

VIRGINIA BEACH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

October 7, 2020, 5:00 pm

Virginia Beach Convention Center, 1000 19th Street, Meeting Room 1 A – C

Approved November 4, 2020

Present:

Officers: Chair, James Wood; First Vice-Chair, Sharon Prescott; Second Vice-Chair Mac Rawls, Secretary, Bobbie Gribble, Immediate Past President Bill Gambrell

Members: Finnley Brakke, Sharon Felton, Harriet Frenzel, Richard Klobuchar, Hannah Levi, Ian Lichacz, Lee Lockamy, Christi Lyons, Timothy Oksman, Katie Paulson

Staff: Mark Reed, Bill Landfair

Public: Christopher Pieczynski (presenter)

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Commission is to advise the City Council and the Departments of Planning and Community Development and Museums on all issues related to the preservation of historic buildings, structures and sites located in the City of Virginia Beach.

MISSION: The mission of the Commission shall be to preserve, protect and maintain the historic identity of Virginia Beach and the former Princess Anne County through a program of advocacy and increased public awareness and involvement.

Due to traffic issues affecting several members traveling to attend the meeting Mark Reed noted that we would wait to see if a few more members would arrive. He said he had been in contact by phone with Chair Jimmy Wood and is caught in the traffic tie up. After 15 minutes, Mr. Reed said the Mr. Wood wasn't any closer to arriving and said to go on with the presentation.

Mr. Reed introduced the speaker, Christopher Pieczynski. He noted that Mr. Pieczynski had presented a research paper at the Commission's last Annual Public Meeting in April 2019 on the 1781 skirmish at James's plantation. Mr. Reed said he had been surprised by all of the activity in Princess Anne County that Mr. Pieczynski described and noted that, like many of us, he had thought that there wasn't much happening in the area between the Skirmish at Kemps Landing in 1775 and the battle off the Capes in 1781. He said the Mr. Pieczynski's continued research not only shows that there was a lot of activity here throughout the war, but that Princess Anne County was a very strategic location that warranted attention from both sides.

Presentation – The Maritime War: The Revolutionary War in Princess Anne County

Christopher Pieczynski presented his paper on the Revolutionary War in Princess Anne County. He said at some point he had to tie up his research to work on the paper and there is more research to be done.

Mr. Pieczynski discussed the British efforts to disrupt shipping and noted their capture of many vessels in the Chesapeake Bay and around Cape Henry during the war. American forces also captured some British vessels in these areas and there was an ongoing effort from both sides to

control the entrance to the bay. Local militia forces supported these efforts from the land, especially at Cape Henry and near the Pleasure House.

The other ongoing effort was to try to control the local population and get them to be supportive of the British cause. Although there were some residents that provided some form of support, it was not what the British had hoped for and it generally did not materialize. The British harassed the population and captured prominent citizens from time to time to intimidate them or to use in prisoners exchanges.

British forces were headquartered in Portsmouth due to the good defensibility of that position. The arrival of Benedict Arnold to command the British efforts heightened tensions and resulted in several unsuccessful efforts to break the British hold on Hampton Roads and capture Arnold.

After the presentation Rick Klobuchar asked a question about the Middle Ground in the Chesapeake Bay. Mr. Pieczynski said it is a large shoal that made navigation difficult at night and for those with little knowledge of local waters. He said it was located on the other side of what is today the second island of the bridge tunnel. Mr. Reed said it is still there on modern navigation maps.

Mr. Reed said he became intrigued about the possibilities for the middle ground when reading Mr. Pieczynski's paper. He noted the British ship the *Swift* that had been mentioned in the talk as having been abandoned and burned on the Middle Ground to keep it from being captured. The paper said that before they did that they threw all of the cannon overboard trying to get the ship to float. He said he asked Mike Clem, an archaeologist at DHR, about it and he forwarded his note to John Broadwater, a well-known marine archaeologist. Mr. Broadwater was familiar with the ship and said it would be a great find. He suggested that the Army Corps of Engineers may have done some survey work near there and to contact them.

Welcome/Introductions/Remarks

Vice Chair Sharon Prescott called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She read the Purpose and Mission for the Historic Preservation Commission.

Approval of September 2, 2020 Minutes

Sharon Prescott asked the Commission members to review the minutes and note any corrections or additions. Rick Klobuchar made a motion for the minutes to be approved as presented. Ian Lichacz seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Committee Reports

Cape Henry Historic Site Committee

Mac Rawls reported for the Cape Henry Historic Site Committee. He noted that the Cape Henry Lighthouse site is reopened to the public as of October 2. He said the cost of admission is \$10 for general admission, meaning you can go to the base of the tower and that admission to go up to the Lighthouse is \$16. (Note: the committee report and the press release that were included in the meeting packet said the price to climb the tower is \$14). Mr. Rawls expressed concern about the cost of admission (both general and to the Lighthouse).

He noted that the city has provided shuttle vehicles, including maintenance and gas, to help address access problems for getting civilians on the base. Mr. Rawls said that Preservation Virginia should have discussed the admission increase with the Commission. He said he will express concern at the Executive Committee meeting. Bill Gambrell agreed the price of admission is a big concern.

Mr. Rawls said the old train station is being refurbished. He asked Lee Lockamy to provide some update. Mr. Lockamy said the project will leave the building exactly as it is with new electrical, HVAC, and bathrooms. He said they found a lot more asbestos than they thought they would encounter and are currently doing asbestos mitigation. Mr. Rawls said that it is great that the refurbishing is going on, although the committee had hoped that the Navy would commit some space in the building for Preservation Virginia.

Sharon Prescott turned the meeting over to the Chair, Jimmy Wood at 6:08 p.m.

Student Leaders Committee

Hannah Levi reported for the Student Leaders Committee. She said they held their first meeting on September 16th. They went over how the meetings would be run, appointed a secretary, and selected members of the social media team. Ms. Levi said they also discussed Clio entries, the Scavenger Hunt, school initiatives and Historic Preservation Month. Their next meeting is October 14th.

Project Updates

Mark Reed provided updates on several historic preservation program projects. He said that for the grant funded projects he is hoping this will be the last time he mentions the grant processes and instead in the future will be discussing the projects that are underway.

Preservation Program Strategic Plan – This project is partially funded by a Cost Share Grant awarded by DHR. Mr. Reed said the grant agreement has been executed. He noted that DHR will be managing the project administration. He said that they have received 5 proposals and a contract for services is expected to be issued soon.

Historic District Design Standards and Review Guidelines – This project is partially funded by a CLG Grant awarded by DHR. Mr. Reed said the grant agreement had been executed. He noted that DHR has approved the scope of work and the City is initiating the Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

National Register Nominations Seatack and L & J Gardens – This project is partially funded by an Underrepresented Communities Grant awarded by the National Park Service (NPS). Mr. Reed said the grant agreement has been executed. He noted that DHR has approved the scope of work and the City is initiating the RFP process. He said that the NPS will review the RFP before it can be issued.

Resort Motels MPD/Jefferson Manor Motel NRHP Nomination – Mr. Reed stated that fieldwork has been completed for the project. The consultant is working on completing the VCRIS forms and additional research. He said they are working on the draft Multiple Property Document and Nomination forms. One more project item is the schedule a presentation to the motel owners/managers. Mr. Reed said they are trying to get on the Hotel Association’s agenda for an upcoming monthly meeting.

Architectural Survey Southern Half – Mr. Reed said that this project has been completed. The written report should be available on the Commission’s web page soon. He noted that DHR said they are impressed with the survey and report and it is another model to show other localities interested in updating surveys.

Archaeological Assessment Southern Half – Mr. Reed said that this project has been completed. He said he is just waiting to receive the redacted version of final report.

Historic Properties Glimpse

Mark Reed noted that there are no agenda items scheduled for the October Historical Review Board meeting. They are expecting a couple of projects in the near future, which are a Nimmo United Methodist Church expansion project and a new construction project for a Veterinary Hospital on North Landing Road in the Courthouse district.

Mr. Reed said he was just made aware of a project at the Hickman House that proposes to construct a Starbucks adjacent to the historic building. He said he would work on getting additional information and would coordinate with the Executive Committee.

Old Business

COVID-19 Required Training – Mr. Reed thanked everyone who has watched the video. For those that haven’t watched it, yet, please do so we can report back that all members have watched.

Jimmy Wood asked if there was any additional old business. Rick Klobuchar asked about any developments with the Confederate monument. Mr. Reed said the evaluation team will be discussing evaluation of the proposals on October 8. He said he is currently scheduled to present recommendations to City Council on November 10.

New Business

Mr. Reed noted that the Commission had sponsored a Native American Heritage Month Proclamation for November each year since 2016. He asked if the Commission wanted to sponsor a proclamation for 2020. He said the likely date would be November 10th. A motion was made by Mac Rawls for the Historic Preservation Commission to sponsor a proclamation by the Mayor to name November Native American Heritage Month in Virginia Beach. The motion was seconded by Sharon Prescott. The motion passed unanimously.

Jimmy Wood asked if there was any additional new business.

Sharon Felton commented on the resources of the Commission. She said Lee Lockamy came to talk to the School Board about schools with mascot names that represented images of Indians. She said Mr. Lockamy provided a good education on the subject.

Tim Oksman mentioned a recent newspaper article about a restaurant in Suffolk that has a theme about the City's history and economic development. He said he is wondering if there are any Virginia Beach historical assets that might be converted to a restaurant operation. He suggested making some initial inquiries to the Resort Advisory Commission. Bill Gambrell said that he serves on the Resort Advisory Commission and he suggested this is not the time to pursue this idea.

Mr. Wood said he thought we might recognize restaurants that have ties to history. Mr. Gambrell suggested Steinhilbers is very historic. Mr. Wood suggested it was something we should look into in this realm – recognizing and promoting restaurants that have repurposed old buildings rather than tearing them down. He noted that we should include it in a historic tourism initiative.

Harriet Frenzel expressed concern about Building 2 that is being refurbished and the permanent memorial that is being planned. She said the Historic Preservation Commission needs to be involved.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, November 4, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. at the Convention Center.