

CHESAPEAKE PARKS, RECREATION AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

November 7, 2019

Chairman Holt called the meeting of the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Advisory Board to order at 6:30 pm.

Members Present:	Chuck Anderson, Christine Arrasate, Rick Bruner, Kevin Cole (non-voting ex-officio/CPS), Susan Dixon, Dani Feret, Berkley Gibbs, Jean Holt (Chairman), Lindy Huber, Annette Kelley, Jennifer Hoover, Mike Kos (Vice Chairman), Bob Leedom, and Phyllis Lewter
Members Absent:	Derek Bennett, Jean Carideo (non-voting ex-officio/GBBWHF), Chelsea Hall, Kayleigh Hamel (non-voting Youth Liaison), Chris Lowie (non-voting ex-officio/GDSNWR), Melissa Randall, GERAL Stukes and Troy Thorn (non-voting ex-officio/CCC)
Staff Present:	Mike Barber, Monica Christiansen, Thurman Diamond, Kim Murden, Ray Wharton and Cori Fuqua

ROLL CALL

Ms. Fuqua called roll. The attendance roster reflected a quorum with 13 voting members present, 4 absent.

MINUTES:

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Mr. Leedom made a motion to approve the August 1, 2019 minutes as presented. Mr. Kos seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved by the board. There was not a quorum present at the October 3rd meeting so no official business was conducted. Discussion notes from the October meeting were distributed for informational purposes.

HEARING OF CITIZENS:

None present.

REPORTS:

a. Committee Reports:

- **Tourism Committee** – No updates.
- **Rules Committee** – After some board discussion, Mr. Barber asked that further discussion and the vote be deferred until the December board meeting when Ms. Stukes will be attending and stats will be available. Since any rule change would not affect play until next summer/fall anyway, voting next month will be fine.

b. Ex-Officio Reports:

- **Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways History Foundation:** Jean Carideo was not present but provided the following updates to Ms. Fuqua:
 - The Heritage Festival went off without a hitch. Programs were scheduled in the museum throughout the day (two examples: Frederick Douglas, as well as English country dancing taught by interpreters) and vendors sold their wares alongside the canal, flooded with sunshine and fascinating boat traffic. The shuttle service was organized and important.
 - The museum exhibits are under construction, with an anticipated opening date to coincide with the Battle of Great Bridge reenactment in December.
 - There are so many key figures that were instrumental in the vision and reality of this museum that are no longer with us... Sam Leary and Preston Grissom being the most recent. Those of us still here and who are working diligently forward miss them, and all who've gone before, very much.
- **Chesapeake Public Schools:** Kevin Cole provided the following updates:
 - We had our Middle School softball tournament at Deep Creek Park recently. The department's grounds staff did all of the prep work on the fields and the teams really enjoyed being there so thank you to Mike, Ray and staff!

c. **Tourism & Conference Center Report:**

Ms. Murden reported on the following:

- **Restaurant Week** was October 18th – 25th with twenty one restaurants participating. This is the third year and we have the most restaurant participation we've had to date. It was a great success and the website had a lot of interest with increased awareness by way of social media. Afterwards, a survey of the restaurant participants was conducted and a majority saw an increase in sales that could be directly attributed to participation in Restaurant Week. Also 100% of those surveyed said they would be interested in participating next year. Next year Restaurant Week will be October 16th-23rd.
- **Meeting sales:** A team attended the Virginia Society of Association Executives in Richmond the first week of October, as well as the Conference Connection with the Delta and Conference Center, and the Mid-Atlantic Travel Show.
- **Historical Tourism Presentation:** Ms. Toby Word, one of the Tourism Sales Managers, gave a very interesting and informative presentation to the board on historical/heritage tourism in Chesapeake.

d. **Parks and Recreation Department Reports:**

Recreation: Ms. Christiansen reported on the following:

- **October Highlights:**

- **Chesapeake Recycles Day** – this coming Saturday from 9 am – 12 pm at Greenbrier Mall.
- **Holiday Craft Show** – Saturday, November 23rd from 10 am – 5 pm, and Sunday, November 24th, from 11 am – 4 pm at the Chesapeake Conference Center.
- **Ghost Maze** was held for one weekend only this year and went very well.
- **2020 Events Planning Session** – We are going to be evaluating our events going into 2020 and will be looking at how to possibly breathe new life into some events, maybe cutting the cord with others and adding some new ones.

Grounds and Housekeeping: Mr. Wharton had no updates at this time.

e. **Director Updates:** Mr. Barber gave the following updates and reviews:

- **Northwest River Park CIP Plan** – A handout was distributed at the October meeting showing the 7-year improvement plan schedule which began in 2018 and goes through 2024. It includes paving the main artery trail, new ranger station, new interpretive center, some new bridges, some clearing, helping with some of the parking and more water access. The main goals are not only to improve aging facilities, but also to increase accessibility and inclusiveness. Mr. Leedom asked if there were any more handouts available. Ms. Fuqua will email an electronic copy to the board.
- **New City Manager**, Chris Price, started November 4th. Mr. Price started his career as a Planner with the City of Chesapeake for a few years, then worked his way up elsewhere, most recently as a Deputy City Manager in Northern Virginia. It was a very smooth, seamless transition between Mr. Baker leaving at the end of October and Mr. Price starting at the beginning of November.
- **Equestrian Trails** – We will be meeting with local equestrian folks in early December for discussions on the equestrian area at Northwest River Park and future development of Heritage Park. We want to renew our partnership and encourage them to use the trails and facilities because it's difficult to support maintenance at a high level if nobody is using them.
- **Youth Initiatives Task Force** – The first area of concern is the Holly Cove/Lake Ahoy area. There was a recent open house meeting with programming and citizen input but there wasn't much response from the community. The full recommendations report should be out in early spring from the Mayor's office.
- **2020 Census** – 82% of Chesapeake residents returned their census information in 2010 but there is a big push nationwide to count all folks and concentrating on the low turnout areas. For every person that doesn't get counted, cities

potentially lose about \$20,000 per person in federal subsidies like grants, etc. so the city is starting early to get the word out before Census Day which is April 1, 2020 by showing up at a lot of events all over the city between now and then to increase awareness.

- **Multi-Purpose Stadium** – Mr. Barber attended a council work session last month to ask for a re-blessing on the master plan/concept portion of the stadium RFP to go out before the end of the year. Council and the school board have given the go ahead to move forward to hold some public meetings to gather citizen input, and to put some initial cost and location information together. Then it will go back to council and the school board for consideration.
- **School Safety Task Force** is working on clarification of signage and rules for citizen use of facilities such as tennis courts, ball fields, etc. on school grounds. There have been a couple of incidents where police were enforcing rules based on current “after dark” wording on signs even though the facilities were lighted for intended athletic purposes after dark.
- **Budget Process and Large Scale Multi-Departmental Project Process Improvement** – The performance measurement survey feedback should give us some benchmarks and a much better picture of where and how much department resources to allocate to projects based on priority, as well as give us a better picture of the costs associated with them.
- **Historical Services Division** – A work session was held with Council mentioning the formation of a Historical Services Division. This was also part of our budget submittal for FY21. We’re at a critical time in Chesapeake’s history. We’re losing resources and people and really need a central services division to store materials, assist in preservation of assets, and be able to more accurately tell the stories of Chesapeake. PRT took the lead with this to identify a few really important initiatives to start with and Council seemed to be excited about it.
- **Department Reports** – These reports are distributed to the board before release to the public. Please read them and let us know if you have any questions or comments about anything. Pay special attention to the projects so you’re aware of them and if citizens ask you questions that you can’t or don’t want to answer, refer them to us and we’ll be more than happy to address them.
- **Advisory Board Attendance** – There were a few board members who received letters from the city clerk’s office if they missed more than 50% of the meetings during the past year. Last month so many members missed the meeting that we didn’t have a quorum. The purpose of the letters is not to kick anyone off the board. It’s to touch base with the board member, make them aware of the number of meetings missed and see if they want to continue serving on the

board. Attendance at a majority of the meetings is important. It's understandable that things happen and there will be times when people have to miss meetings, but if circumstances have changed and you can no longer attend meetings on a regular basis, that's okay. Just let us know and someone else can be appointed.

Then we asked ourselves what we could do to make membership and meetings more interesting. So Monica put together a list of opportunities called "Get To Know Your Board" with events that you can get involved with and/or attend mapped out in advance for ease in planning. We will also serve light meals at a meeting on a quarterly basis to give everyone an opportunity to arrive a little early, have something to eat and just chat with people. Also we're going to shake things up by holding the meetings in different places – not just in club rooms at community centers – so you might have to be a little more vigilant to make sure you know where the meeting is being held before leaving work or home.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- Nominations are open for officers for 2020 – Chairman and Vice Chairman. If you would like to nominate someone (and they have agreed to run) or are interested in running yourself, please contact either Chairman Holt or Ms. Fuqua.

HEARING OF BOARD MEMBERS:

- Mr. Anderson asked if we used white golf carts for maintenance on the Western Branch Trail. Mr. Barber said it's not a golf cart, it's a big orange utility cart. We're working on an ordinance right now that will address use of trails and sidewalks by scooters, carts and other motorized vehicles and/or equipment.
- Ms. Huber said she and her husband did the ghost walk and had a great time. They talked to a guest and he wanted to know why metal detectors can't be used at parks. Mr. Barber said you would need to apply for a special permit through a formal process. It's prohibited for random detecting because any digging is considered destruction of city property. People want to come, dig, make a mess and then leave.
- Ms. Hoover said she and her husband recently went to Bells Mill Park and they used some of the exercise equipment. The park is wonderful and well-maintained despite its heavy use by cross country teams.
- Mr. Gibbs made a trip out to Deep Creek Park with his granddaughter and was pleasantly surprised to see that all of the musical and interactive play equipment was in working condition. He will be absent from the December meeting and looks like he will be missing most of the meetings with meals!
- Ms. Kelly said that someone asked her why there were little orange flags in the ground at Camelot Park and said that their 18-month-old child was getting into them and picking them up. Mr. Barber said the trail was just re-done all the way

around the park and those flags were used for the contractor and Miss Utilities but they should be gone now. Also she said that Western Branch Middle School is putting on a musical play for the first time ever so if anyone is interested, please go and support them.

- Ms. Feret said they went to AutumnFest a few weeks ago and had a nice time. It looked like it was well-attended, there were lots of activities to do and everyone was having a good time.
- Ms. Holt went to the Jubilee Craft Show and it was very nice. She also joined a running group and they are preparing to run a 5K so she went to Oak Grove Park and ran the trail around the lake.
- Mr. Kos said he has friends who live in Deep Creek and they were very grateful for the efforts the department staff has done to really improve their facilities and maintain them! Thank you.
- Ms. Lewter said she continues to be impressed by the bus trips and the planning and thought that goes into them. She is always hearing from her friends that can't wait to hear what's coming up and they are looking forward to the Mystery Tour of Chesapeake.
- Ms. Dixon participated in restaurant week and said it was a great idea. Is the planetarium part of Parks and Recreation? Mr. Barber said that it was actually part of schools but that we work with them on promoting some of their activities.
- Mr. Anderson said that if we ever need anyone to talk to city council about why what the department does is important, he would be more than happy to do it. The revitalization of the softball fields around the city has made a huge difference. Since Chittum is getting a new school, is the department working with schools so that the WBAC will still be able to get back to the fields? Mr. Barber said yes, and as of right now, the fields are not supposed to be disturbed but the parking will be improved.
- Mr. Bruner has been going to the Great Bridge Lock Park a lot and his kids are wearing it out. Mr. Barber said a new playground will be installed this spring.

NEW BUSINESS:

- None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be on Thursday, December 5, 6:30 pm, at the South Norfolk Community Center, 1217 Godwin Avenue, Chesapeake, VA 23324.

Minutes submitted by: Cori Fuqua, Secretary