

# CHESAPEAKE PARKS, RECREATION AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

## Meeting Notes

### June 3, 2021

This meeting of the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Advisory Board was held on June 3, 2021 at the Chesapeake Conference Center. Chair Hoover called the meeting to order at 6:40 pm.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chair Hoover made the following announcements:

- This meeting is being recorded.
- Meeting information for this board, along with provisions for public access, is posted on the [Parks, Recreation and Tourism Advisory Board web page](#).
- Essential business of the [Parks, Recreation and Tourism Advisory Board](#) is being conducted during this meeting.
- Public comments will be received during the Hearing of Citizens section on the agenda (after the Approval of Minutes), and the time limit is 3 minutes.
- Speakers will identify themselves verbally by name before speaking.
- Attendees must be called on by name by the board chairman before speaking, or identify themselves by name before speaking at any time during the meeting.

Chair Hoover asked if anyone had any questions about the process and there were none.

<b>Members Present:</b>	Donna Cannatella (non-voting ex-officio/CCC, Paula Faivre, Jean Holt, Jennifer Hoover (Chair), Chris Lowie (non-voting ex-officio/GDSNWR), Patti McCambridge, Neta Stephens, and Geral Stukes
<b>Members Absent:</b>	Chris Anderson, Christine Arrasate, Colby Black (non-voting Youth Liaison), Bryan Carey, Jean Carideo (non-voting ex-officio/GBBWHF), Kevin Cole (non-voting ex-officio/CPS), Susan Dixon, Berkley Gibbs, Julie Halsnoy, Chelsea Hall, Lindy Huber, Bob Leedom (Vice-Chair), Annette Kelley, and Michael Williams
<b>Staff Present:</b>	Mike Barber, Monica Christiansen, Thurman Diamond, Kim Murden, Ana Elezovic and Cori Fuqua

#### **ROLL CALL**

Ms. Fuqua called the roll. Attendance did not reflect a quorum with 6 voting members present, 11 voting members were absent.

#### **MINUTES:**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Ms. McCambridge asked that a correction be made to the May minutes as follows: the reference to the Owens/Bellville house should be changed to Owens-Melvin house. There were no further corrections so the minutes will be final as corrected.

#### **HEARING OF CITIZENS:**

None.

## REPORTS:

### a. Committee Reports:

- Athletic Rules Committee – None.
- Tourism Committee – None.

### b. Ex-Officio Reports:

- Chesapeake Conference Center – Ms. Cannatella reported on the following:
  - **COVID Restrictions** – Most COVID restrictions were lifted on May 28<sup>th</sup> and the Conference Center is following all City guidelines. However, VenueWorks employees are still required to wear masks as they walk about the Center. Customers are consulted regarding their preference as far as physical distancing for their events. Restrooms are open but still have distancing restrictions, hand sanitizers and floor decals are still in place throughout the Center, buffet procedures will still be adhered to, and staff is still disinfecting before and after all events. All of these things will stay in place permanently.
  - **Events** – As of tonight, we have 96 confirmed events on the books so far through the end of the year. If you would like to join our mailing list to receive weekly Friday emails, go to the website and click on “About Us”, then “Stay Connected” or at the very bottom under the “Plan Your Event” section, you can submit your email address there. There is also a popup that comes up, so three ways to sign up! Events this month include the Rotary Club meetings every Wednesday, the Annual Great Bridge Fisherman’s Association Flea Market on June 12<sup>th</sup> from 8am-2:30pm at \$4/pp to get in, the Chesapeake Sports Club monthly luncheon meeting on June 14<sup>th</sup>, the Chesapeake Juneteenth Foundation on Saturday June 19<sup>th</sup> featuring a jazz concert at \$50/pp. New events coming up are a Jujitsu combat event on August 28<sup>th</sup> and others that will be announced at the next meeting. We have all new catering menus with organic selections and you can see them on our website featured in our new digital flipbooks on our website, and all-inclusive packages for a variety of events. For more information, go to the website [ChesapeakeConference.com](http://ChesapeakeConference.com). We are also hiring banquet staff so if you know anyone who would be interested, please direct them to our website for more information and to apply.
  - **Lunch with Chef** is on Fridays from 11:30am – 1:30pm at \$14/pp. (except for June 18<sup>th</sup> which is the Juneteenth holiday and we are closed that day).
- Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge – Mr. Lowie gave a presentation on the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. It was very interesting and the presentation will be sent out to the board as a PDF along with the meeting minutes. He also mentioned that a group consisting of staff from the City of Chesapeake, Public Works and PRT Departments and City of Suffolk Parks and Recreation and Planning/Public Works Departments received a federal highways FLAP grant. It funds a planning study for an environmental assessment to determine the feasibility of a

connecting trail within the Dismal Swamp area from Suffolk to Chesapeake. It's great news!

- **Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways History Museum** – Ms. Fuqua distributed copies of the Patriot Record newsletter on behalf of Ms. Carideo.

c. **Tourism Report** – Ms. Murden gave the following updates:

- **Hotel Performance and Visitation in Chesapeake** – We continue to do really well and are leading the region and state. In the month of April, our occupancy was at 80% while regionally it was at 74% and statewide it was 56%. Business travel is starting to pick up. It has always been a strong sector for us due to the corporate business base we have here in Greenbrier.
- **Events** – We have two events coming up: KayaXpedition at Oak Grove Lake Park on Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup> and Celebrate Freedom at City Park on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. See the [website](#) for details.
- **Bus Groups** – The International Tattoo is this weekend in Norfolk and we've been able to secure two bus groups that are participating in Tattoo activities but staying in Chesapeake. We created itineraries that include some Chesapeake activities such as visiting the museum and Elizabeth River Park, birding opportunities, fly fishing demonstrations and some lunches/dinners.

d. **Parks and Recreation Reports**

- Mr. Diamond reported on the following:
  - **Recreation Centers** are fully open!
  - **Summer Camps** at Great Bridge, Indian River and Western Branch are full, but Camelot still has a few openings.
  - **55 & Better** – The annual Fish Fry is this Friday, June 11 starting at 10:30am at City Park and there will be two separate lunch seatings. Ceramics, Painting for Fun and Zumba classes are back. We'll be expanding numbers and slowly bringing on other classes.
- Ms. Christiansen reported on the following:
  - **Paddle for the Peake** – Launched last Friday with the app which you can now download. It will be ongoing throughout the summer.
  - **Splash Pad at Western Branch** – Working with contractor to get everything ready and will hopefully have a soft opening soon this summer.
  - **Still Hiring!** We need lots of people! Please see our weekly postings on [Facebook](#) and share.

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

- **Board Meeting Locations** – Thank you to Donna for hosting the meeting tonight! Board members should have received the meeting schedule for the rest of the year. The meetings will be in a different place every month so the board can see locations they might never have visited or haven't been to in a while.

- **Historical Village** – City Council passed the MOU with the state last week for us to get our designated \$3 million and that’s great news! That gives us \$3.4 million. Another \$600K has been pledged by the City for FY 2023. The \$3 million will be used to build a Visitor Center and commemoration to the Underground Railroad. We have already met with consultants so we can hopefully fast track it. We are also a finalist for an additional \$3 million of federal funds for restoration of the Cornland School and the Superintendent’s House and feel we’re in a very good position for that. We should hear something between October and January.
- **Cornland School Move** – Rolling along really well and there is a possibility that the move might happen earlier than late summer/early fall as originally thought.
- **100’ Flag at City Park** – You might see a conditional use permit request for the flag installation at the Chesapeake 9/11 Memorial as an agenda item to Council soon, after it goes through the Planning Commission for their approval first.
- **Department Report** – Should be released tomorrow. Lots of good information including the historic marker dedication at Owens-Melvin house and Clean and Green Poster winners with the Mayor.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- None.

#### **HEARING OF BOARD MEMBERS:**

- Ms. Fuqua shared a few items from the following board members that could not attend the meeting:
  - Ms. Arrasate – Please accept and pass on my congratulations to Mike and the team for the article on Pilotonline regarding the Cornland School project. Well done! I know good PR helps to gain community support and can help move a project forward!
  - Ms. Kelley – Please let Donna Cannatella know that I had lunch with Chef and it was delicious. I had two friends with me and they were impressed. Also Mike and Monica knew my brother, Robert Peek. On June 9<sup>th</sup> at 1pm at the NC Visitor Center the Army Corps will be naming a boat in his honor.
- Ms. Holt – Are you still capping off the summer camp at 20 kids per center? Mr. Diamond said that yes, 20 will still be the limit because kids can’t be vaccinated yet and must still practice physical distancing and wear masks. We don’t have room for more than 20 kids with the physical restrictions in place.
- Ms. McCambridge – Thank you Mike, Ana and team for the event at the Owens-Melvin house. It was beautiful and the family was thrilled.
- Mr. Barber added that Ana did a wonderful video series for the Historic Preservation Commission that featured different places in Chesapeake. If you haven’t seen them, you can find the links on the Historic Preservation Commission’s [HPC Library web page](#) under the Video section, on PRT’s [Facebook page](#) and also our [YouTube channel](#).

- Mr. Barber said that there were a couple of other events coming up at Chesapeake City Park like Rock The Park on Friday, June 11<sup>th</sup> from 5-9pm, and the Chesapeake Spring Art Show on Saturday and Sunday, June 26-27 from 10am-6pm both days.
- Ms. Murden provided a link to the [VisitChesapeake weekly events email signup](#).
- Ms. Faivre suggested that we post our events as “Events” on Facebook because lots of people go there when looking for things to do on the weekend. There was much discussion on this but staff responded that for events that are ours, we do post them on Facebook. There just haven’t really been that many for the past year.
- Ms. Faivre also asked about the status of Culpepper Landing Park and Heritage Park. Mr. Barber said that the land for Culpepper Landing Park has been deeded over to the City but the environmental prep work hasn’t been finished by the vendor yet. The improvements can’t be started until then. Heritage Park has been delayed due to the new construction of a police/fire precinct building on the site (which was just completed). An extended road leading back into the property with a parking lot at the end will likely be built later this year. After that’s completed, we’ll be working with the equestrian folks to do some trail blazing as Phase I. Phase II would be the addition of the amenities. The current police academy might need to be relocated to that location which would change the road layout so that’s what the delay, and possible future delays, is about. But we do have the funding for Phase I now and funding in the capital plan budget for FY 24 for Phase II to add other amenities like shelters, playground, etc.
- Mr. Lowie asked if the Culpepper Landing Park would be a public park and Mr. Barber said yes. The only thing from the original plans that will not be included is the revolving bridge which the Army Corps would not allow. Later on we can have the discussion about the possibility of a connection into the Refuge.
- Ms. Hoover – A lot of her friends are very excited for Paddle the Peake!

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- None.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 pm.

#### **NEXT MEETING:**

**The will not be a meeting in July. The next meeting will be on Thursday, August 5, 2021, at 6:30 pm at The Portlock at South Norfolk, 3815 Bainbridge Boulevard (near the South Norfolk Community Center).**

Minutes submitted by Cori Fuqua, Secretary