

Virginia Beach Historic Preservation Commission
November 1, 2017
Towne Bank Building, 2101 Parks Avenue, Suite 500
Approved December 6, 2017

Attending – Officers: Chair, William Gambrell; First Vice Chair, James Wood; Second Vice Chair, Sharon Felton; Secretary, Bobbie Gribble; Immediate Past Chair, Bernice Pope

Members: Diane Horsley, Michel C. Ashe, Harriet A. Frenzel, Mac Rawls, Jimmy Jordan, Sean Diment, Jennifer Estes, Glenn Carwell, Madeleine Penree, Sharon Prescott

City Council Liaison: Rosemary Wilson

City Staff: Mark Reed, Carolyn Smith

Guest Presenter: Sherry DiBari

General Public: Kenneth Harris, Cheryl Scott, two other citizens

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.

Welcome/Introductions/Remarks - Bill Gambrell

Presentation on Seaview Beach and Amusement Park Research Paper and Website project - Sherry DiBari (Adjunct Faculty, English and Geography, ODU; Media Specialist for a project with NASA)

Ms. DiBari received an FY17 Research Grant from the Historic Preservation Commission. She thanked the Commission for funding her project. The product was a research paper and a website:
<https://seaviewbeach.wordpress.com/>

Ms. DiBari noted that *Life Magazine* published a photo essay in 1947 on Seaview Beach calling it “Virginia’s best-known Negro Resort”. At that time, *Life* articles focused on the beautiful people and it was unusual for them to include something about African Americans.

Seaview provided a place for African American elites to come socialize safely and network.

1964 the Civil Rights Act opened up all businesses to everyone. Dr. Watts said that Seaview could not compete with Oceanview Amusement Park.

David Levine purchased the land for \$500,000.

In February of 1966, wreckers demolished the two story building and facilities. The Norfolk Journal and Guide called it the largest, best African-American Resort in America.

Ms. DiBari said there are very few photographs of the resort that she could find in public repositories. She said an important next step would be to try to track those down in private collections.

Sharon Felton suggested Sherri DiBari get in touch with the Prentiss Family who was involved with the operation. She felt they would have information and pictures. It was also suggested that Ms. DiBari apply for another grant to further explore Seaview Beach and Amusement Park or for a historic marker to commemorate the site and its history.

Approval of October 4, 2017 Minutes

Diane Horsley made a motion that the minutes from October be approved it was seconded by Jimmy Jordan. The motion passed unanimously.

Virginia Preservation Conference Overview – Mark Reed

Bill Gambrell, Jennifer Estes, Mac Rawls, and Bernice Pope plus Mark Reed attended this conference. Walt Whitehurst from the Historical Review Board also attended. There was a lot of great information.

State of Historic Preservation: First on the agenda was the state of historic preservation in Virginia; there are a lot of good things happening. The last General Assembly passed funding for African American Cemeteries. The cemeteries need to be owned by governments or non-profits. Mark is not sure if this extends to churches (he will check on this; he will also follow up with Edna Hendricks who has done research on local African-American cemeteries). Cemeteries in general are a real challenge to maintain and care for.

They announced two new Certified Local Government communities: Virginia Beach and Lexington.

There are 44 new state historic markers. We (Virginia Beach) have two of those.

Clio App: The keynote speaker was David Trowbridge, a professor from Marshall University. His students and he have created a mobile app named Clio. It is a website that is designed to work on your phone. It is a great resource if you are in a new town visiting. You can go onto Clio when you see an old building and if it has been entered into Clio you can find something about that building.

Mark has set up an institutional account in the name of the Virginia Beach Historic Preservation Commission on Clio. The hope is the Student Leaders Committee will take this on as an activity to research and develop entries on Virginia Beach's historic buildings.

It is very simple to upload historic buildings and make entries. Persons entering information utilize the same password to get into the institutional account. All entries would go to Mark for review, comment and editing assistance prior to his approval to release to the public site or return to the student for more work.

This would be a great way to get information out to visitors and residents of Virginia Beach. You only have to download the app on your smart phone.

Mac Rawls: this will be great for Historic Kempsville.
Sharon Felton: the Native American sites would be wonderful.

Bernice Pope: the idea is that it is used as much as Yelp when you go to a new location. There are links to provide further information. It also could include oral history.

Mark Reed: this is a nonprofit so there are no ads. It doesn't have to be purely history, could be public art, etc.

Community Partnerships: Mark Reed: there was a lot of discussion about community partnerships. In Petersburg, the city was close to failure (\$50 million in debt) so they had to disband their city government. They have had partners who have done quite a bit with them. The HistoriCorps Institute is now in Petersburg (this is created in the model of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s). They help to preserve historic buildings on public land. They work with the community on preservation. The Cameron Foundation is also there (5% of the money they have raised in the past 15 years is with historic endeavors). We may want to look into this with a local organization, such as the Hampton Roads Foundation.

Historic Tax Credit Programs: The Federal Tax Credits are looking to be written out of the budget by the House. A couple of congressional representatives wrote a letter to get the federal tax credits left in the budget. Elizabeth Kostelny of Preservation Virginia urged attendees to contact their representatives to see if they would sign on to the letter or at least support maintaining the federal historic tax credits.

The state tax credits faced challenges last year. The expectation is they will face similar challenges in the coming session. They are looking at the model from NC, they got rid of it a couple of years ago and recently brought it back in a watered down version. Studies are being done because they are economically viable.

Bill Gambrell said he sent an e-mail as a citizen to his congressman, Scott Taylor.

The Planning Department covered registration costs for any Historic Preservation Commission or Historical Review Board members who wanted to attend. Hopefully they will be able to continue to offer this in the future.

Freedom of Information Act Update – Mark Reed

- FOIA Requirements apply to all committees of the Commission.
- All Committee members count equally for FOIA regardless of whether or not they are Commission members or voting members.
- Any Committee meeting of three members must be publicly posted.
- If a Committee only has three members then any meeting with two members must be publicly posted.
- The location does not have to be a public meeting room but the public must be allowed to attend.
- Committee Chairs should provide Mark Reed with the necessary information on their meeting date, time and location, etc. at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting date so he can coordinate the required informational posting.

Committee Reports

Cape Henry Historic Site - Mac Rawls

We continue to work to improve access to the base to get to the lighthouse. There is a new regulation that you must leave your driver's license with the gate. They will run it through the background check security program while you are visiting the lighthouse.

This is in addition to the required presentation of registration and insurance, as well as the vehicle check.

They are trying to set up a shuttle service. In doing that arrangement, some of the steps of the current process would likely be eliminated

Preservation Virginia is a very interested partner in this. City of Virginia Beach is working on a grant for an autonomous bus so we can implement the shuttle.

This past week, Mac Rawls, Bernice Pope, and Mark Reed met with Preservation Virginia about the grant project that will enhance the lighthouse. Preservation Virginia's concern is that the process has been slow and as a result all the work will probably not be able to be done in the winter. They have asked that construction be delayed until October 2018. They have indicated that closing during April through July will have a significant impact on their revenues for organizational operations. These are revenue producing months which causes concern.

This past year the City applied for additional grant funds since the project did not have enough funding to put out to bid. The grant request (\$362,800) was approved, but the timing did not allow for a fall 2017 construction start. The Commission's concern is if it is further delayed, the construction costs will rise and the project might not get future funding. The result of the meeting was that Preservation Virginia staff seemed to be willing to present to their Board to go forward on the project.

Tomorrow (11/2), the Committee members will be taking a field trip to the Currituck Lighthouse in Corolla to see another privately operated historic light station. The idea is that Preservation Virginia would acquire the 1881 Cape Henry lighthouse and would open it to the public.

The Cavalier Task Force is still alive. They meet on as needed basis. There will be a tour on 11/8 at 8 am; the tour will be led by Bruce Thompson. Please let Mac Rawls know if you are interested in going.

Princess Anne County Confederate Monument

Jimmy and Sharon met with the Mayor today (11/1) to get his ideas on membership and composition. Jimmy and Sharon came up with a list of 30 people who would be possible members. Ultimately there will be a core of five to work with Sharon Felton and Jimmy Wood.

Within a few weeks there will be a meeting with the full committee. They will meet as many times as needed to formulate a recommendation to the Commission, a public forum will then be held.

Sharon Felton stated we want to make sure everyone is represented on this committee. Jimmy Wood, we are trying to be deliberate and thoughtful to bring a diverse view so as a community we can come to consensus.

The target deadline for bringing a recommendation to the Commission is February. The goal is to be done before the budget is finalized for next year.

Student Leaders – Sharon Felton, Sean Diment

Established Goals

- I. Contact the other students and ask them to join the student leaders committee
- II. Create a Flier for promoting historical volunteering and activities within schools.
- III. Contact the NHS of each school to raise awareness of the importance of volunteering.
- IV. Hold our first Student Leaders meeting on December 13.

Threatened Buildings - Jennifer Estes

Mark sent out the forms for the Threatened Buildings and Sites Submittal Worksheet. Please help us become aware of these sites and make sure a form is submitted for them.

Sharon Felton asked if a building will be knocked down, is it possible to get a historic marker (recognition) for the building. The Masonic Lodge on Princess Anne Road will be torn down. An architect has determined it is not viable to repair/renovate.

Mark Reed, we are trying to get our historic marker program off the ground. The state has one. If a building is to be taken down, an intensive level survey needs to be done (which costs a few thousand dollars).

Project Updates – Mark Reed

Archaeological Assessment: Mark spoke with DHR this week. They have awarded six or seven cost share grants. They are holding ours until the end. Virginia Beach is putting up \$10,000 and the state agreed to match the \$10,000. The proposals received were in excess of that. They are excited about our archeological survey and they are going to try to find additional funds for it. We will probably hear in a few weeks who the firm is that is going to do the project. It will require an amendment to the original agreement. The City will not be obligated for any additional funds. DHR will cover the amount over the original \$20,000 project budget. They are so interested in the project they want to cover the entire scope.

Architectural Survey: Mark has been developing the scope of work. He is working with DHR to ensure everything will be done with the survey within their guidelines and requirements.

Old Business

Native American Heritage Month: A special thanks to Councilperson Wilson for sponsoring the proclamation for Native American Heritage Month in Virginia Beach. This is the third year in a row that November has been declared Native American Heritage Month. Chief Lee Lockamy will be there to receive the proclamation. The City Council meeting will be held Tuesday, November 7th at 6:00 p.m. Please attend if you can.

New Business

Federal Tax Credit Program: This is part of the current tax reform and budget debate. Elizabeth Kostelny of Preservation Virginia sent out information that the tax credit program is in jeopardy. She had heard that a vote would be taken on November 6th. A couple of Congressmen asked for Ways and Means to put the Historic Tax Credit back into the budget.

The letter from Elizabeth Kostelny asked that the City Council pass a resolution asking the Federal Tax Credit Program remain, Mark Reed explained that there was not enough time to get this done.

Bill Gambrell said that the Tax Credit Program is one of the most important to rehabilitation. The tax credit program is tax neutral (at worst); however, for every dollar invested we get that and more back.

A motion was made to send our Congressman a letter asking that the Historic Tax Credit stay in the budget. Bernice Pope made the motion. Jennifer Estes seconded.

Discussion: Rosemary Wilson stated we might be able to get the Mayor to send a letter with the request to keep the Tax Credit.

Rosemary Wilson asked that Mark Reed put together a resolution so it can be included as an add-on to the City Council Meeting or draft a letter for the Mayor to be given to him midday Friday.

The motion was amended to ask the Mayor to write a letter to our Congressional Representative (Scott Taylor) and to our Senators, and Chairman Brady.

The motion passed unanimously.

Jennifer Estes suggested we forward the letter out about the need to advocate for the tax credit letter.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, December 6, 2017.

Adjournment