

Chesapeake Arboretum Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

July 27, 2020

4pm PRT Administrative Office with Virtual Attendance (Zoom) in accordance with the Amended Ordinance adopted by Chesapeake City Council on April 28, 2020.

Board Members Present:

Richard Pippin
Linda Bradley
Phil Johnson
Dee Zagurski
Michelli Booker

PR&T Staff Present:

Mike Barber, Director
Kevin Kaul, Parks Manager
Meghan DeSanto, Secretary

Board Members Absent:

Deb Pearson
R. Stonecypher

The meeting was called to order at 4:02pm.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

Secretary M. DeSanto took attendance.

R. Pippin reviewed the guidance from the City of Chesapeake Amended Ordinance adopted on April 28, 2020 (in regards to virtual board meetings).

No Citizens present.

Approval of Minutes – No changes were made to the May minutes.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

M. Barber stated that the City has taken the position to not promote or sponsor public gatherings. Private groups can hold gatherings, but events like movie nights, the 4th of July celebrations, etc., cannot be held at this time. Therefore the City would recommend cancelling or delaying AutumnFest. An event could be held by a private group with safety restrictions but the City cannot sponsor or promote it. To meet responsibilities for TreeCity USA a virtual program is an option, which includes completing necessary tree plantings.

Programs/Operations: D. Zagurski met with P. Johnson earlier in the year but because of COVID-19 many of those plans are no longer feasible. M. Barber clarified that an educational program can be held but not without an attendance limit and safety plan.

R. Pippin suggested further discussion about AutumnFest, including the idea of postponing it for a spring event. M. Barber mentioned programs like Nature's Classroom have been offered recently but require pre-registration. R. Pippin asked if anyone would like to make a motion to cancel AutumnFest. P. Johnson made a motion to postpone AutumnFest to a later date, and that a tree planting be done instead. D. Zagurski seconded the motion. The motion to postpone AutumnFest to some date in the future passed.

D. Zagurski asked if we own the old Facebook page for the Arboretum. She said that this could be a good place to promote programs and the Arboretum itself. M. Barber said he would have to check with Lynn Jordan [Public Information Coordinator], and that the City does not use that page. He explained that maintaining a social media site would be a challenging task, and keeping it consistent with City and Departmental policies requires someone with the appropriate knowledge and availability to do so.

D. Zagurski talked about how while walking at the Arboretum she has met lots of people who have never heard of the Arboretum before. She talked about suggestions she has received such as a community garden. She asked about the plants in the nursery: how are they purchased and sold? K. Kaul said we support it but it is run by the Master Gardeners and Cooperative Extension. Plants are normally used for City operations and for parks. An annual plant sale is also held at the beginning of the planting season (around May) at City Hall.

Before making new plans, she feels it would be best to see what further developments occur with COVID-19.

R. Pippin reminded everyone that committees can still meet but making plans [for events] at this time will be difficult.

D. Zagurski also asked about a previously discussed suggestion box, to provide a way for people to make suggestions about what they would like to see at the Arboretum. M. Barber said that once renovations on the house begin, this should fit in to the new plans. He envisions having plans on display so people can see what kind of work will be done on the house. This would be a good time to receive suggestions from the public, especially about the grounds.

City Council: Nothing to report.

Invasives: The invasives are still there. L. Bradley said a new plan is needed to tackle the invasives. She remembers Renee having put one together about two years ago. Native plants and a number of invasives such as Chinese privet have somewhat grown back. The south end of the trail needs mulch. Volunteer groups haven't been able to help out because of the pandemic. R. Pippin suggested that L. Bradley find people to be in her committee who can help her work on a plan and then present findings to the Board.

M. Booker remembers Renee's 3-5 year invasives plan and asked if it was known where it was deposited. M. Barber said he remembers recommendations being made but not a plan.

L. Bradley said she had a copy of this.

L. Bradley also said that Norfolk Botanical Gardens came as a community project and did some work about two years ago in the north end of the trail, as well as on the E Bridge, and at the number 6 entrance. Renee gave a plan. M. Barber stated it was City staff, Tony Castelov, Renee and a few on her staff who completed spraying and invasive removal. Renee gave spraying recommendations and said unless people are able to consistently pull up dead invasives, the invasives will come back over time. This being performed consistently just at the Arboretum is well beyond our resources and capabilities in terms of staff as of this time. He said that if a plan is presented, PRT can look at putting it in the budget, for example to perhaps secure for a contractor to deal with specified invasive areas.

Volunteers: Nothing to report.

Historical: Nothing to report. R. Pippin asked if Roxanne had sent anything for review. M. Barber said that Roxanne had emailed park signage examples from Florida after the last meeting.

Capital/Projects/Trails: P. Johnson had nothing new to report. M. Barber was able to share that some projects sat in limbo for a few months, but a purchase order for the Arboretum and Heron Landing were secured before the end of the fiscal year. A meeting with the architect was held the previous week about the Arboretum. The capital and purchase orders remain intact.

K. Kaul wanted to thank M. Barber and recognize his efforts in keeping secure the funding for the Arboretum. This funding totals \$1 million.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: The Standard Operating Procedures are complete.

Staff Reports:

K. Kaul reported that Bridge C is complete. The trail has been mulched so there are no scars on the trail. The trail loop is now tied together.

K. Kaul talked about Arboretum signage, which was discussed in the last meeting. In response to requests for locator signs, every entrance is labeled with a sign. He asked what signage the Board would like to see in the Arboretum. There is already some interpretive signage (he provided examples), so narrowing down what type of signage is needed would help. K. Kaul also passed around for review a sign that provides fishing guidance and park rules.

D. Zagurski asked about disposal stations for fishing gear, as hooks and lines are a problem. K. Kaul said that Boy Scouts have previously made one of these for Oak Grove Lake Park, and he can look into that further.

He also talked about recent equipment purchases to assist with trail maintenance. These include a Dewalt kit with power tools and saws, various tools including an edging blade, a weed eater, a new mower, and a chipper. Lots of research went into choosing the right equipment that can fit on the Arboretum's trails. P. Johnson asked if one has to be certified to use the chipper, and K. Kaul said yes.

In regards to the farmhouse's building evaluation, a kickoff meeting has been held and on the 6th of August, another meeting with an on-site evaluation of the house will take place. M. Barber talked about how the architect wanted us to have a vision outlined, but we preferred to have the architect gauge the house's condition and then provide us with options. M. Barber expects the renovations to reflect exhibit purposes rather than programming ones due to size. R. Pippin asked if there is a timeline, and K. Kaul said this will be clearer after the evaluation. M. Barber described how the architect group is also working on Cornland School projects at the same time as those for the Arboretum.

The content of the proposed fishing sign was reviewed. In relation to its statement about the Arboretum having park hours of sunrise to sunset, M. Booker asked if the Arboretum is considered a park. M. Barber said yes the Arboretum is classified as a park. This designation helps with ordinances.

P. Johnson made a motion to approve the fishing sign. D. Zagurski seconded it. The motion passed.

K. Kaul also talked about social media videos. Since the last meeting two new Arboretum videos were created and posted fairly quickly. K. Kaul thanked P. Johnson for his participation in his video. If anyone has more video ideas, please let PRT know. K. Kaul also mentioned that Nature's Classroom programming is still being offered and held. R. Pippin complimented the videos and remarked that when posted on Facebook they can be shared on a personal level. M. Booker also complimented the videos and the historical information they contain.

Returning to the topic of signage, K. Kaul asked how the Board would like to determine what kind of interpretive signage the Arboretum needs. M. Barber said a previously discussed example was having educational signs in areas where invasive species are being addressed. P. Johnson suggested a survey for the public would be a good idea to gauge what citizens would want. This could be posted online. K. Kaul suggested a citizen survey should have specific questions the citizens can answer. P. Johnson said he has at least six topics, which K. Kaul asked him to email.

M. Barber also mentioned that M. DeSanto is working on a 'Dos' and 'Don'ts' flyer that has information about fishing in Chesapeake. He also encouraged everyone to look at the PRT Facebook page and share it with their friends because July is Parks and Recreation month, and there are a number of videos including staff spotlights that show off what Chesapeake PRT employees do.

NEW BUSINESS: No new business.

COMMENTS: D. Zagurski pointed out that a memorial plaque was on the wrong Arboretum bridge. It belongs on Bridge E but was put on Bridge F. K. Kaul said he would have this fixed. D. Zagurski also shared that there have not been any incidents among neighbors and fishermen since a Ranger came out to handle a disagreement.

M. Booker would like to see the Arboretum's kiosk used more often. It has plenty of space that can be used educationally. M. Barber said it has been used for programming information, which can be continued as more programming is made available.

D. Zagurski asked if there have been any weddings at the Arboretum since the advent of COVID-19. K. Kaul said one had been canceled but another is scheduled for an upcoming weekend.

P. Johnson complimented the work PRT has been able to accomplish, especially in programs and budget. Information sharing is very important and he believes that Virginia has more positive information sharing than any other state.

L. Bradley said she would like to help with Tree City USA work. The parks are very important and they are very busy. D. Zagurski added that she has never seen the Arboretum so busy.

The next meeting will be September 28, 2020 at 4 pm. It will be at the PRT office again.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Minutes submitted by Meghan DeSanto.