

Friends of the James River Park Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 8, 2021 at 6:30 pm
Virtual Meeting

Board Members in Attendance:

Mary Kay Martin, President
Jake Savage, Vice President
Justin Doyle, Secretary
Cat Anthony
Madge Bemiss
Dave Broocke
Byron Chafin
Scott Dickens
Bill Draper
Giles Garrison, Superintendent (ex-officio)
Kendra Norrell
Matt Rigby
Scott Silvester
Kevin Tobin
Greg Velzy
Brooks Whitten

Staff Members in Attendance:

Josh Stutz, Executive Director
Shawna Shade, Office Administrator

Meeting Called to Order – Mary Kay Martin

The meeting was called to order by Mary Kay Martin, President, at 6:33 pm.

Executive Director Report – Josh Stutz

Scott Dickens motioned to approve the December meeting minutes. Jake Savage seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Josh Stutz, Executive Director, talked about the outdoor classroom project. A volunteer event is being planned to prepare the site and James River Outdoor Coalition volunteers will install benches constructed by the Wounded Warrior Project.

The Wood River Run will be held at Pony Pasture on April 16. The event could generate \$45,000 in revenue for the organization according to Josh. Dominion is sponsoring the event. A race director was deemed unnecessary.

The Friends of the James River Park website update is underway. Scott Dickens will share updates later in the meeting.

The James River Park System's 50th birthday is this year. Josh would like to organize a celebration and fundraiser toward the end of the summer.

Scott Dickens and Josh are meeting with Legend Brewing on Thursday. The Raging James Pilsner, benefitting Friends of the James River Park, will be released the weekend of Riverrock in May.

A welcome reception for new Superintendent Giles Garrison is scheduled for February 23. Katherine Mitchell, former President of Friends of the James River Park, is hosting the reception at her home.

Josh has been advocating for the state budget amendments supporting implementation of the James River Park System Master Plan. The budget amendments were introduced by Senator McClellan and Delegate Adams and would bring \$30M to master plan implementation.

The RVA Osprey Cam is returning.

Superintendent Report – Giles Garrison

73,549 visits to the James River Park System were counted in January. Visitation was down compared to January 2021. A faulty counter could be a reason for the decline in visitation. Staff is considering a new visitation tracking system that uses cell phone data.

Two years worth of invasive plants removed from Belle Isle by Catherine Farmer and volunteers were recently mulched thanks to the support of Friends of the James River Park and the Invasive Plant Task Force.

Operations staff removed a temporary set of stairs on the north side of Belle Isle and installed tiered stone steps where washouts are frequent. This is located near the shelter located at First Break.

Messer Contracting is making progress on the universal access project at Huguenot Flatwater. Recent high water slowed progress. The project is anticipated to be complete in April.

Operations staff met with Invasive Plant Task Force member Laura Greenleaf at Huguenot Flatwater to cut stumps flush and treat them with herbicide. This is a follow up to a James River Outdoor Coalition project to that removed Amur Honeysuckle from the area. Staff installed new directional signage at the Riverside Drive and Southampton Road intersection

James River Park System staff members are working with the James River Outdoor Coalition to install new water level and safety signs at 12 locations in the park system. They will be installed at or near kiosks in such a way as to minimize interruptions to viewsheds.

The trails team is adding armoring along the North Bank Trail just south of Hollywood Cemetery. This project reduces erosion and improves user experience.

Operations staff continue to make progress on constructing an observation structure at Pump House Park. Railings and an access ramp will be installed.

James River Park System staff members are working on applying for a grant in the amount of \$3.5M to fund accessibility infrastructure, roof improvements, window renovation, and masonry repairs at the Pump House. Funding is coming from the American Rescue Plan Act and an award would be made in July.

The boat ramp at Ancarrow's Landing is currently closed for dredging. Dredging began on February 2 and will continue through February 9.

Operations staff is ordering an additional 10 tons of river rock to shore up the 14th Street parking area. The James River Outdoor Coalition voted to fund 10 more tons for additional parking lot surfacing as needed.

Giles and Josh worked together to submit a letter of introduction to The Community Foundation to apply for \$36K in funding to support 2022 Teens of Richmond in Parks (TRIP). This is intended to be the beginning of a Richmond Youth Conservation Corps style program where teens are paid a stipend while they complete projects benefitting the park, the community, and the ecosystem.

Mary Kay and Josh are meeting with Chris Frelke, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities and Giles this week.

Kevin Tobin inquired about high water slowing down projects at Ancarrow's Landing and Huguenot Flatwater. High water slowed down work at Huguenot Flatwater and didn't slow down dredging at Ancarrow's Landing according to Giles.

Madge Bemiss noted National Invasive Species Awareness Week is February 27 through March 5.

Financial Review

Shawna Shade and Josh provided board members with an update on the organization's finances. More money is coming into the organization than is going out. The organization received \$10,000 from 40 individuals at the end of 2021.

Candidates for the Board – Josh Stutz

Josh presented board members with a slate of four candidates for the Friends of the James River Park board. The candidates are Karen Garner, Jean Linnell, Mel Smith, and Krista Weatherford. Kevin Tobin motioned to approve the slate of candidates. Scott Dickens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

No committee meetings were held in January.

Strategic Framework Strategy – Mary Kay Martin & Jake Savage

Mary Kay and Jake presented the Strategic Framework Strategy to board members, an outcome of the strategic planning effort undertaken at the end of last year. Mary Kay led a discussion about the framework. Greg Velzy motioned to add Stewardship as a value in the Strategic Framework Strategy. Jake seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mary Kay informed board members that they will be reassigned to the following committees. Josh will facilitate committee meetings going forward.

- Development Committee
- Executive Committee
- Finance Committee
- Governance Committee
- Programs and Services Committee

Old Business

Website Update – Scott Dickens

Scott reported that his team is working on a site map to help reorganize the website. Scott and his team have spent time considering user experience.

New Business

Shawna reported James River Park System maps were recently updated and will be distributed.

Greg reported on combined sewer system legislation being considered by the Virginia General Assembly.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 1, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Justin Doyle, Secretary of Friends of the James River Park.