

CHESAPEAKE PARKS, RECREATION AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Notes

August 5, 2021

This meeting of the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Advisory Board was held on August 5, 2021 at the Portlock at South Norfolk. Chair Hoover called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Fuqua called the roll. Attendance reflected a quorum with 13 voting members present, 4 voting members were absent.

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

MINUTES:

Approval of Meeting Minutes: There were no corrections, so the minutes are approved as presented.

HEARING OF CITIZENS:

None.

REPORTS:

a. **Committee Reports:**

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

b. **Ex-Officio Reports:**

- **Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways History Museum** –Ms. Carideo reported on the following:
 - **Coastal Virginia Magazine Awards** - The museum was recognized with a silver award as Best Museum for History on the southside and the park won bronze as Best Place to Hike and Walk on the southside.
 - **MAPS (Museum Assessment Program)** - The museum is in the process of the MAPS (Museum Assessment Program) and it is a lot of work!

- **Food truck** – The first food truck event of the summer was last night, and the food was delicious.
- **Chesapeake Public Schools** – Mr. Cole reported on the following:
 - **New Staff Person** – Mike Tribus, former Athletic Director at Indian River High School. He couldn't be here tonight to be introduced but hopefully will be able to attend a future meeting.
 - **VHSL 2021-22 State Class 5 and 6 Football Championships** will be held at ODU Ballard Stadium in December and Mr. Cole is helping to run it.
 - **Sports Safety Zone Training** is being hosted at the Conference Center on August 16th from 9am-12pm.
 - **OSHS Football** is hosting the #1 national football team, St. John Bosco of California, on September 17th at 7:00 p.m.
 - **Chesapeake High School Game Tickets** will now be available to purchase online.
- **Chesapeake Conference Center** – Ms. Cannatella reported on the following:
 - **Events** – As of tonight, there are 61 confirmed events (and counting) on the books through the end of the year. For a complete listing of events, see our website. Also, the Princess Ball will be back in February 2022 with a new twist. Princesses representing 10 children's charities will be invited to attend with their fathers. A royal raffle will be held at the end of the evening with 100% of the proceeds going to one of the charities.
 - **Lunch with Chef** is on Fridays from 11:30am – 1:30pm at \$14/pp. August is "City Appreciation" month for city employees at \$10/pp. We will be incorporating different charities and non-profits including the Humane Society and they will be bringing animals for adoption in October. Also looking into a "donation" program that would bring in donations for charities in return for a discount or coupon off the lunch price.
 - **Winter Wonderland Forest Contest** with Chesapeake Public Libraries. It will consist of a month-long (November 20-December 15) exhibit of Christmas trees decorated in different literature themes chosen by participating Chesapeake public schools. More information is available on our website. If anyone knows where we could get donated trees, please let Donna know. Artificial trees would be perfect. After the contest, the trees will be donated to families in need.
- c. **Tourism Report** – Ms. Murden gave the following updates:
 - **Hotel Occupancy** – Chesapeake has been averaging around 85% occupancy this summer!
 - **July Sales Team Report** – Our sales team was able to attend their first in-person sales event, a bridal showcase, and really enjoyed seeing everyone.
 - **Events** – Celebrate Freedom was held at City Park on July 3rd with an estimated 15,000 happy attendees. The Chesapeake Criterium Bike Race and Teeuwen

Memorial Time Trials are coming up in August, and Symphony Under the Stars in September. Paddle for the Peake has been popular with 1,317 new app users since the beginning of June - 1,061 new users in July alone!

d. **Parks and Recreation Reports**

- Mr. Diamond reported on the following:
 - **Recreation Centers** are open and operating.
 - **Summer Camps** at the four participating centers are full at reduced capacity from past years.
 - **Pickleball** attendance is growing and becoming more popular with pre-seniors.
 - **Instructional Classes** with limited capacities are continuing and filling up very quickly for the Fall.
 - **Fall soccer** registration numbers were up from the Spring as expected but still lower than pre-Covid for Fall.
 - **Fall football, volleyball and cheer** registrations are open until August 9th.
 - **Field hockey camp** is new and open for registration, so we will see if we can generate enough interest in a program.
- Ms. Christiansen reported on the following:
 - **Sundays on the Lake** – Free program at Oak Gove Lake Park to bring your own kayak/canoe/SUP and paddle on the lake. It was supposed to begin the first Sunday in August but was rained out. We will try again this coming Sunday and each Sunday through the end of the month from 10am-4pm. Mr. Barber added that there are significant dollars in the capital budget for FY 24 to add parking, rental facility, restrooms and staff so the public will have more access the lake.
 - **Splash Park at Western Branch** – We will hopefully have a soft opening in a few weeks and keep it open for 4-6 weeks, weather permitting. Patrons must have a community center membership or purchase a day pass to use it.
 - **Introducing Shawn Hopson!** Shawn started Monday and is the new Parks and Municipal Services Superintendent and joins us from Virginia Beach.

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

- **Cornland School move** is happening tomorrow and is the first step for the historical village.
- **Battlefield Museum's** new property acquisition is waiting for a conservation easement through the state before it can be transferred to the City. We are maintaining the property until then.
- **Newton Neck property acquisition** off Dominion Boulevard is still in the works and looks like the grant funding might be able to transfer directly to us rather than through the Living River Trust first. This park will give the public another water access point and will be a natural area to preserve and develop.

- **Former FEMA properties** – This is a new acquisition of five adjoining parcels on Mains Creek (near Harbour North Park) that we were able to scoop up and will end up being a park of around 11 acres total. We will be working with grant money and the Wetlands Watch organization will be working with PRT and doing some natural and native dense plantings in the next 6-8 months.
- **Schooner Trail (Holly Cove area)** – This is a parcel that we picked up a couple of years ago. Thurman has been working with the Holly Cove residents to get their feedback on what recreational opportunities they would like to see there.
- **Cuffee/Campostella Area Mayor’s Task Force** has just been created to work with area organizations to see what can be done to help the residents. We have had difficulties trying to attract people to utilize and participate in structured activities there, but the center is busy with activity all day long and so is the park and playground.
- **Capital reports**
 - **Historical Village** – moving right along starting with the Cornland School relocation to the site. We are still in the beginning design phase for Phase II which includes the visitor center and Maroon community site.
 - **Northwest River Park** – Both of the campground restrooms are open. The third restroom facility at the south terminal by the river is now under construction and the interpretive center and ranger station are in the design phase.
- **100’ Flagpole at City Park** – The sleeve for the pole was delivered today and the pole itself and the 30’x50’ flag will be here in another week or so. The Gold Star Memorial folks will not be able to complete their fundraising in time to be able to have the memorial installed by 9/11 but they have made a good start.
- **Department Staffing** – We are still hovering right around 60% for staffing and we are not alone. It is an issue for everyone and is challenging. Cities are competing with each other to recruit staff and it’s a tough, competitive market.
- **New City Logo** – We are rebranding with a new City logo in September. Most people won’t notice much difference although we will be allowed to use some additional color options now other than maroon, and there will be a heron we can use too.
- **New City and Department Website** – The City is also coming out with a brand new website this fall, both for the City and our department, and we are very excited about that.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- None.

HEARING OF BOARD MEMBERS:

- Ms. Carideo wanted to put in a plug for the Cuffee library. They are very innovative and doing everything they can to serve the community.
- Mr. Gibbs asked if the flagpole near the Bagley stage will stay or be removed. Mr. Barber said it will be removed.

- Ms. Faivre asked about the FEMA properties and if they are dry and usable or if they are wet. Mr. Barber said they are dry most of the time but during certain storms it most certainly floods. There are amenities and plants we can put in that will withstand that and assist. Some may have similar concepts to Blue Heron Landing.
- Ms. Stephens asked if there were plans for a still/distillery exhibit at the NWRP new facility and Mr. Barber said yes, we are researching that.
- Mr. Leedom saw an article in the Clipper about Indian River Park and the new bridges. Also wondering that there are no history links on the department or tourism website, or links to the Battlefield Museum, Conference Center, Tourism, etc. Very difficult to navigate. Mr. Barber added that hopefully with the new website, it will be more user friendly and easier to find information. We inherited the historical aspect from the planning department and will address that area at some point on the new website.
- Ms. Faivre received an email from Derek Bennett, an umpire for Deep Creek Baseball and former board member, regarding a couple of field lighting incidents at the Deep Creek Park baseball fields and the league's lack of access to water for the fields. Mr. Barber said that he was aware of the lighting incidents on one evening due to an issue with our national contractor's software and much of the information in the email was inaccurate. We have a good relationship with the league contact persons, and they are always welcome to further discuss ways to improve amenities – and they do.
- Ms. Holt was contacted by a citizen asking why the public can't canoe or kayak at Oak Grove Lake Park and she told them about Sundays on the Lake in August. Another had a concern about offering Boxing 101 at the community centers to kids. Mr. Diamond and Mr. Barber said that it is passive boxing where kids will be mostly fitness training, hitting a punching bag, learning different techniques and self-defense, and that the class is small and will be limited to around 8 spots. It is more of a training and conditioning program, not a true boxing activity as nobody will be hitting other people.
- Ms. Kelley said she became very aware of the parks during the Covid-19 shutdown and would like to know if there is a way to find out which park trails are actually handicap accessible? Not just a little ramp to a sidewalk that then becomes gravel or mulch. Mr. Barber said that our Park Planner is evaluating every park against a list of criteria to find out exactly what our overall situation is and then we can prioritize and address. If you have specific areas at parks that you would like us to review first, please let us know. Ms. Kelley also talked about the Army Corps of Engineers ceremony at the Dismal Swamp State Park in June where they christened a boat and named it Peek in honor of her late brother, Robert Peek. He was the bridge, lock and dam master at the canal lock in Deep Creek for more than 20 years as well as an unofficial ambassador and historian to the Dismal Swamp Canal. The ceremony was really very nice.
- Ms. McCambridge brought some framed and matted photography of historical subjects around Chesapeake as a show and tell. There are 45 professional photos that were commissioned by the Historical Preservation Commission four years ago. She is hoping to be able to display them at the Conference Center and at other places like libraries. They have a good collection of other artwork, maps, etc. as well. Chesapeake should

consider having a Chesapeake history-themed Reflections contest within the schools that would consist of art, poetry, literature and photography/videography entries.

- Chair Hoover said that she and her husband have done both Dismal Swamp Canal locations for Paddle the Peake and the app is great. There was an instance where they couldn't figure out where they needed to be to take the photo so she emailed VisitChesapeake and they were so kind and prompt in responding. Amazing customer service!
- Mr. Gibbs said July 3rd was excellent!!

NEW BUSINESS:

- Ms. Murden conducted a drawing to win a stuffed Chessie and the winner was Berkley Gibbs!
- Chris Anderson turned in his resignation to the board. He will be going off to college at Mary Washington University in Fredericksburg on a pre-med track. Best wishes to him!

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be on Thursday, September 2, 2021, at 6:30 pm at River Crest Community Center, 1001 Riverwalk Parkway.

Minutes submitted by Cori Fuqua, Secretary