

Friends of the James River Park Board Meeting

Tuesday, September 1, 2020 at 6:30 pm

Meeting Minutes

Board Members in Attendance: Katherine Mitchell (President), Mary Kay Martin (Vice President), Dean Brunson (Treasurer), Justin Doyle (Secretary), Byron Chafin, Mike Doerr, Mary Kay Martin, Jake Savage, Scott Silvester, Brooks Whitten, Greg Velzy

Staff Members in Attendance: Matt Mason, Shawna Shade, Bryce Wilk

Guests: Madge Bemiss, Invasive Plant Task Force and board candidate, and David Broocke

Introductions

Katherine Mitchell called the meeting to order at 6:39 pm. Katherine asked Greg to introduce guests, Madge Bemiss and David Broocke, both of whom are board candidates. Madge Bemiss is from the Invasive Plant Task Force and provided an overview of the work of the task force in the James River Park System. David has been a park user for many years.

Meeting Minutes

Jake Savage motioned to approve the meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Byron Chafin. The motion passed unanimously.

Volunteer Report – Matt Mason

Matt Mason introduced himself. He has been with the park for 11 years, five years in his current position. The COVID-19 made volunteer coordination challenging. He began organizing popup cleanups in the park system every Wednesday and Saturday. The second Saturday in September is the annual James River Regional Cleanup organized by the James River Advisory Council (JRAC). This year, a “virtual” cleanup is being organized. Matt will be at Pony Pasture during the cleanup but will not be serving food or beverages to volunteers. New hangout spots have popped up in the park system as a result of high visitation. Matt is looking forward to leading volunteer landscaping events. Invasive Plant Task Force volunteer opportunities at Pump House Park on Fridays and The Wetlands on Saturdays. Beautify Ancarrow’s Landing has been rescheduled to September 26. A similar project is being planned at the 21st Street Tower in partnership with the James River Outdoor Coalition (JROC).

Park Report – Bryce Wilk

The Universal Access at Huguenot Flatwater project is going out to bid soon. All permits are secure. The project is being funded by the City of Richmond and JROC. Programs have been virtual during the summer months. Videos have been created. In-person programming is planned during the month of September. Programs include Avian Observations led by Tyler, James River Readers led by Penelope, and a night hike led by Bryce. A rare Ibis was recently spotted in the park system. New park system maps have been installed at trailheads. Katherine asked Bryce for a digital version of the map to add to the Friends of the James River Park website. Grading at Pony Pasture and Huguenot Flatwater. Trails crew created a new trail at Chimborazo Park. Teen Workforce assisted at Chimborazo Park and maintenance on the Potterfield Memorial Bridge. Applications for Americorps volunteers have been submitted.

Friends of the Pump House meet next week. Bryce is in touch with an architect who he was connect to him by Stephanie Lynch. JROC has a virtual meeting tomorrow. Recent focus has been river safety and diversity within outdoor groups. Bryce intends to organize an end of summer safety debrief with relevant departments. Bryce submitted an urban ranger program proposal to Chris Frelke, Director of Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities.

Greg Velzy provided an update on the 50th Anniversary of the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program. He circulated coasters and stickers. Greg reported the Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee is working with the City of Richmond to remove a non-native tree blocking the “View that Named Richmond.” Greg suggested the idea of the James River Outdoor Coalition coordinating with Invasive Plant Task Force on projects.

Treasurer’s Report – Dean Brunson

Dean Brunson presented the Treasurer’s Report (see report). Katherine encouraged everyone to purchase a Friends of the James River Park license plate. Revenue supports the organization.

Finance Committee: Jake Savage asked “How do we keep our financial records clean” going forward? This is an issue the Finance Committee is considering.

Artist in Residence: Brooks Whitten provided an update. She recently met with Penelope and Natalie. Two programs per month, one in the evening and one in the morning, are planned. A start date has not been established yet. They are thinking through program accessibility.

Membership Committee: Katherine Mitchell reported a good committee meeting. The annual membership will be held in the spring instead of the fall because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The committee is thinking through a speaker series to keep people engaged. Katherine is seeking board members to help. Katherine is working on membership recruitment and a plan.

Leadership Development Committee: Greg Velzy updated the board on the proposal to add the position of Past President to the Board of Directors. The new position will require an amendment to the organization’s bylaws. Greg motioned to create the position of Past President with a one-year term and voting privileges through amending the organization’s bylaws. Mary Kay Martin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Madge and Dave, board candidates are present and their ca

Communications Committee Report: Greg Velzy provided the report in Scott Dickens absence. September’s ParkStar is going to be Katherine Mitchell. The Artist in Residence is planned to be the ParkStar in October. Communications is focused on leaving no trace in the park system. Social media account followers are increasing. Most people visiting the website are from the Richmond area. The most-visited webpage is the homepage.

Advocacy Committee: Mary Kay Martin reported the Friends of the James River Park is participating in Mayorathon. The Environmental Content Team is creating questions for mayoral and city council candidates.

Master Plan Implementation Action Team: Mary Kay Martin reported Katherine, Bryce, and her met with Chris Frelke and Deborah Morton of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities to discuss funding implementation of the James River Park System Master Plan.

Branding Action Team Report: Shawna Shade provided an update on the work of the Logo Development Committee. The Spotted salamander is the finalist for the logo. The purple color of the logo stands out among similar organizations. Several tagline options were considered. Shawna shared images of the logos to board members. Discussion about the logo options ensued. Board members will review logos before making a final decision.

Executive Committee Report: Katherine Mitchell reported the Executive Committee is considering amendments to the bylaws. The committee would like to connect with other organizations. Katherine thanked board members, this her last meeting as President, and highlighted hiring Shawna as the organization's first paid staff member. She thanked Dean for coming on-board as Treasurer and assisting Shawna during the transition. She acknowledged the contributions of individual board members. Katherine presented a gavel to Mary Kay Martin, the organization's incoming President.

New Business

Greg Velzy's Third Term: Greg Velzy has reached the end of his second three-year term. Katherine Mitchell motioned to extend Greg Velzy's term for three years. The motion was seconded by Jake Savage and it passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 6:30 pm