

Friends of the James River Park Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 2, 2021 at 6:30 pm
Forest Hill Park

Board Members in Attendance:

Mary Kay Martin, President
Jake Savage, Vice President (virtual)
Justin Doyle, Secretary
Dean Brunson, Treasurer (virtual)
Bill Draper
Matt Rigby
Scott Silvester
Kevin Tobin
Brooks Whitten
Bryce Wilk, Senior Superintendent (ex-officio)

Staff Members in Attendance:

Josh Stutz, Executive Director

Introductions: The meeting was called to order by Mary Kay Martin, President, at 6:35 pm.

Meeting Minutes: Board members reviewed minutes from the October board meeting. Scott Silvester motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Matt Rigby seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Executive Director's Report: Josh Stutz, Executive Director, reported City Council voted to allocate ARPA funds to the Texas Beach bridge renovation, James River Branch Trail, and Crooked Branch bridge. Saturday, April 23, 2022 is the date for the Wood River Run. Josh set a \$30,000 fundraising goal for the event. Josh has made numerous requests for corporate support in recent weeks. Josh reported the outdoor classroom project at Reedy Creek/Park Headquarters is proceeding with support from Richmond Toolbank. Richmond Toolbank prefabricates components for outdoor classrooms. The James River Outdoor Coalition will be responsible for installation with support from James River Park System staff members in February. The project is supported by a grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry. Josh reported the board's strategic planning meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 11, 2022. All board members are strongly encouraged to attend and participate. John Dougherty will facilitate the strategic planning process. Josh reported the Herndon Foundation is funding the design, fabrication, and installation of new interpretive signs on Belle Isle in the amount of \$10,000.00. The signs will be bilingual and include English and Spanish text. Josh reported that Ernie Ashenbach passed away and the organization has been receiving donations in his memory. Josh has been discussing the refresh of the organization's website with Scott Dickens

of RocketPop Media. Scott can create a new Wordpress website by February 2022. The organization currently pays RocketPop Media \$800.00 per month. This amount will increase to \$1,200.00 per month for a period of one year if approved by the board. Josh reported that he is working with Legend Brewing to create a beer that supports Friends of the James River Park.

Superintendent's Report: Bryce Wilk, Senior Superintendent, reported the Park Superintendent position closed last Thursday and he has reviewed the list of candidates. He is working on scheduling interviews for six candidates. Bryce reported that he is working on securing funds for the ADA accessible ramp project at Pumphouse Park is moving forward and the universal access project at Huguenot Flatwater is underway. Trees have been removed at Huguenot Flatwater. Bryce reported 130 trees were planted by volunteers at The Wetlands and 150 trees are scheduled to be planted by volunteers at Ancarrow's Landing. 500 additional plants will be planted at Pony Pasture and The Wetlands. The native garden has been receiving attention from former board member Katherine Mitchell with support from Tyler Twyford of the James River Park System. Bryce added that City Council allocated \$1.5M to parks acquisition and funding for the creation of a citywide parks master plan. Bryce reported the James River Park System conservation easement is able to be expanded after further review by the Capital Region Land Conservancy. The conservation easement is now over 400 acres in size. 122 new acres will be added to the park system, a large portion of the acreage is Williams Island. Bryce reported students from Northstar Academy are working with operations staff members on Thursdays through the springtime. Bryce reported arson activity on Belle Isle on Halloween. Portapotties and trash bins were torched.

President's Report: Mary Kay reported that the organization has made a few mistakes with its social media communications and a new oversight strategy involving Josh is being implemented. Mary Kay would like to assign Bill Draper and Matt Rigby to committees. Mary Kay reported 550 copies of Bill Draper's book are available for purchase as the holiday season approaches.

Treasurer's Report: Dean Brunson reported more money is coming in than going out. He would like to meet with Josh and Shawna Shade to review the organization's financial situation in advance of 2022.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee: Jake Savage reported the Finance Committee did not meet in October.

Membership Committee: Dave Broocke is absent. Mary Kay reported he is working on a Giving Tuesday push.

Leadership Development Committee: Greg Velzy was absent. Josh reported seven individuals are interested in joining the board and continues to recruit board members for vacant positions. Josh would like to organize a mixer in December.

Communications Committee: Scott Dickens is absent.

Events Committee: Byron Chafin is absent. No report.

Advocacy Committee: Mary Kay and Josh spoke in support of ARPA funding proposed for the James River Park System at a recent City Council meeting.

Invasive Plant Task Force: Madge Bemiss is absent. Bryce reported the natural resources specialist position is a high priority for the task force. The task force will continue to focus on native hotspots and is planning to undertake a new survey of the park system.

Partner Organization Updates:

- A James River Center project stakeholder meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 10.
- Friends of Pumphouse Park is hosting an Abandoned in Virginia program on Saturday, November 13.
- InLight will be held at Great Shiplock Park during Friday and Saturday of the second weekend of November.
- King of the James is scheduled for Sunday, November 14, and benefits the James River Outdoor Coalition.
- Katie Lemmert, local graphic designer and James River Outdoor Coalition member, is working on designing bilingual river safety signage.

Old Business

No old business was discussed.

New Business

No new business was discussed.

Kevin Tobin motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 pm. Brooks Whitten seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 7, 2021 at 6:30 pm

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