

CHESAPEAKE PARKS, RECREATION AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Notes

September 2, 2021

This meeting of the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Advisory Board was held on September 2, 2021, at the River Crest Community Center. Vice Chair Leedom called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Fuqua called the roll. Attendance did not reflect a quorum with only 7 voting members present, 9 voting members were absent. No official business will be conducted at this meeting.

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

MINUTES:

Approval of Meeting Minutes: There were no corrections and the August 5, 2021 minutes approval will be deferred to the next meeting.

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:
 - **Outdoor Classroom** – Two of our most dedicated volunteers, Gerald and Trudy Hartis, with the help of Chuck West, built an outdoor classroom near the woodland trail that runs along the canal in Battlefield Park. Lowe's generously donated all the materials and Gerald, Trudy and Chuck did all the work. It's a lovely spot for an

outdoor classroom where school groups, adult groups and special events can benefit.

- **Eagle Scout Fencing Project** – Tommy Rabenold, an Eagle Scout, approached the Foundation some time ago with a proposal to extend the historic replica fencing along Historic Way to the entrance. He worked with the department to satisfy all planning and permits required, is now ready to begin and deserves recognition for this park improvement.
- **John Adams** – John Adams is coming to the museum on Monday, September 27th, at 7:00 p.m. Dr. William G. Chrystal, pastor, author, scholar, historical interpreter, and the host of The Thomas Jefferson Hour for the past 12 years, will be with us. Tickets are available by calling the museum at 757-482-4480. Seating is limited.
- **Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge** – Mr. Lowie reported on the following:
 - **Interpretive panels** - 14 new interpretive panels have been installed at all trailhead kiosks. The new panels highlight a map and features of each entrance and messaging was developed from the headquarters exhibits for consistency.
 - **Portsmouth Ditch Trailhead** – A portion of Black Bear Trail, located at the Portsmouth Ditch Trailhead in Chesapeake, will be designated a Track Trail. Track Trail is a Kids in Parks program sponsored by the Blue Ridge Park Foundation. A new kiosk and brochures will be installed over the winter. The project is also sponsored by a Chesapeake citizen.
 - **Hunting program** - The refuge hunt program has been revised. Portsmouth Ditch Trailhead in Chesapeake, as well as all other trailheads, will now be open to hunting. We have identified archery-only areas around our heavily used public access points. The season is longer, more species available, and more access points.
- **Chesapeake Public Schools** – Mr. Cole reported on the following:
 - **Chesapeake Olympians Meet and Greet** – A meet and greet for Grant Holloway and Michael Cherry will take place at Grassfield High School on Friday, September 10th, from 5-6:30 p.m. Anyone is welcome to attend. Masks will be required.
- **Chesapeake Conference Center** – Ms. Cannatella reported on the following:
 - **Events** – Lots of events happening including church events, birthday celebrations and business meetings to name a few. For a complete listing of upcoming events, visit our website.
 - **Lunch with Chef** is on Fridays from 11:30am – 1:30pm. Lunch on September 10th will be Lunch with Chef and Chessie and we will be selling the stuffed Chessie bears which include a coupon for \$4 off of lunch. Kids 5 and under eat for free!
- c. **Tourism Report** – Ms. Murden gave the following updates:

- **Hotel Occupancy** – Hotels still doing well. Occupancy is strong and we're still leading the region.
- **Sales** – Currently promoting fall travel and activities and we continue to add information on fall events and activities to our website.
- **Events** – Restaurant Week will be happening October 15-22. Symphony Under the Stars is this weekend on Sunday the 5th, the Ceremony of Remembrance and Concert is Saturday, September 11th.

d. **Parks and Recreation Reports**

- Mr. Diamond reported on the following:
 - **Splash Park** opened August 17th with daily hours. After Labor Day, it will be open late Wednesday afternoons and Saturdays.
 - **Athletics** – Youth football season has started, and practices have begun. Fall volleyball and soccer are starting up as well. Adult fall softball season is going strong including the senior league.
 - **Stay & Play** after school program registration opened August 9th with reduced numbers and most of the programs are either full or almost full. We had to cancel the program here at River Crest due to not enough interest at this location.
 - **Standup Paddleboard Yoga** at Oak Grove Lake Park. Two Friday evening sessions will be offered in September and registration is open at \$45 per person. We hope to expand this next year.
 - **Housekeeping** – we are still short around 30 housekeepers. Staff and supervisors are working hard to keep up standards and a mobile team has been created.
 - **New gym floor** was installed here at River Crest with four pickleball courts. It's beautiful! Check it out after the meeting.
- Mr. Hopson reported on the following:
 - **Parks maintenance** – Also short staffed and trying to keep up with mowing and other park maintenance projects, athletic field maintenance and event support. Vacant grounds positions are posted, and we will hopefully be able to interview and fill some of these vacancies in the coming weeks.
 - **Landscaping** – starting to plan for winter projects such as mulching and tree maintenance. Will also be interviewing for the landscape designer position in a couple of weeks.
- Ms. Christiansen reported on the following:
 - **Sundays on the Lake** – Even though the weather didn't cooperate every weekend, we still had between 20-40 people participate for each Sunday and everyone loved it. We're looking at changing it from a summer program to maybe spring and/or fall for next year and will continue to gauge the interest.

- **Splash Park at Western Branch** – As we go into next year, we’re looking at expanding the concrete pad to be able to offer some non-water-related games like a painted tricycle path, painted checkerboard, and maybe a flat painted version of cornhole.
 - **CIP Budget Kick-Off Meeting** took place yesterday and we’re feeling pretty good about the process. The CIP budget must be turned in in October and then we’ll start on the operating budget.
 - **AutumnFest and Arbor Day Celebration** will be October 2 at 10 a.m. at the Arboretum. It’s a fun event to begin the fall season.
 - **Arboretum Farmhouse** – interior items are being evaluated for removal and storage so once that has been completed, the condition of the building can be assessed for renovation.
 - **Cornland School** was successfully moved to its new location so we’re very excited about that.
 - **Heron Statues** have been installed along the waterway at Great Bridge Lock Park and are very cool! Pictures are in the latest Department Report.
- e. **Director Updates:** Ms. Christiansen gave a few updates on behalf of Mr. Barber. See above.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- None.

HEARING OF BOARD MEMBERS:

- Ms. Dixon announced that the annual Chesapeake Community Messiah Chorus concert will be taking place at the Great Bridge Methodist Church and asked that we share the event information to help get the word out not only to get people to attend the event, but also to attract new choir members. It is a free event, and the first rehearsal is October 4th. Kim Murden said it could be added to the holiday events on the VisitChesapeake website.
- Ms. McCambridge said that the Cornland School move was an adventure but was very well orchestrated. The historical photography collection will be installed and housed at the Chesapeake Conference Center, and they will be delivered next Tuesday. Thank you, Donna! Lastly, would really like to see regular reports and updates on the CEIC/environmental activities. Ms. Christiansen agreed and will include them in the future. Ms. McCambridge won a Notable Yard award for the Great Bridge district. Congratulations!!
- Ms. Faivre asked if any Chesapeake playgrounds had a wheelchair swing. Mr. Diamond said yes, there is one at the playground at Deep Creek Park. Also, on her morning walks, she noticed the progression of improvements at Deep Creek Middle School. She also received a great email from Tourism and Ms. Murden said it was probably the partner (business) email which was sent out to the board since they are part of the data base. There is also a consumer version that will go out once or twice a month so look for

those as well. Ms. Faivre downloaded the VisitChesapeake app and suggested that everyone do the same! She also saw a post on one of her Deep Creek Facebook groups from a woman who wanted to do a memorial tree planting in Deep Creek Park. Ms. Kelley is also in the same Facebook group and is communicating with the woman. The department has a Commemoration and Donation program that covers memorial benches, trees, etc. and Ms. Fuqua will send the website link and contact information for Kevin Kaul, Parks Manager, to Ms. Faivre and Ms. Kelly to share with the citizen.

- Ms. Kelley received an email from a citizen thanking Mosquito Control for spraying around the shelter at City Park before their event but said it was difficult to figure out the process for the request. Ms. Kelly then asked if there would be a Mr. & Miss Abilities pageant this year and Mr. Diamond and Ms. Christiansen responded no, not this year due to the uncertainty of Covid.
- Mr. Gibbs shared that the Fall Jubilee Craft Show will be at City Park on November 6th so please come and support the Jubilee. Also, on page 18 of the Department Report you'll see a picture of my son, Chesapeake Fire Marshall Gibbs, with Cinco the K-9 Fire Dog. If anyone has any organizations that would like them to come out and do a demonstration, we can set that up. What is the one-time charge to go to the Splash Park? The daily pass is \$5 per person but usage is free with a community center membership. Non-residents can also use it, but the fees are a little higher.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Ms. Fuqua mentioned that term renewals are due for some board members and that they should have received letters from the City Clerk's office as well as emails. Board members that are interested in renewing their terms will need to go on the [website and fill out the application](#) by September 30, 2021. If not renewing, please contact the City Clerk's office to let them know.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be on Thursday, October 7, 2021, at 6:30 pm at the Rokeby Center, 1709 Rokeby Avenue.

Notes submitted by Cori Fuqua, Secretary