

Friends of the James River Park Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 1, 2022 at 6:30 pm
Forest Hill Park

Board Members in Attendance:

Jake Savage, Vice President
Justin Doyle, Secretary
Dean Brunson, Treasurer
Dave Broocke
Scott Dickens
Bill Draper
Karen Garner
Jean Linnell
Kendra Norrell
Matt Rigby
Mel Smith
Kevin Tobin
Greg Velzy
Brooks Whitten
Krista Weatherford

Staff Members in Attendance:

Josh Stutz, Executive Director
Shawna Shade, Office Administrator
Giles Garrison, Superintendent
Michael Burton, Trails Superintendent

Guests in Attendance:

Scott Ross, Riverside Outfitters

The meeting was called to order by Jake Savage, Vice President, at 6:33 pm. Board members and guests introduced themselves. Four new board members, Karen Garner, Jean Linnell, Mel Smith, and Krista Weatherford, were in attendance. This is the final board meeting for Scott Silvester and Kevin Tobin.

Meeting Minutes

Scott Dickens motioned to approve the minutes from the February board meeting as amended. Dean Brunson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Executive Director's Report – Josh Stutz

Josh Stutz reported February was a strong month for donations.

Josh is working with students from Maggie Walker Governor School to clear space for the outdoor classroom at Reedy Creek/Park HQ on Saturday. Benches will be installed by the James River Outdoor Coalition and volunteers the following Saturday. Benches should be in the ground by the end of March.

C&F Bank will be the finish line sponsor for the Wood River Run. 300 participants is the goal for the event. Josh is working on securing road closure permits. Lucky Road is donating gift cards to race winners.

The RVA Osprey Cam will be reinstalled tomorrow morning. The camera is being sponsored by Friends of the James River Park and RVAH2O. Bill Draper reported seeing an osprey on the piling, the first one he's seen this season.

The website update is underway. A small group of board members reviewed it and shared feedback with Scott Dickens.

Josh would like to celebrate the James River Park System's 50th Anniversary on Belle Isle during James River Week in September.

Friends of the James River Park's beer, Raging James Pilsner, is scheduled to come out in May and will be brewed by Legend Brewing.

Katherine Mitchell, former President of the board, hosted a reception for Giles Garrison at her home.

The General Assembly budget amendments supporting the James River Park System failed.

National Invasive Species Awareness Week is underway and Boogie for the Biosphere will be held at Legend Brewing on Friday. Andrew Alli of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities and baby goats will be at Boogie for the Biosphere.

Park Report - Giles Garrison

Giles Garrison reported that James River Park System staff members are looking into a new way of counting visitation to the park using StreetLight Data. Giles would like to expand the park and deconcentrate visitation to popular areas using the data. Staff members are considering privacy concerns and would like to apply for a Virginia Outdoors Foundation Get Outdoors (GO) program grant to support implementation of the new system. Giles and Josh answered questions about the system asked by board members.

Messer Contracting is making progress on the universal access ramp at Huguenot Flatwater. Messer is targeting mid-April for project completion.

Penelope Davenport is back in the office and is planning education programs. Penelope and Giles are working to organize Teens of Richmond in Parks (TRIP), which is intended to be a Youth Conservation Corps-style program. They were invited to submit a grant application to The Community Foundation. A spring break program will be offered and James River Park System staff members intend to hire four seasonal staff members to support programs.

Operations staff members made significant road improvements to facilitate safe access to the shelter at 42nd Street for outfitters and spring/summer program providers.

Operations staff members continue to work with North Star Academy on accessible observation deck at Pump House Park.

National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW) has kicked off with in-person and virtual events scheduled to highlight invasive species removal projects. “Boogie for the Biosphere” is on Friday at Legend Brewing.

James River Park System was contacted by Union Sportsman’s Alliance and would like to assist with lighting on the Potterfield Bridge and Virginia Capital Trail.

The Department of Public Works secured \$250,000 for improvements at the north end of the Potterfield Bridge to reduce bottlenecking.

Michael Burton will be the point of contact while Giles is on maternity leave.

Treasurer’s Report – Dean Brunson

Dean Brunson reported the organization is in strong financial health and the Executive Committee met last week discussed the FY2022-23 budget process.

Committee Reports

No reports. Committees did not meet.

Spring and Summer Projects

The Executive Committee reviewed a list of priority projects in the James River Park System. The list of projects was presented to Josh by Giles. Josh will present a plan with estimated costs to the board at a future meeting. Jake commented that the organization has enough funding to complete the projects.

New Committees

Josh and Jake presented new committees to board members. New committees include Programs and Projects Committee, Development Committee, Community Engagement Committee, Governance and Finance Committee, and Executive Committee. Each board member will be assigned to one committee.

Website and Social Media Updates

Rocket Pop Media is working on updating the Friends of the James River Park website. Scott Dickens reported progress is being made on the website. Social media engagement is strong too.

New Business

Dumping Debris in the James River Park System: Brooks Whitten reported observing debris being dumped in the park system from Riverside Drive. Board members discussed strategies for contacting residents of Riverside Drive. Giles and Josh will work on drafting a letter to residents informing them that dumping is illegal. Graffiti in the park system was also discussed.

Adjournment: Kevin Tobin motioned to adjourn the meeting. Scott Dickens seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 5, 2022 at 6:30 pm

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