



Resort Advisory Commission
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RESORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

DATE: July 7, 2016
TIME: 3:00 pm
PLACE: Virginia Beach Convention Center, Room 4AB

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Billy Almond
Kristina Chastain
Sam Reid
Bill Gambrell
Joe DaBiero
John Hawa
BJ Baumann
Bryan Cuffee
Sylvia Strickland
Tyler Brown
Jim Davis
Craig Roback
Michael Cloud-Butler

Gerrie West
Bobby Melatti
Nancy Creech

OTHERS PRESENT

Matt McInerney, VBPD
John Uhrin, Council
Emily Archer, Planning
Brad Van Dommelen, CVB
Diana Burke, VBHA
Bill Reed, BEACON
Stacey Parker, The Pilot
Hillary Smith, Southside Daily
Mike Eason, SGA/Resort Mgmt.
Robin Hart, SGA/Recorder

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Laura Habr
Randy Thompson
Preston Midgett

Chair Billy Almond called the meeting to order at 3:00p.m.
Motion carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the June 2, 2016 meeting as written.

ODU Tourism Project: Increasing Resiliency in the Coastal Tourism Industry
- Emily E. Steinhilber

Emily Steinhilber introduces Michelle Covi and Lindsay Usher, both of ODU.
Michele Covi has a background in both natural science and stakeholder outreach, and works with the Virginia Sea Grant Program as part of the NOAA efforts to build resilience across all coastal states. They want to adapt the Gulf Region (AL, MS) sea grant program to Virginia Beach. She has been involved with cities across the region in an adaptation forum since 2012, discussing how to adapt to sea level rise, as well as working with the City of Virginia Beach public works and public service areas on their NOAA coastal resiliency grant. She is trying to knit the discussions together to help our region to become more resilient.

Dr. Lindsay Usher, in Park Recreation and Tourism Studies, says that the surveys will focus on the tourism industry. They officially kicked off the project on July 1. They are creating a Business Resiliency Checklist, and in the fall (September through December), they will collect data from business interviews and analyze that data for gaps in preparedness between businesses.

They are looking for suggestions on contacts to make sure that they cover all parts of the tourism industry. They have support from Gold Key/PHR, from the City and today being able to speak with the RAC is creating a lot of enthusiasm for the project.

After data analysis in Year 1, the next step in Year 2 is to conduct workshops for resiliency plans to fill in gaps for resiliency, such as forming partnerships with other better-prepared businesses. Ideally, they would like to get external funding for the workshops, but the interviews are the first step.

QUESTIONS

- Jim Davis asks if resiliency is going to be the only focus from gathering all the data.

Emily replies that resiliency is necessary to business continuity, and Michele adds that from the Virginia Sea Grant point of view, it is about community resilience.

- Billy Almond asks if they are focusing on defining the issue or offering solutions. He says that groups such as FEMA already have solutions in place and asks the group what they plan to add, whether it is getting awareness out, etc.

Michele says that their focus is on the tourism industry. The needs assessment will reflect how well businesses can be part of the solution.

- Sam Reid asks if they will be involving residential communities and the group replies that they will be assessing the needs from business management's perspective; however, the project may work toward the neighborhoods. If they do, the residential areas will be parallel projects.
- Mike Eason comments that it has been made mandatory that every municipality have an emergency evacuation plan in place which has to address how to get people out, and more importantly, how to get people back in. He asks if they see themselves as supporting this effort.

Michele and Emily reply that their partners at VIMS will assist with models to which they can apply to their data. Mike adds that the tourists (hotel staff and guests) will be the first to leave and the question will be when to tell them to evacuate.

Billy asks if the product of their study will be a program, and Emily replies that one of the products will be a similar self-assessment, and workshops, as well as a follow-up on policy analysis of the tourism area at a later stage. Michele adds that they will only be providing information at the policy analysis stage.

Emily is hoping that they can count on groups such as the RAC, whose members represent retail, hotel and restaurant businesses in the tourism industry, for interviews and assistance.

- Jim Davis asks to what extent there is collaboration with natural disaster personnel, and Michele explains that they will not function as team members, rather information-gatherers for those entities.

Warrior Week Presentation – John Uhrin

John gives a presentation of the Warrior Week event, now in its fourth year in partnership with the USO, and reports that they hosted 575 wounded service members and their families, up from 450 the previous year.

They provided some great activities for them to do in the area, such as golf, fishing, horseback riding, kayaking, skydiving on the beach, waterskiing, and more. They also had the USO Military Village and had the LCAC hovercraft on the beach. A lot of USO assets were brought in - the silent drill team and the USO singers, as well as the traveling Vietnam memorial wall that was set up on the beach. A chalet was set up for the concerts and they had an area for those interested in attending the party.

One of the events related to that going on long before this event is the Ride to Recovery, which started in Northern Virginia and the finish line was at 17th Street Park.

John feels that, especially in a military town, it is important to continue this event and have it be known that it is a safe event for wounded warriors and that their needs will be met, i.e. flotation devices for those who can no longer swim, etc. They were also going to have a lot of speaking engagements and healing-type seminars, but the attendees were interested in being active. They were all very active before their injuries and the focus is on things to do. Many attendees use this as an event to help them relate to their children since becoming injured.

QUESTIONS

- Jim Davis asks how wide an area the event reaches and John replies that the majority of the attendees are from the East Coast, but it is a national draw. Although they had about 25K spectators, this was more of an unpublicized event. This type of event, to John's knowledge, is not held anywhere else. It was an idea between Mike Eason and Jeff Hill.
- BJ Baumann asks if it is part of the Patriotic Festival, and John replies that it is not, but it is held right after the Patriotic Festival, so part of the synergy is already there.
- Jim asks what the plan is for next year and John would like to bring back the racquetball on the beach. Although there was an issue with getting the court back this year, the motorcycle jump as added in its place. John asks for ideas.
- Sylvia Strickland asks if paddle boarding was an event and John replied that they did have paddleboard, but this year they had kayaking. They did have paddle boarding within the Wave Warriors camp in the afternoon, but he will see about it as a separate event. John asks Sylvia to call her contact for assistance in 2017.

Committee Reports

Transportation, Parking, Pedestrian Committee (TPPC)

Mike Eason reports for Preston Midgett that TPPC met last month and discussed the use of the temporary parking passes. In a June, at a civic league meeting they were able to gain more knowledge on what people were doing with the temporary passes. The committee, in cooperation with the civic league, will probably come back to RAC with a recommendation.

They discussed employee parking and what effects the changes that they made this year had on the parking. They are still vetting that and will have results at the next RAC.

The trolleys at the oceanfront are successful. Rob Fries had noted that the garage locations sold all 500 of their passes and they have ordered 1000 more. They are working on a more convenient way to get these passes out to people.

They also briefly discussed the event houses, which are affecting Sandbridge as well as the north end, and there will be more discussion on that. Billy Almond mentioned Barry Knight's committee on rentals, which will meet on July 14 in Richmond. The committee will hear issues on AirBnB's, and locals will be attending that meeting.

Planning and Design Review (PDR)

Billy Almond reports that they had Steve McLaughlin report on the 16th Street pump refurbishment. The committee suggested using pavers and having a paver color review, to be scheduled in the future.

They reviewed the 27th Street Hyatt project as two Hyatt parking lots for interim parking, which will be valet only. One is on 27th and Pacific Avenue (the future garage site) and another on the south side of 27th Street (the future site of the tower). They passed along their recommendations to the developers and the parking lot projects are in site plan review.

Kristine Gay updated the committee on two projects that had come to the planning department: Seaside Apartments (18th Street on the south side) and Montage Apartments (directly opposite the Rescue Squad). Portions of both projects qualify for housing credits, and Karen Prochilo and Andy Friedman's department is involved.

Last, the Café Guidelines will be revised for the ViBe District, something similar to a "Café Guidelines II". The east-west gateway streets will be reviewed for a little more flexibility for people having small cafes outside. The outsides of most of these cafes are on public streets and the guidelines may need to be revised to explore that opportunity for them. They are setting up the meetings after PDR each month.

Oceanfront Enhancement Committee (OEC)

Jim Davis reports that they discussed the Sense of Arrival project with regard to the new poles and banners on Shore Drive and turned to how the poles on I264 East can be further developed.

In that same regard they discussed asking various entities to consider developing icons for their areas. Mike Eason shows the banner most recently developed by the OEC, eight of which will be put up shortly at the Rudee Inlet.

In addition, they had discussion on the status of the homeless and Jim Davis is hoping that the PIN Ministries and Potters House representatives will be able to redirect the homeless population that might remain at the oceanfront toward the new housing center at Witchduck.

QUESTIONS

BJ Baumann asks if there are guidelines as to how the banners should look, and John Uhrin replied that the layout would be the same, but the icon will change. These banners are a separate project from the banners on Shore Drive.

BJ replied that many of their guests come from US13 through Shore Drive and asks if Shore Drive would be willing to work with the resort team for banners.

Resort Investment Committee (RIC)

Billy Almond reports that they addressed the upcoming speakers on the circuit starting with August through December 2016. The September meeting has been confirmed as meeting

at the Cavalier Hotel for a tour in lieu of the traditional RAC meeting. They will have more information on that date at the next RAC meeting.

Oceanfront Strategic Growth Area Committee (OSGAC)

BJ Baumann reports that they met with one of their remaining property owners and hopefully will be tying up the 31st Street corridor discussions within the next couple of months.

G.R.E.E.N. Committee

Billy Almond reports that the G.R.E.E.N. committee did not meet.

Economic Development

None

Staff Report

Mike Eason announces that they had a good July 4 event, with traffic emptied from the oceanfront within less than an hour. The traffic in the past had taken 2 to 2 ½ hours.

The Rock n Roll Marathon is coming and there will be major changes for parking and other logistics for that event.

Other Business

None

Public Comment

None

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.