



Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Meeting Minutes January 12, 2017

Members Present: Patricia McCambridge (Chair), Thomas Sledge (Vice Chair), Venetta Stephens, Sam Leary, George Nicholas, Victor Pickett, and Edd Conner

Staff/Others Present: Senior Planner Alexis Baker, Assistant City Attorney Meredith Jacobi, Parks Planner Lennie Luke, Chesapeake Arboretum Founding Member/Urban Forest Trailblazer/ Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways Board Member Phil Johnson, and Historic Preservation Planning Intern Kimberly Parker

The official meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by the Chair.

Dr. Leary made a motion to accept the December 8, 2016 meeting minutes as written. Ms. Stephens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Jacobi gave an update on social media archiving for City facebook, twitter, and other accounts to fulfill the Freedom of Information Act requirements. She also spoke about a proposal in the Virginia Senate and requested input from the HPC regarding additions to the residential disclosure requirements for local historic districts.

Mr. Luke spoke about several of his duties and properties that the City Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department oversees. He told the HPC that the damaged bridges on the Arboretum trail will be fixed in April. He stressed the importance of keeping the Caleb Williamson House in good repair and historically accurate. The Arboretum has also worked with science and biology classes. The HPC has several ideas to enhance the Arboretum such as heritage gardening and the addition of chickens. Mr. Luke invited HPC members to attend an Arboretum Board meeting to discuss their ideas.

Mr. Luke discussed the Superintendent's House and the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail. The City lease with the Army Corps of Engineers for the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail does not include the house. Parks, Recreation and Tourism own 12 acres just north of Ballahack Road, behind Wallaceton, between the new and old U.S. 17. While roads would need to be built, it may be possible to move or build a re-creation of the Superintendent's House on City property. A discussion was also held on possibly moving Cornland School onto City property. Additionally, HPC was interested in having a planetarium on the same property due to the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail being part of a dark sky area. A solar walk, first discussed by Dr. Hite, with a re-creation of the solar system was

brought up by Ms. McCambridge and Dr. Leary; Mr. Luke said that the proposal should be shown to Parks, Recreation and Tourism. The HPC would also like to see the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail extended to North Carolina, which would need to be grant funded. Dr. Leary would like to see if the Canal mile markers could be maintained by Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. Additionally, Dr. Sayers and his maroon research should be incorporated into information about the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail. The 12 acres owned by the City could have great potential for historic, ecological, and commerce connections by possibly integrating the Superintendent's House, Gertie School, and a planetarium. Mr. Luke will take these ideas to the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Director.

Mr. Luke also discussed Gertie School. The playground is maintained by Parks, Recreation and Tourism. The City's Facilities Management Division is responsible for building maintenance. Mr. Pickett has concerns about the windows. Per Mr. Luke, Facilities Management currently has no plans to replace the windows, but has performed lead abatement on them per the Ruritan lease agreement with the City. Mr. Pickett stressed the significance of Gertie School and the need for maintenance. He would like to inform the City of the need to protect Gertie School, save the Superintendent's House, and to continue to preserve the integrity of the Chesapeake Arboretum. Mr. Luke will do further research into the windows at Gertie School.

Finally, Mr. Luke spoke on the Portlock Galleries building. Parts of it are leased by the South Norfolk Jordan Bridge administrator and for afterschool and summer programs. If possible, HPC would like to see art shows in the gallery. Ms. Jacobi recommended exploring any liabilities with the display of artwork. The HPC should contact Josh Fisher, Events Coordinator, to explore that option.

Mr. Johnson spoke about the Tree Walk near City Hall. From the Community Center to Bells Mill, there is a four mile urban trail with 121 species of trees. He also spoke about the Great Bridge Battlefield and Waterways History Museum. It is currently going out to bid for the third time. He spoke of a partnership with Yorktown to tie together historic areas such as Great Bridge, Kemps Landing, Norfolk, Philadelphia, Mount Vernon, Monticello, Montpelier, and Boston through bus tours and education.

Ms. McCambridge and Dr. Leary spoke about Cornland School and how \$13,000 was used to stabilize the school. Ms. McCambridge would like to write a letter to City Council to update them on the money appropriated for the Cornland School Foundation.

The next meeting will be held on February 7, 2017.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 6:59 p.m.