

# CHESAPEAKE PARKS, RECREATION AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

## Meeting Minutes

# October 7, 2021

This meeting of the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Advisory Board was held on October 7, 2021, at the Rokeby Center. Chair Hoover called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

### **ROLL CALL**

Ms. Fuqua called the roll. Attendance reflected a quorum with 11 voting members present, 4 voting members absent.

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

### **MINUTES:**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** The August 5, 2021 minutes and September 2, 2021 meeting notes were approved by the board with no corrections.

### **HEARING OF CITIZENS:**

Mark Shackelford, a previous board member and equestrian community member, asked to be involved again with trail blazing at Heritage Park. Mr. Barber said absolutely, and it was good timing. Now that the new Police/Fire Training Center plans have been finalized, our first step will be to create a separate entrance drive off St. Brides Road to the park grounds, and then add a parking lot so groups can get back there and start on the trails.

### **REPORTS:**

#### **a. Committee Reports:**

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

#### **b. Ex-Officio Reports:**

- **Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways History Museum** – None.
- **Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge** – None.

- **Chesapeake Public Schools** – None.
- **Chesapeake Conference Center** – Ms. Cannatella reported on the following:
  - **Award** - The Conference Center was honored with a ConventionSouth Magazine annual Reader’s Choice Award as one of the best meeting sites in the south.
  - **Lunch with Chef** is on Fridays from 11:30am – 1:30pm. Lunch on October 8th will feature the Chesapeake Humane Society and they will bring a few pets that are up for adoption. If you adopt a pet or bring an item from their wish list to donate, lunch will only cost you \$10. Also, the NAACP will be there conducting a voter’s registration drive so NAACP members are eligible for lunch for \$10. And city employees too – lunch for \$10 permanently! For a group of 10 or more people, there is a group discount with lunch for \$10 each. Next week, Lunch With Chef will be an Italian buffet in celebration of Italian American Heritage Month (October).
  - **Events and Promotions** – For a complete listing of upcoming events, visit our website. October is Italian American Heritage Month so there will be special pricing on an Italian buffet at \$5 off per person for those who schedule events during this month even if the event takes place after October. Also, October is LGBTQ History Month and there will be special pricing of \$5 off some different buffets. October 1<sup>st</sup> kicked off the first Friday Trivia Contest for a chance to win a Lunch With Chef. Each month will feature different trivia questions about the Conference Center and the answers can be found on the website. Want to feature a special personal message on the Conference Center’s marquis? For only \$250 it will run 24 hours for 3 days. Full details on all events and promotions can be found on the website.
- c. **Tourism Report** – Ms. Christiansen gave the following updates on behalf of Ms. Murden:
  - **Hotel Occupancy** – Hotels still doing well and going strong.
  - **Events** – Restaurant Week starts next week October 15-22. There are 31 participating restaurants covering breakfast, lunch and dinner menu options and the full listing of participating restaurants can be found at [www.chesapeakerestaurantweek.com](http://www.chesapeakerestaurantweek.com). The VisitChesapeake website has a great section of fall events and activities, and you should sign up to receive their weekly eNews that features events and activities happening not only in Chesapeake, but the region as well, if you don’t already receive it.
  - **Podcast** – Kim Murden was invited to participate in an international podcast called Layover Live to talk about Paddle the Peake and other initiatives. The series is targeted to tourism professionals to share unique and successful ideas with industry partners. Check it out [here!](#)
  - **Sales** – Still promoting fall travel and activities and continuing to add information on fall events and activities to the VisitChesapeake website.
- d. **Parks and Recreation Reports**
  - Mr. Diamond reported on the following:

- **55 & Better** – The October Newsletter, Rokeby Center October Calendar and Senior Services Seminar flyer were passed out to everyone. The seminar is at Indian River Community Center on Friday, October 29, from 9am-12:30pm. It is a great event so put it on your calendar and attend if you can. The 55 & Better seniors division will be starting a new Introduction to Stained Glass program at The Portlock which is exciting. Last week they had a Drum Circle at the Marketplace Shelter at Chesapeake City Park, and it was lots of fun.
- **Athletics** – Youth flag and tackle football season is well underway, as well as cheering, volleyball and soccer. Adult fall softball season is still going strong.
- **Stay & Play** after school program is going strong at five of the community centers.
- **Housekeeping** – we are still hiring housekeepers! If you know anyone who might be interested, please send them our way.
- Mr. Hopson reported on the following:
  - **Parks Maintenance** – A section of the Commonwealth Railway Trail beginning at Dordon Street (off Taylor Road) and has been paved and completed as part of the Hampton Roads Trail and eventually will link to the Western Branch Trail. We've taken over maintenance responsibilities from Public Works so check it out if you have a chance.
  - **Landscaping** – Grass growth is starting to slow down a little so we're doing a little catch up in other areas and will begin to transition over to winter projects such as mulching and tree maintenance. New equipment has been arriving which will be extremely helpful to increase productivity and efficiency. Russell Memorial Library's back parking lot has been repaved and we will be installing some new sod and shrub plantings there.
  - Chair Hoover asked what was the best way to report a downed tree blocking a trail or other issues that should be report to the department? Mr. Barber said if it's not an emergency, send Ms. Fuqua an email with the details. If it's more urgent, call our front desk at 757-382-6411. Pictures are helpful as well as location information (cross streets, landmarks, etc.).
- Ms. Christiansen reported on the following:
  - **Environmental Programs** – Megan Hale, our environmental programs coordinator, will be coming to our next meeting in November to present an overview of our environmental programs and how we are connected to the CEIC (Chesapeake Environmental Improvement Council).
  - **AutumnFest and Arbor Day Celebration** was last Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, at the Arboretum. It was a beautiful day, the grounds looked fantastic, and everyone enjoyed it.
  - **Special Events Coordinator** – We are hiring for this position so if you know anyone that might fit the bill, ask them to check out the posting on the city's employment website.

- **Deck the Hall** – We have a new vendor we'll be working with for this year's holiday event. It will be similar to last year but without the light show on the City Hall building. There will be more lights on the grounds and fun things to see as well as two separate event nights (December 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>) featuring carolers, goats and Santa, and vendors will be serving donuts, hot chocolate and coffee. We're finalizing the marketing and promotional materials which will be out very soon.
- **Holiday Brass** will be at the Conference Center again this year on December 16<sup>th</sup> without the children's performances. The **Holiday Parade** and **Battle of Great Bridge** both take place the first weekend in December.

e. **Director Updates:**

- Mr. Barber gave the following updates:
  - **Council Agenda Item/Lake Ahoy Space Lease** – We'll have a council agenda item on Tuesday to accept a lease at the Lake Ahoy shops, next to Southwestern Park, for a resource center with tutoring, outreach programs, and mentoring. Parks, the Police Department, Libraries and Schools will be involved.
  - **Historical Services** –
    - A group including department staff, members of the Historic Preservation Commission, and a couple of student alumni from the Cornland School took a field trip to Jarvisburg, North Carolina to visit the Historic Jarvisburg Colored School (now a museum). The group was able to see how it was set up and get some ideas for the Cornland School.
    - A couple of weeks ago, department staff and members of the Historic Preservation Commission toured several historic locations in Chesapeake including the Colonna houseboat.
    - The Historical Village is coming along, and the task order with the architectural items that need to be done is with the state Department of Historical Resources for approval. We already have their money so when we get the approval, we can start spending it to start the second phase which includes the Visitors Center and parking lot, stormwater and other infrastructure. We may get additional funding soon that would take care of some of the finishing touches at the Cornland School inside and outside as well as the Superintendent's House.
    - Cornland School is finally on its foundation and the girders have been replaced. The next step is to finish up the roofing. Once those items are finished and the building is secure, we can start on the grounds.
  - **Northwest River Park** – The terminal restrooms are just about completed. We're still working with the architects on the ranger station and interpretative center plans. We hope to be able to go out to bid by the start of the next fiscal year.

- **Blue Heron Landing Park** – Waiting for one more approval and then will be ready to go out to bid, hopefully by the end of the year, and then construction can start in the spring.
- **Arboretum** – The farmhouse has been cleared out and there are significant issues and damage from beetles. The building will have to be elevated to treat the beetles under the house.
- **9/11 Ceremony** – It was a great event and a special day. We actually had our own flyover! The 100' flag was up in time with temporary lighting, and we'll be adding some fencing and landscaping around it.
- **Claire Askew**, a long-time previous director of the department, passed away recently. She was instrumental in getting Centerville Park, Oak Grove Lake Park, and Deep Creek Park going.
- **Arboretum Advisory Board** – This small board was established a few years ago when the Arboretum Foundation turned over the Arboretum to the City. They've come to the point now where they would feel comfortable dissolving the board and turning things completely over to the city. Maybe there could be a dedicated member on this board representing the Arboretum as a liaison.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- None.

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

- Ms. McCambridge gave a more in-depth update on the Jarvisburg field trip and some thoughts for the Cornland School. She also gave some additional background on the Colonna houseboat. While working at the Historic Preservation Commission table at the AutumnFest, she received some great feedback on the event and the weather was beautiful!
- Ms. Stephens asked if there were any updates on the earthworks fort and Mr. Barber said that it's moving forward at the state's pace. We just had to pay the state \$20,000 for the next round of Geotech work.
- Mr. Gibbs said the 9-11 service was very nice and well-attended. Attended Lunch With Chef along with Bob Leedom and it was great. The Jubilee Fall Craft Show is November 6<sup>th</sup>. and the Kiwanis Club is doing the food. If you show up, he'll give you free cheese for your burger so please come and support the Jubilee!
- Mr. Williams said that Chesapeake is the only city that has all three major concert groups performing in their city! Tidewater Winds had a few rainouts this past summer season so looking for some reschedule dates next year in March, April and May.
- Mr. Leedom went to the 9-11 concert, and it was outstanding. Symphony Under the Stars was also great and very well done.

- Ms. Kelley also attended Symphony Under the Stars and the Pig Pickin'. Are all neighborhood parks part of Parks and Recreation? Mr. Barber said that some could belong to Homeowners' Associations.
- Ms. Holt would like to thank the city for being able to accommodate the ODU baseball team to rent a field on short notice because other plans fell through at the last minute. She also asked if the board's term expiration dates could be more staggered. It seems like many terms expire all on the same date.
- Ms. Arrasate really appreciated the offering of the kayak/paddleboard events at Oak Grove Lake Park. While she was not able to attend this year's events, she's looking forward to attending some next year. Mr. Barber added that we have funding for fiscal year '23 which should pave the way for us to add a rental facility and staffing.
- Ms. Huber thanked Shawn for the grass cutting efforts and added that the mulching at the Arboretum looks great. Whenever she contacts the department about an issue that she notices, it is taken care of immediately. Somebody has been doing some work at the Deep Creek High School baseball field and it looks nice. Mr. Barber said that it was a combined effort between an outside group that was allowed to use the field, the school and the department.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- Nominating Committee – Chair Hoover, Ms. Holt and Ms. Huber volunteered as the nominating committee. Next month the slate could be presented to the board and a vote can be taken if ready, or if not, the vote can take place in December. If anyone is interested in running or has any questions, please email Chair Hoover or Ms. Fuqua.
- Mr. Barber mentioned that Geral Stukes' passing was a tough loss. She was always available to us and willing to serve in a leadership role on the athletic rules committee with a smile on her face. She will be greatly missed.
- Ms. Holt brought a Chesapeake Monopoly game to raffle off to the board members – Ms. McCambridge won the raffle!

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

#### **NEXT MEETING:**

**The next meeting will be on Thursday, November 4, 2021, at 6:30 pm at the South Norfolk Community Center, 1217 Godwin Avenue.**

Minutes submitted by Cori Fuqua, Secretary