



Resort Advisory Commission
2101 Parks Avenue, Suite 302
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
(757) 385-4800
FAX (757) 422-3666

RESORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

DATE: April 7, 2016
TIME: 3:00 pm
PLACE: Virginia Beach Convention Center, Room 1AB

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Billy Almond
Kristina Chastain
Randy Thompson
Sam Reid
Bill Gambrell
Preston Midgett
Gerrie West
Michael Cloud-Butler
Sylvia Strickland
John Hawa
Laura Habr
Nancy Creech
BJ Baumann
Tyler Brown
Jim Davis
Bobby Melatti
Bryan Cuffee
Craig Roback

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Joe DaBiero

OTHERS PRESENT

Officer Matt McInerney, VBPD
Lt. Scott Wichtendahl, VBPD
John Uhrin, Council
Amelia Ross-Hammond, Council
Art Webb, BCF
Greg Ward, BCF
Rob Hudome, Economic Development
Bill Reed, BEACON
Stacey Parker, The Pilot
Hillary Smith, Southside Daily
Mike Eason, SGA/Resort Mgmt.
Cece Riddick, SGA
Robin Hart, SGA/Recorder

Chair Billy Almond called the meeting to order at 3:00p.m.

Motion carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the March 3, 2016 meeting as written.

Billy introduces Glenn Oder, the Executive Director since 2011 of the Fort Monroe Authority (FMA). The FMA is responsible for overseeing the transition of Fort Monroe from an active US Army installation to property owned and operated by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

2019 400-year Celebration of Freedom at Fort Monroe – Glenn Oder

Glenn tells the Commission that Fort Monroe is a BRAC closure and it is a huge responsibility to have a vacant campus in the middle of the city. The challenges of BRAC are deciding who gets to use what areas of the property. Subdivision is complicated. They are working with a statewide commission trying to figure out how to commemorate the 400th Anniversary of the arrival of Africans into our culture and into this country. The impact on our nation over the last 400 years in relation to how tragically it started is something that

they do not want to miss and at the same time make sure that it is treated and recognized properly. The state has created the 2019 Commemoration Commission and Fort Monroe is a piece of it. Congressmen and Senators are getting together to create a national 2019 Commemoration Commission. They want it to be a state and national significance as well as a global story, as it is at this location where slavery essentially began and ended.

Glenn tells the Commission that there are four events that occurred in 1619 that have significance for Fort Monroe. The first was that the first legislative body met in 1619, so Jamestown and Richmond are excited about that, and the idea of recruiting of women to grow the colony was growing then. The first Thanksgiving was that year, and the arrival of Africans to our country was occurring at that time. Glenn describes the history of Fort Monroe, how the African American culture was introduced in our country, and the development of the first great successful civil rights movement with 10,000 slaves ultimately seeking independence at Fort Monroe.

Fort Monroe is almost a small city, and President Obama has made this property a national monument. The National Park Service has a portion – approx. 200 acres, a large green piece inside the fortress. Glenn describes the current 565-acre property and the Master Plan. He thinks that with this 2019 Commission, they want to tell the story with four projects: 1) a commemoration park, 2) a visitor education center, 3) a renovated theater, and 4) a commemorative art project. They want to be able to use the green area for events where feasible and want the infrastructure in the ground. Jamestown and Williamsburg are close by, and Yorktown is to the right. Together these areas represent 400 years of continuous history.

QUESTIONS

Jim Davis asks about the Casemate Museum. Glenn answers that Fort Monroe still runs it, but it needs an upgrade.

Bill Gambrell asks how the facility handles 10K people parking and Glenn replies that they have parked 7200 cars for fireworks two years ago, and they blocked the road off and directed traffic three ways; they emptied the area in 45 minutes.

Amelia Ross-Hammond asked how Glenn envisioned their connection to us across the water, and Glenn tells her that they do not have a specific plan for that, but with them appearing here today, plans might develop.

Billy says that inviting Glenn to RAC today was to inform us that people will be coming to the area for this commemoration and that it is a big deal for the state and the country. There is a correlation between Fort Story and First Landing and Old Point Comfort, and we might want to begin to plan for the event.

Beach Events Holiday Lights Update – Bobby Melatti

Over the 22-year course of the Holiday Lights' display run on the boardwalk, Beach Events has been able to squirrel away money for the eventual repairs and replacements that will be needed.

They would like to be able to keep the Holiday Lights display for at least another year, due to 1) the image that it is for the Beach, 2) family and 3) tradition, but they are fighting the elements with the boardwalk display and need to make some changes. They want to replace the older graphics with new designs and new images.

Bobby Melatti shows a presentation of the current and proposed displays and suggestions. Some have become dangerous and they will be removing them for safety. He wonders if replacing displays with the same design or other replacing them with designs

that are more representative of who we are is a better suggestion, and shows the RGB lighting technology.

QUESTIONS

Jim Davis asks if they can do more with these graphics if they want, and Bobby says that they can do something as varied as Freemont Street in Las Vegas.

Mike Eason explains the broader picture of where the money is coming from. He says that they keep working capital on hand in the event that they need to be able to pay an artist in the event of a cancellation (at AMF, for example). He believes that they have a little bit more than what they actually need for those instances, so they are doing something that is slightly risky.

John Uhrin asks if they are comfortable with this risk, and Mike believes that they are, as they plan for the loss of the largest event and then deal with whatever may happen at the smaller events. Bobby says that the AMF and the Monster Trucks events are the money generators, through ticket sales. The odds of losing all four big events shows would require a hurricane, a multi-day storm event.

Bobby says that he is here today to inform the Commission, and says that unless there is a real objection to going forward this, they can make some of the suggested changes, or keep retiring and not replacing elements of the show. He feels that if we do the second suggestion, we risk losing the appeal of the display.

COMMENTS / QUESTIONS

Nancy Creech believes that we need the program, especially in the winter, so any additional funding available would be a plus. She says that Neptune Festival had a disastrous last year and were fortunate enough to be able to get by on their reserves.

Bill Gambrell says that the VBRA is confident that Bobby will make the best decision.

Billy Almond is behind it, saying that they have had discussion in another meeting about the Santa Village and the possibility of using parks as winter venues. The display has been incredibly successful and he would like to see it continue.

John Uhrin believes that the attraction adds warmth and ambiance.

Motion carried unanimously that the RAC support the refurbishing of the Holiday Lights Program.

Committee Reports

Transportation, Parking, Pedestrian Committee (TPPC)

Preston reports that they met last Thursday and had a presentation on the schedule for replacement of the 19th Street pump station at the VBCC to increase capacity.

They supported the renewal and possible relocation of the 19th Street Farmers Market operation.

They had an update on the new automated parking passes system. Preston says that the price has gone up and implementation is the delay created by the software glitches, as it was to have gone live on April 1.

Bill Gambrell expresses the frustrations that he has heard and notes in particular the huge price increases. He did receive a response from Rob Fries on how the decisions were made and who made them, but he feels that this matter needs to be reinvestigated.

John Hawa comments on the parking program pass/fee changes. He has his pass, and the system was working in order for him to get the pass, but he says that he and Bill were on the resort parking committee that made these changes, and they both feel that they made a mistake. He feels that the program needs re-evaluation.

BJ Baumann is hoping that the city will be lenient on ticketing, and both Preston and Mike Eason comment that there will be no enforcement until the system is operating properly. The two issues seem to be sticker shock and the learning curve.

John Uhrin comments on the original intent of the passes, which was not to make money for the city but to make employees more accountable for their part and reduce the parking impact to the neighborhoods. In the meantime, he wonders if we can review the pricing and maybe phase in the increase. He says to keep in mind, that at \$20/year they were incentivizing employees to park in the neighborhoods as opposed to parking in the parking lots. Now we have opened the surface parking lots to the pass holders on Sunday through Thursday. The garages are not yet open to that, but parking in the lots are better for both safety for the employee and residents' concerns. We have to continue working on the program, and he is willing to re-examine the issue. If the rate is going to be changed, it needs to be changed now.

Preston adds that the other items discussed were the possibility of the Bayfront trolley coming into operation, and the HRT ticket sales to the hotels. Rob Fries is working on the ability to purchase the HRT tickets online through the new parking passes application.

Planning and Design Review (PDR)

Billy Almond reports that they had an update from Lt. Bob Christman about the oceanfront camera project. They are getting together again on the actual locations of the poles on the boardwalk with regard to the bike path and cafes.

They had the same pump station presentation that TPPC did and approved it.

They had a discussion on the design changes requested by Ry Restaurant on Atlantic Avenue. They are putting in an application for a café in front of their restaurant.

Oceanfront Enhancement Committee (OEC)

Jim Davis reports on the Sense of Arrival developments and the silk banners at the Rudee area, as reported at the last meeting. Per Virginia Power's requirements, they have reduced the size of the banners to a 2x8-foot size. The banners will be located on the four poles that lead up to the bridge. The OEC recommended that they move forward to see how the public responds to the banners.

He also shares that there will be a Virginia Beach Cleanup Day being held by PIN Ministries, run by Dallas Stamper on April 23 from 12:00pm – 2:30pm. It will feature some members of our community who are homeless, and will serve a lunch afterward. They encourage anyone to join them to help.

Resort Investment Committee (RIC)

Billy Almond reports that they had a member from tHRive, a young professionals group, speak to them about becoming more involved in the resort community meetings. He is taking information back to his leadership and will probably get back to us in May. Billy says that we have been trying to get more youth involved in RAC and the subcommittees for years, and this might be the catalyst to do that.

They discussed the Alcohol Review Committee and additional events – they are waiting on a legal opinion and ABC concerning a street party with alcohol.

They discussed the increase of surf competitions at the Jetty and whether it is taking away from the surfing community. The larger surf competitions already have the area and they would prefer that the incoming groups to occupy the area north of 3rd Street. Billy asks for additional suggestions on how they might be able to break up the dimensional surf space.

They discussed the next months' scheduled speakers for RAC that included Frank Wagner, Art Webb, and the ODU tourism resiliency group in May, June and July, respectively.

Oceanfront Strategic Growth Area Committee (OSGAC)

BJ Baumann reports on the ongoing discussions held with the Laskin Gateway Property owners.

G.R.E.E.N. Committee

Laura Habr reports that they had a presentation from ODU about sea level rise and conducting a study to look at the tourism industry, coastal communities and the rising seas and how that would affect us. The G.R.E.E.N. committee did support continuing the study and let them work on this. The hotel association also sent a letter of support. She asked for RAC's support that they could send their G.R.E.E.N. letter of support for them to study this issue. **Motion carried unanimously to allow the G.R.E.E.N. committee to support the ODU research for the coastal tourism industry.**

Economic Development

None

Staff Report

Mike Eason reports on the three franchise agreements that make up the 19th Street Farmer's Market. They are up for renewal and there is a potential option for the relocation of the market to 18th Street. Also there are seven dates of operation that exclude 19th Street closures, which are graduation and other events. **Motion carried unanimously to approve the renewals at 19th Street with the option to relocate to 18th Street.**

The agreement for Strategic Art Solutions is due to expire. Bobby Levin would like to extend the art program. **Motion carried unanimously to approve the renewal for Strategic Art Solutions.**

Other Business

None

Public Comment

None

Billy Almond announces the City Manager's Annual Resort Committee Update on Monday, April 11, 2016 from 2:00pm to 4:00pm at the VBCC. He invites RAC members to attend.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.