

Minutes - Friends of James River Park Board Meeting Tuesday, February 2, 2020, 6:30- 8:00PM

Attendees: Brittany Zamborsky, Cat Anthony, Scott Dickens, Kevin Tobin, Scott Silvester, Brooks Whitten, Dean Brunson, Greg Velzy, Jake Savage, Justin Doyle, Katherine Mitchell, Mary Kay Martin, David Broock, & Madge Bemiss

Absent: Mike Doerr, Byron Chafin, & Cary Wing

- 1) Mary Kay Martin, President, called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM, a quorum was present.
- 2) Minutes for the Jan. 5, 2021 meeting were approved after a motion by Scott Dickens and a second from Greg Velzy
- 3) Guests introduction and presentation:
 - A. Natalie K. Stickel, artist-in-residence for the Park, was introduced by Brooks Whitten. Natalie explained what programs she is doing with mostly kids as: a) eco-journaling; b) field sketching; and c) nature for kids. There is a 8 person maximum limit for the groups she is leading in the Park, primarily at Pony Pasture and Belle Isle. She is teaching them natural observations with mindfulness. She is in need of someone who speaks Spanish and can translate for her programs so please keep this in mind and make a recommendation should you know of a candidate. Scott Dickens is going to interview Natalie as a future Park Star.
 - B. Robert Pruett with Brandyln Printing was introduced by Katherine Mitchell and Bill Draper. Robert published the book A Photographic Journey Through the James River Park System which has sold out. Delivery was delayed due to Covid-19 complications. Robert recommended that the Friends' Group re-print the book as soon as we can given the momentum/buzz that the book created. There is an 8 week turnaround for a re-printing. A decision was deferred to the Membership Committee who will report back to the Board on its recommendation.
 - C. Penelope Davenport (Gorman?) was introduced by Mary Kay Martin. Penelope is writing a grant applying for a NOAA BWET (Bay Watershed Education & Training) Grant which is for 3 years and up to \$150,000 per year. This will be a partnership between the RPS System, the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay (Annapolis, MD), and FoJRP. The Friends' Group responsibility for the Grant will be: a) as Fiduciary Agent for the Grant

monies; b) as Fiscal Agent for the Grant monies; c) Shawna Shade will take responsibility for bookkeeping for the Grant working approximately 5 extra hours per week; and, d) executive and administrative oversight by the Executive Director (to be hired by May hopefully) consuming approximately 1-2 hours per week. Penelope will be the writer and administrator of the Grant and this will take about 60-70% of her time. This Grant will build capacity at the Friends' Group and at the RPS System. Specifically, this Grant will help the RPS System with its Environmental Literacy Plan, will train teachers as well, and create a culture of learning for Environmental Literacy for the school children. Justin Doyle suggested including Shawna Shade in the Grant writing. The question of whether the Friends' Group would need an audit was asked, and Dean Brunson confirmed that we will not need one, if and until, our annual federal grant revenues exceed \$750,000. Mary Kay Martin suggested this Grant, if we receive it, will show that the Friends' Group is doing great things for our community and the JRP. The question was called and Scott Dickens made a motion which was seconded by Katherine Mitchell and then passed unanimously by the Board. Penelope will get budget information to Mary Kay Martin and Dean Brunson within two weeks.

- 4) Presidents Report - see 3 (C) above related to Shawna Shade's time commitment. MKM requested that the Board authorize increasing Shawna Shade's hours from up to 12 hours per week to up to 20 hours per week given the various projects that are going on including, but not limited to: a) the book fulfillment; and, 2) the NOAA BWET Grant. The questions was called and Katherine Mitchell made a motion to that effect, Scott Silvester seconded, and the Board approved the motion unanimously.
- 5) Park/Volunteer Report - Bryce Wilk -
 - A. DWR - determined that Ancarrow's Landing and Huguenot Landing will NOT be in the access permit requirement
 - B. The Park had over 2.1 million visitors during 2020, a record, and over 180,000 more than 2019.
 - C. Conservation easements are being performed on certain islands that may eventually become part of the JRP System's lands.
 - D. Volunteering in the park has been extremely high and more corporate groups are getting involved.
 - E. Interpretation signage is being developed for Belle Isle with a goal of making the Isle more like an outdoor museum.

- F. Friends of Pumphouse have received a \$100,000 grant for ADA compliance and access to the Ballroom
 - G. Co-Star recently bought their building and Greg asked that we consider a strategy to get the corporation more involved in the Friends' Group and JRP System.
- 6) Treasurer's Report - Dean Brunson - Dean reported FoJRP has collected through gifts the entire unfunded deficit budgeted for FY 2020-2021. Accordingly, we can use the excess cash for 2020-2021 and beyond. He will be developing a 3 year rolling budget for the FoJRP to use in the future.
- 7) Finance Committee - Jake Savage - No report
- 8) Membership Committee - Katherine Mitchell
- A. During FY 2019-2020 the FoJRP had 138 donations/memberships for \$32,900 in giving compared to FY 2020-2021 YTD with 787 donations/memberships for ~\$222,000. The vast majority of the increase in the number of gifts was from the book sales and the increase in dollars is associated with the book sale and a small number of extremely generous donors.
 - B. Signs will be going up around the Park to allow "Text to Donate".
 - C. The membership event will be postponed until later this year due to COVID-19.
 - D. UTV Update - Bryce and MKM penned a letter requesting a discount on the UTV and the dealer supplied it to the FoJRP at half price. The UTV will be donated by FoJRP to the JRP System and their budget will pay for routine maintenance and operating costs going forward.
 - E. Matt Mason of the JRP Staff will start getting the email addresses of volunteers which Membership will use for solicitation purposes.
 - F. Dean Brunson reported that the Friends' Group generated a net profit on the book sale of about \$26,000 after printing and fulfillment costs.
- 9) Leadership Development Committee - Greg Velzy - The committee is developing a list of potential Board candidates for the FoJRP which will be distributed over the next few weeks.
- 10) Communications Committee - Scott Dickens
- A. An analytics report was distributed for the website and social media, showing 6,900 users last month covering 8,500 sessions. Scott reported that drone videos draw the most traffic.

11) AC & MP - MKM - the Committee asked Bryce to develop a list of high profile projects that can be completed easily to show progress with the Master Plan Implementation.

12) Invasive Plant Task Force - Madge Bemiss

- A. National Invasive Species Awareness week is coming up on Feb. 27th.
- B. Emily Forte is heading up the “Free-A-Tree” program whereby park neighbors will be encouraged to cut ever-green vines (i.e., Ivy) from “strangled” trees.
- C. 16 different professional contractor companies are volunteering a work day in the park. Think about how we can thank them! Social Media acknowledgement? Yes!
- D. Scott Dickens encouraged all of us to share pictures with him taken in/of the JRP of invasive species and other interesting subjects

13) Executive Director Action Team - Jake Savage - the Job Description is almost complete and we are on schedule with regards to the implementation timeline

14) New Business:

- A. Partner Groups - Greg Velzy -
 - Conservation easement inspections are in process - get them done
 - JROC - clean-ups are happening especially focusing on plastic bags that have hung up in trees
 - Falls of the James - I-95 bridge signage showing the James River is part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed are going up
 - James River Advocacy Council (JRAC) - looking for “Stewards of the River” award nominations - submit nominations to Greg Velzy with justification as to why you think the person should be considered
 - James River Association - Justin Doyle - working on a State of the James River Report
- B. Board volunteer day - please make suggestions - Matt Mason and Bryce Wilk to discuss

15) Old Business - Book sales update - see 3(B) and 8(F) above

***** On February 16, 2021, the Friends of the James River Park Board conducted an on-line vote seeking the approval of an expenditure of \$11,000**

for the publication of the book "A Photographic Journey through the James River Park System". On February 17, 2021, the vote tally was 13 "yes" votes approving the expenditure of funds and 0 "no" votes. As a result, the "yes" votes carried and the expenditure of \$11,000 for the publication of the book was approved by the FOJRB.

The next virtual meeting will be on March 2, 2021 at 6:30PM.