraising to commence following the first of the year.

D. Park Improvements/Projects – Larry Socha, Chair – not discussed, as Larry was not able to attend tonight's meeting.

E. Membership/Volunteers – Michael White, Chair – Membership sent 229 renewal letters with return envelopes. They were received in the mail last Thursday who those got received the notice said they liked it. Membership renewal volume will be light month-to-month. It bubbles June / July and around the holidays.

#### V. Old Business

A. Sports Backers and Richmond MORE - Mary Helen Sullivan, Board Member – Went to a luncheon associated with Dominion Riverrock where plans for how to enhance the event were discussed. John Lugbill wanted sign on for trail markers. Chris Hull talked with Nathan and RAMORE has taken lead on trailmarkers. There seems to be some tension with first responders, park user novices, etc. A meeting will be called to address these issues. Richmond MORE part is covered with budget.

B. Saturdays in the Park and Blue Bell planting – Elaine Marolla, Co-President – These events were a wonderful success, the clearing looks great and on this coming Saturday from 9:30 to 1 PM is the planting. Chesapeake Bay foundation is involved.

C. Chapel Island & additions to website - Maureen Egan, Past President— There is a push to create a Park where Great Shiplock Park currently exists, and the friends voted \$5K towards this. The monies will be quickly spent as bridges must be accessible, etc... and all plans must go through Urban Design and Planning commission. Grant must be used by 12/2012... everyone wants it to happen, but there are many details to track (e.g., low tide water levels, etc...) They will ask for money in the Spring, so it is this fiscal year.

#### VI. New Business

- A. HandsOn Greater Richmond – Elaine Marolla, Co President – Michael suggested we look into it, Ben had been a part of them before. B&E will be part of AmeriCorps. We don't want more volunteers than we can handle.
- B. Winter Solstice Celebration –Mary Helen Sullivan, Board Member – discussed as above.
- C. Vote on park expenses - Mary Helen Sullivan, Board Member – will occur by e-mail
- D. Grant-Science to the Park - Anne Wright, Board Member – Dr. Wright obtained \$61K in funding. Two things to work on are anadromous fish and rock pools. Not much on website stuff yet. Interactive kiosks will get underway . Michael Sparks Associates on Hull St.

VII. Report – Ralph White, Park Manager/Naturalist – Parade viewing will be at Libbie Hill, best viewing is at Dock Street, it is not a JRP activity – should be run by events coordinator for the City, Alan Rothert, with help from JROC. This Saturday from 4:30 – boats go on at 6 until 6:15. There will be 300 people; 1200 at Dock St. The Bluebell planting will occur this weekend – 1800 bluebell bulbs; and 500 dutchman's breeches. Ralph requested \$550 for painting of windows at Pumphouse. Ralph supported Warren's idea for park improvement (Larry's purview), at the Huguenot flatwater and entrance to pony pasture. Ralph has given his year's notice and plans to retire on Jan 13, 2012. He recommends that an announcement of this upcoming vacancy be placed in the Spring issue of the National Recreation and Parks magazine – letting possible candidates know of an upcoming opening for the Best Urban Park in America. Ralph noted that the job includes long hours with only moderate pay, but has great opportunities... He'd like to get the commitment from the City to put out official bid on Jan 2, and alert the Sierra Club, etc... City should be encouraged to increase the salary to the \$60-\$75K range. Two caveats – need a vehicle included, and the freedom to make decisions at the field level.

VIII. Announcements/ Next Meeting/Adjourn – Betsy Slade, Co-President