



Resort Advisory Commission
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RESORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

DATE: September 4, 2014
TIME: 3:00 pm
PLACE: Virginia Beach Convention Center, Meeting Room 5AB

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Kristina Chastain
Gerrie West
Preston Midgett
Bobby Melatti
Joe DaBiero
Laura Habr
Nancy Creech
Sam Reid
Craig Roback
Bill Gambrell
Randy Thompson
John Hawa
Jim Davis

Michael Cloud-Butler
Sylvia Strickland
Ken Taylor
Billy Almond

OTHERS PRESENT

John Uhrin, Council
Diana Burke, VBHA
Bill Reed, BEACON
Harry McBrien, VBPD
Matt McInerney, VBPD
Stacey Parker, The Pilot
Mike Eason, SGA/Resort Mgmt.
Robin Hart, SGA/Recorder

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Tom Brown
Bryan Cuffee

Vice-Chair Kristina Chastain called the meeting to order at 3:08p.m.
Motion carried to approve the minutes from the August 7, 2014 meeting as written.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Transportation, Parking, Pedestrian Committee (TPPC)

Preston Midgett reports that the committee met last Thursday.

They are getting more information on the Pedestrian Crash Report that they discussed last month and working on developing a strategy for educating the public.

A group wants to have valet parking on Atlantic Avenue, and wants to try to get that done for this spring. They will get back with us with more information. They will have to take the idea through Council with a franchise agreement.

The HRT bus transfer station currently at 19th & Pacific will be moved back one block, relocated to where the old treasurer's office was to free up Pacific Avenue for the upcoming construction.

They reviewed some bus stop locations on Virginia Beach Boulevard, for betterment or removal, and they need to speak with Traffic Engineering for more input.

They distributed the Subcommittee Guidelines, and Preston reiterated to TPPC members that the process applied to all future members (not existing members).

Planning and Design Review Committee (PDRC)

Gerrie West reports (for Billy Almond) that the PDRC did meet this month.

There was an update on the Old Coast Guard Station fencing project, wherein a composite material that looks much like an old-fashioned fence was approved, and is on order. It is scheduled to be installed next month.

Giovanni's requested an awning and there was not enough information, so the PDRC requested a design submittal from them to determine the appropriateness of the canopy. They will have more information next time.

The issue of the resort restrooms has been coming up at the PDRC several times, and they are seeing a greater need for public restrooms on the side streets. A group will be reporting to RAC on the findings of appropriate resort locations.

Oceanfront Enhancement Committee (OEC)

Jim Davis reports that the OEC met last month, and they are continuing their discussion with some of the agencies that provide services to the homeless and looking at how some of those services may affect the neighborhoods. They are reaching a difficult point in discussion where maybe the services should move, if it was possible. Jim requests any ideas or suggestions from the Commission.

Resort Investment Committee (RIC)

Kristina Chastain reports (for Ken Taylor) that the RIC did not meet this month.

Oceanfront Visionary Committee (OVC)

Kristina Chastain reported that the OVC did not meet.

G.R.E.E.N. Committee

Laura Habr reported that they met last Wednesday and they discussed their recycling program as well as the recent beach closings and the water quality issues. Next month they will have a presentation from the state health department on their testing methods, as well as stormwater information. The representative has also been invited to speak at the RAC in October, to which Mike Eason adds that they will have a representative from stormwater runoff management that will be at RAC to discuss water quality as well.

John Hawa asks if anyone from the maritime community is going to be at either presentation who is knowledgeable of the bacterial waste dumping from the ships. He notices debris when he is fishing and noticed it most recently right after the recent closing.

Economic Development Report

None

Staff Report – Mike Eason

Mike begins the staff report with an update on the boardwalk benches.

This past spring they started a pilot program putting center armrests on the boardwalk benches. They did an area between 18th and 20th Street. The OEC and TPPC were briefed, and they have been collecting feedback for the season.

Diana Burke has approached us and asked if the armrests can be installed in the benches if the hotels request it and are willing to pay for it. Mike did receive a request to put center arms in front of six benches in front of one hotel, and would like the RAC's endorsement to oblige the property owners in putting them in. The cost is about \$250 per bench to modify them. They are trying to order new benches that already have the arm in there, but at \$1200 per bench, the cost is too high, so one plan is to consider phasing them in when new benches need to be purchased.

Diana confirms that the hotel, Commonwealth Lodging, is willing to pay for the arm installation on the benches, without city funding, as the hotel owners are having a real issue with the benches there and are looking for relief.

Motion carried to support the bench armrest installations on the six benches at 24th Street.

Nancy Creech questions the arm additions limiting the number of people who can sit on the bench; she also wonders where the people that are currently on the benches may migrate to, and if that will become more or less of a problem. Mike explains that they discussed those issues, and for now are gathering data from anyone who would like to send me information, comments, pictures, etc. They will then meet with law enforcement and others, and come up with some recommendations. They hope to have some significant accomplishments in about a year.

Jim Davis hopes that the bench modifications will (1) help enhance the experience of visitors, and (2) help us to come up with solutions that are more permanent. He is aware that when you make one change in one area, the problem usually crops up in another location.

Bobby Melatti suggests a sponsor-a-bench type of program. He agrees with Commonwealth Lodging in trying to resolve their problem.

Jim suggests the bench improvements be viewed as an enhancement.

The HRT bus stop on Pacific Avenue is being relocated to Arctic Avenue in anticipation of the Pacific Avenue project, which will be running during the off-season for the next three years.

Laura asks what is being done across the street on the south side of 19th Street between Arctic and Pacific, and Mike responds that it will be a construction trailer for the project.

Kristina Chastain asks what is happening at the old treasurer's site, and Mike replies that part of the area is associated with the Dome site development.

Old Business

Kristina asks about any update with the arts and culture district in the 19th and 17th Street areas.

Nancy Creech says that Emily Labows has advised her that they now have a cultural arts plan in place, and have brought in a consultant to assist in how they see the

program as developing.

Laura talks about the Friday VIBE, as a grassroots event generally involving businesses located between 17th to 22nd Streets. Every month they add on new businesses, and the neighborhood includes two schools for which they are doing a back-to-school drive.

Kristina asks if a sidewalk plan exists for 17th Street, specifically between Baltic and Mediterranean and Mike is not aware of one, but as things develop, it will be brought together.

Mike reports on the events that occurred in the extreme heat over the weekend (AMF). On Saturday the 1K race went well. Bobby Melatti says that he does not have enough information to give us a bottom line yet for AMF.

What he would like to do, is at some point, is to bring in a checklist of events and obtain input on events that are good to stay or no longer benefit the city/retailers, etc. They are going to have to take out some events, due to a loss of funding. What is affecting the availability of funds is that we had a small transfer to Town Center, increases in administrative and other fees associated with back of house, and you have less total money for funding of events. The TIP fund has been relatively consistent throughout the years, which is a percentage of tax generated through a number of sources from taxes, which includes food, restaurant and hotels. Mike and Bobby have to operate within those expenses.

Attendance for the 5th Street events was 5K-6K people on Friday, 7-9K Saturday night and 15K on Sunday night for AMF, normal. There is so much free entertainment, in Chesapeake now, Beach Events has another series in Portsmouth, and they have to be more careful with respect to the dollars that they spend.

Bobby conducts exit surveys and tries to predict how many people will be coming back to that event the following year. Some events that used to be small (i.e. Funkfest) have grown to 8K people this year. They try to focus on what brings in not only tax dollars, but also room nights.

Joe asks if there is an economic study for Town Center like there is for the resort area. Mike replies that unofficially no, but in what they have seen, at the Last Night on the Town event, for example, the hotels were always booked and the restaurants had two-hour waits. This year, they are expected to do better than last year.

A request for an update on the Skywheel was that it has been “officially postponed indefinitely”.

New Business

None

Public Comment

None

Meeting was adjourned at 4:16p.m.