

CHESAPEAKE PARKS, RECREATION AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2020

This meeting of the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Advisory Board was held at the Delta Hotel (next to the Chesapeake Conference Center) on February 6, 2020. Chairman Holt called meeting to order at 6:36 pm.

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

ROLL CALL

Ms. Fuqua called the roll. The attendance roster reflected a quorum with 11 voting members present and 6 absent.

MINUTES:

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Ms. Hoover made a motion to approve the January 9, 2020 minutes as presented. Ms. Lewter seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved by the board.

HEARING OF CITIZENS:

- Mr. Reginald Cyrus addressed the board asking that the department's athletic field rental policies include a process for departmental oversight of any organizations that are not under the umbrella of the City of Chesapeake that use the athletic fields, including CPS fields. He believes this would allow citizens of Chesapeake an outlet of redress should an issue arise between citizens/parents and the organizations using the fields, and he would like to see staff or a department assigned to this oversight. There were many questions and comments from the board, as well as some general responses from Mr. Diamond and Ms. Christiansen regarding the current rental process as well as changes and improvements that have been made over the past year.
- Ms. Kezia Hendricks, Founder and CEO of the Young Investors Group, spoke to the board. The YIG is a non-profit group with a program that mentors young

African-American youth ages 12-19 and teaches them about investments including economic, self-development and community investments. The youth are mostly from the lower economic neighborhoods around the Dr. Clarence V. Cuffee Community Center and library and Ms. Hendricks talked about the program's mission and activities. They would like to be able to use the Cuffee Center as their base and meet more often. Currently, they are only meeting there once a week on Tuesdays because their budget isn't able to afford to rent more time. Ms. Christiansen said the department would need to have additional conversations with the YIG.

REPORTS:

a. Committee Reports:

- **Tourism Committee** – No updates.
- **Rules Committee** – No updates.

b. Ex-Officio Reports – No updates.

c. Tourism & Conference Center Report: Ms. Murden reported on the following:

- **African-American Heritage Trail:** The challenge is that there currently isn't one specific place where people can go for a historical experience and learn more. The original concept is that it would be a self-guided (driving) tour but there aren't buildings right now that are open to visitors. The three bus tours that have been scheduled are extremely popular and are almost completely booked already. To create an "experience", we are developing a brochure and producing 7-8 podcasts touching on different topics like the Cornland School, the Underground Railroad, the maroon colony in the Dismal Swamp, etc. The podcasts will consist of information gathered from interviews with local historians, historical committees and authors, and will be housed on the web so they will be accessible. People are excited about it and it's been fun to work on all the different aspects.
- **Ambassador Academy:** We had our first five graduates and the program is starting to take off and grow. Each program consists of four different monthly tracks and they continuously repeat every four months.
- **Your Military Reunion Conference:** We're hosting the Your Military Reunion Conference sponsored by the Delta Hotel at the hotel on February 16-18. There will be around 25 military reunion planners attending and we have a familiarization tour planned for them and lots of information on Chesapeake.

d. Parks and Recreation Department Reports:

Recreation: Ms. Christiansen and Mr. Diamond reported on the following:

- **Town Hall** – There was a town hall meeting focusing on the Deep Creek area on February 4th at Grassfield High School. If you have not yet attended a town hall meeting, the new format works so much better than before. It used to a traditional format where citizens would speak and council and department heads did not interact with them – much like the City Council meetings are conducted now. But the format changed to a much more interactive format where council and city departments have tables set up so citizens can go to the tables they're interested in and actually talk to council members and city staff. It was a wonderful experience and a great way for us to get feedback from the public.
- **Advisory Board Bus Tour** has been scheduled for Saturday, February 29th. We'll need at least 10 people to commit to so please let Monica or Cori know if you plan on going.
- **2020 Schedule of Events** has been finalized and emailed to you. So check it out. See if there is anything that interests you and sign up!
- **TR Valentine's Dance** – Mr. Diamond said that the TR Valentine's Dance will be held this Saturday at River Crest Community Center and registration is already full.
- **Gym Roof Leak** – The roof at River Crest Community Center is currently being replaced and repaired and hopefully will be completed by the end of the winter.
- **STEM Camp** – We are partnering with Libraries and Don Carey to hold free STEM and football camps at the Dr. Clarence V. Cuffee center in the gym. They are looking for people to set up tables with different subject activities that would be fun for the kids. It should be happening sometime in May.
- **New Summer Camp** – We're partnering with the Police and school resource officers to do a week-long summer camp for the kids in the Holly Cove area.
- **Holly Cove Day** – Coming up next Saturday from 10 am-4 pm at Southwestern Park. We're partnering with a handful of churches in that area and will have lots of vendors and activities. It should be lots of fun.

Grounds and Housekeeping: Mr. Wharton had the following updates:

- **Behind the Scenes** – When issues like roof leaks come up at community centers or other department facilities, we make sure areas are cleaned so they can still be used by the public if at all possible. Grounds staff also make sure that parks are “ready for company” for activities like the Holly Cove Day that's coming up.

- **Municipal Grounds** – We are working on low maintenance landscaping in an area in front of the animal services and emergency services buildings off of Military Highway. The area is difficult to mow, landscape and maintain so we're looking at some different options for more effective maintenance and appearance. Also we are continuing to be busy with tree work as more and more citizens call us regarding limbs that are hanging over their properties as well as trees they feel might fall onto their property or they just want them removed. We handle these on a case-by-case basis.
 - **Athletic Grounds** – Finished the baseball infield at Grassfield High School. We put in a new pitching mound, some new sod, and re-did the warning track around the dugouts and batter's box. There is new fencing, dugouts and bleacher pads being installed at the BM Williams fields, and we're getting ready for spring softball, baseball and soccer at the City and school softball fields.
 - **Parks Grounds** – Getting ready for the busy season by painting tables, doors, and replenishing playground surfaces as well as other regular wintertime maintenance tasks.
- e. **Director Updates:** Ms. Christiansen gave the following updates on behalf of Mr. Barber:
- **Budget Hearing** – Went very well and feels like we're building a good rapport with the new City Manager. Looks like the historical services aspect is moving forward as expected, and there were lots of good questions on maintenance equipment and services.
 - **Cornland School** – There was an architectural review meeting recently about the possibility of relocating the Cornland School building although there are some challenges that would have to be overcome. It's more complicated than one might think. Also in discussions about viable locations.
 - **Arboretum Farmhouse** – Still moving forward with the architectural review of renovations needed for the farmhouse.
 - **NWRP Updates:** Still moving forward with the design of new store and interpretive center buildings.
 - **Stadium** – the RFP closed yesterday and they think they will get more than 5 bids. Community engagement will be important so there will be a lot of public meetings to explain the strategic plan and get feedback.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- None.

HEARING OF BOARD MEMBERS:

- Mr. Anderson asked whether a spouse would have to undergo a background check if participating as a volunteer with a board member. Ms. Christiansen said that if it is just a one-day supervised project, a background check would not be required. But for a longer-term thing like coaching, a background check would be required.
- Mr. Kos asked if the volunteer list had been distributed to schools and Ms. Christiansen said that it hadn't yet but we will be contacting different groups including school and military groups. Feel free to share it with any of your contacts.
- Ms. Holt said that ODU has a Leader's Program and she will share the volunteer list with them.
- Ms. Christiansen said that the Homeless Resource Center on South Military is looking for someone to lead a weekly group exercise program on a volunteer basis. Maybe a half-hour once a week. This would be good for those who would like to get in some community service hours – especially student groups.
- Ms. Kos went to Oak Grove Lake Park. It was very clean and they had a lot of fun.
- Ms. Christiansen added that KayaXpedition will be expanded and held for two days in June this year. You can bring your own kayak or canoe or you can rent them. There will be a festival atmosphere and lots of things going on. We are also participating in River Fest this year and will be holding it at Elizabeth River Park on that Saturday in June. We're hoping that the Learning Barge will be able to be docked there for the weekend.
- Ms. Holt's running group will be going to Oak Grove Lake Park when it starts staying lighter in the evenings.

NEW BUSINESS:

- None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 pm.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be on Thursday, March 5, 6:30 pm, at the Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways History Museum/Visitor Center.

Minutes submitted by Cori Fuqua, Secretary