



Resort Advisory Commission
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RESORT ADVISORY COMMISSION MINUTES

DATE: November 3, 2016
TIME: 3:00 pm
PLACE: Virginia Beach Convention Center, Room 2AB

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

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

Bryan Cuffee
Craig Roback

OTHERS PRESENT

Aaron Spence, VB City Public Schools
Eileen Cox, VB City Public Schools
Mark Swingle, VA Aquarium
Scott Wichtendahl, 2nd Precinct
John Uhrin, Council
Emily Archer, Planning
Brad Van Dommelen, CVB
Kathy Warren, SGA
Diana Burke, VBHA
Bill Reed, BEACON
Stacey Parker, The Pilot
Mike Eason, CVB/Resort Mgmt.
Robin Hart, CVB/Recorder

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Gerrie West

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

Motion carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the October 6, 2016 meeting as written.

21st Century Learning - Dr. Aaron Spence, Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) Dr. Spence emphasizes that the city is leading the nation in performance on the SAT and, this year has had the highest graduation rate and lowest dropout rate in the history of the city, and the highest number of scholarships awarded in the history of the city.

Virginia Beach leads the state in industry certifications, earning 10% of the state's total. There is a benefit of offering workforce credentials, and students are seeing it, too. They want to help students to see the benefits of community certification at an earlier age, as the competitive environment today is not how it used to be in the past.

He provides an example of an interactive website that students can use to plan their coursework. Employment skills, such as persistence, understanding entitlement, working in

groups, public speaking and communication are emphasized in these programs while students are still in high school.

The schools need a firm commitment and partnership with businesses in order to be able to bring the students on board while they are still in school and show them what they expect in terms of workplace performance. He reviews the partnership with Stihl and their small engine repair program, which has developed into a need for mechatronics, as an example. He sees great potential for growth in our region in the maritime industry, hospitality, health sciences, STEM and advanced manufacturing industries.

QUESTIONS

Bill Gambrell of the VBRA is interested in forming a partnership with the schools where they can get students in the industry earlier and get them to understand their potential to rise.

Dr. Spence agrees that educating them to the possibilities is key, and start marketing interest-based learning as early as the fifth grade.

John Urhin believes that having those early years of exposure to the public will serve students well later in life. Bobby Melatti agrees, saying that Beach Events has already gone into the school community to make presentations to show what they offer to interested students.

Kristina asks what the structure of the program is, and Dr. Spence say that the work program is free to employers, with the exception of time, and students receive education credit in return for work. It is part of the school's cooperative education program.

Nancy Creech asks where medical opportunity fits in, and Dr. Spence says that the health sciences curriculum covers medical education and Bayside Academy has one of the best programs in the country.

Jim Davis ask how the division is doing with the achievement gap with various students.

Dr. Spence replies that he is trying to raise awareness of the challenges that they have. There are two components: responsive teaching and basic, good teaching.

Norfolk Canyon – Mark Swingle, Virginia Beach Aquarium

Mark Swingle wants to do as good a job of protecting our area in the ocean as we have done with protecting the area on earth (with national park systems, etc.).

He wants to protect an area in the ocean known as the Norfolk Canyon, a geologic feature that was formed by ancient river systems (Susquehanna and James) dumping off the shelf creating what is today an underwater river valley and river bed about 70 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach. It is essentially now a grand canyon underwater, only 300 feet deep at the shelf and a mile deep at the deep end. Mark also wants to include in the sanctuary the protection of the historic site of the sinking of the Billy Mitchell fleet of eight ships, an event which is believed to symbolize the foundation of the modern air force and the modern navy and its naval aviation program.

They propose an area of 750 square miles off the coast for the nominated sanctuary area. The Virginia Aquarium would like to turn the application in by the end of December 2016. The NOAA will review it for 30 to 60 days. If it meets criteria, it is placed in an inventory, and then NOAA goes to Congress for funding in order to move on to the designation process. After a three-to-five-year designation process, which separates a national sanctuary from other marine protected areas, during which different stakeholders,

government agencies, private entities have input where environmental impact statements are conducted, and the like, the area is granted national sanctuary status.

Questions that Mark has encountered already are:

Why is the Virginia Aquarium interested? The Aquarium's mission is conservation and the ocean is critical to life on Earth. The national marine sanctuary office with NOAA staff will bring research and educational dollars to the area. The Aquarium would be the portal for telling people about this place, and they would hope that the NOAA sanctuary office would establish their office here.

Is everyone on board, and if there is pushback, what is it? The fishing (primarily) and military industries are potential opponents to the sanctuary designation. The Aquarium is engaging with both industries, and of the sanctuaries that currently exist, none of them preclude fishing or military activity in their areas.

DISCUSSION

Laura Habr says that the effects of seismic airgun blasting to the sanctuary is of concern to a lot of people and scientists, and the area would be protected by sanctuary status. Laura makes the motion that we support Mark and this program, and Bill Gambrell seconds the motion, with the caveat that we are concerned about fishing, but this organization does want to support Laura's motion that we support the sanctuary. He thinks it is important that we send that message.

Billy Almond asks if it is important to have the support of the Commission in order to complete the nomination package, and Mark replies that they are asking for support from a number of groups, as it would be part of the package. He understands their point and it is not his intent to come up with a resolution of support, and if it happened, it is not a necessity that it be done today. They will be taking it to City Council in a couple of weeks and they have some endorsements from some organizations, but he would like to have their endorsement at some point.

Bill Gambrell says that it does show our commitment to the ocean that is part of our livelihood. This is the RAC and this community is about the ocean and the opportunity to enjoy it. He thinks it is important that we support the idea, and if the process goes forward there might be things come up to which we have objections, but the process is something that we really want to support.

The motion, restated, is to support the nomination, and Bill adds the caveat that they do not want it to have a negative effect on fishing, but we do want to support the nomination process.

Mark adds that inside the Aquarium's *Norfolk Canyon* handout, referencing the FAQ section is the verbiage that they will have in the application regarding fishing regulations. It basically states that commercial and recreational fishing will continue.

John Uhrin suggests that they add the wording to the motion from the section that states that the proposal will recommend continued open access to traditional ocean users, which will cover the military and the commercial fishing industry, and so on.

After discussion on the possible impact and/or influences on offshore drilling activity, the commercial and recreational fishing industry and the military activity, a **motion was carried that the RAC support the nomination of the Norfolk Canyon to become a sanctuary given the written additions noted identified in the Aquarium handout presented at today's meeting.**

Mark Swingle thanks the Commission and adds that there is a website that they have set up that allows for individuals to sign in support of the nomination.

Committee Reports

Transportation, Parking, Pedestrian Committee (TPPC)

Preston Midgett reports that they discussed a project coming up on Pacific Avenue on 24th and 25th Streets and returns on 22nd Street. It is a short-term project that runs through this month, replacing sewer lines.

The third part of the Pacific Avenue project starts the first part of October and there will be minimal disruption to traffic and will be completed by April 30.

They have another project next spring with the traffic lights along Atlantic Avenue where they will replace the rusting steel poles with new galvanized poles. They suggested that the project managers see Billy Almond for coordinating the colors of the poles.

An update on the guest passes says that a civic league at the oceanfront can change the number of guest passes they get from the Treasurers office. They asked that another (Shadowlawn) civic league be allowed to review the recommendation and make sure that everyone was on the same page before they vote on it. It seemed like a good idea. They don't want two different policies for two civic leagues along the resort area.

Planning and Design Review (PDR)

Billy Almond says that they reviewed two projects – one a new boardwalk café for the 27th Street Hyatt. The concerns about the café connecting to the bike path will be revised. The second project, a renovation from Doughboy's on 241/2 Street, will be similar to 33rd street.

The subcommittee that worked on the revision of Category F to the café guidelines was sent around and they feel that the café designs running east and west are different than the ones running north and south and the residential areas need to be treated differently. They need to send out the revisions one more time and then it will go to the legal department and then to Council.

Oceanfront Enhancement Committee (OEC)

Jim Davis reports that they have been discussing the Sense of Arrival. They batted around some ideas about how they can identify an identity statement that they can turn into a gateway design that might feature some icons that maybe could be branded. They decided to reach out to some stakeholder groups and they decided to start that right here with the Commission. He leaves the Commission with two questions and asks that they either respond before they leave or take the questions with them.

Billy says that Brad hosted the tourism luncheon yesterday and he watched the branding for Pure Michigan. He urges the members to complete the questions and get the answer to the OEC.

Resort Investment Committee (RIC)

Billy reports that the RIC met yesterday and they discussed the speakers scheduled for the rest of the year.

He asks what speakers the RAC might like for 2017, as there are topics out there that we can bring to the RAC.

He reviews the 2016 subcommittee topics that the RAC developed last year. Based on discussion yesterday, parking was added to it and it was requested to discuss the Dome Site again. They want to make sure that they have the right message to discuss the priorities with the City Manager in January. If there is any discussion on this, and if not, if there is anything that the members want to add to this list, please send to Robin, and RIC can review this at the December meeting and finalize the message.

The other item was to ensure that everyone that is on the Commission please to serve on a subcommittee.

Billy asks Preston to report on the Nomination Committee.

Preston asks the Commission to add any other names to the nominations for RAC Chair and Vice-Chair, as currently nominated are Kristina Chastain as Chair and BJ Baumann as Vice-Chair of the RAC for the next term. Hearing none, he asks for a motion to approve the nominations. **Motion carried to elect Kristina Chastain as Chair and BJ Baumann as Vice-Chair of the RAC for the next term.**

Oceanfront Strategic Growth Area Committee (OSGAC)

BJ Baumann reports that they had a housekeeping meeting yesterday for the conversations held about the 31st Street corridor. There is currently another landowner scheduled to appear for the 31st Street discussion and then they will move on to the Marina District.

G.R.E.E.N. Committee

Laura Habr reports that they met last month and are looking for people to join their committee.

At their next meeting they will prioritize the issues discussed at the last meeting, which include recycling, composting cleanup, expanding the Beachy Clean program, sea level rise, flooding issues, the blue-green streets model/stormwater program, bike-sharing program, the light rail and increasing their rank on the ACEEE scorecard.

They had a good clean beach report this year, with one brief incident around the pier.

The storm drain marker program needs volunteers to identify drain makers with a program that can be used with a cellphone to assist with mapping.

She also wanted to take this time to reiterate G.R.E.E.N.'s position with the oil and gas program, and on which she would like the RAC's support and a motion. We are already on record in 2015 saying we oppose this oil and gas industry, so she would have a second to her motion to reiterate that RAC is opposing offshore drilling and gas exploration to include seismic testing.

One member asked if that was already expressed, and Laura clarifies that we did take a position but there are two different tracks of this process. The oil and gas drilling has been pulled, but the testing and the permit process has not been pulled. Her G.R.E.E.N. committee talked about it and they are not in support of seismic testing.

Laura makes a motion to amend what we previously voted on to include ‘..and seismic testing...’. Seconded. **Motion carried to amend what RAC previously voted on and addressed in the 2015 letter to Council to include ‘..and seismic testing...’.**

Laura announces that their next G.R.E.E.N. meeting is November 16.

Preston adds that, along with adding things to the area that will be more energy-efficient, the streetlights that are going to be added on Pacific and along the boardwalk are LED lighting. They should be able to finish most of the east-west project, starting this winter. There will still be another part of that which will probably happen next year.

Billy asks if there is any way to get, at some time in the future, to find out what the energy reduction is for the LED so they can support for doing it in other places. Mike Eason replies that it is still in the same loop, and it will be another three years before they can have comparable data.

Randy asks how many new bulbs are going up and Mike says that once the 40-50 poles that need to be swapped out is complete, they will know what the new costs are and how many lights they can do and where they can start. Most likely they will start at the south end as the older poles are down there.

Economic Development

None

Staff Report

Mike Eason reports that there has been a change in the second precinct and Capt. Ronan is now the Captain of the second precinct. Effective today, he took over the second precinct.

Joe DaBiero tells Captain Ronan that they are supportive of his command. Bill Gambrell echoes Joe's support.

John Uhrin suggests writing a letter of thanks for Sean's extraordinary support for Week 17 and believes that he has had some big wins for the resort community. **Motion carried to send thank you letter to Sean Adams for his service at the second precinct.**

Mike Eason shares that when they started the Wounded Warrior week with the USO to support the ill and injured with their recovery efforts and it has grown to be the "premier event of the country", in the words of the USO. It has allowed the city to showcase what they can offer to visitors to come here. About two weeks ago, they received a request from Jeff Hill /USO with four delegates from Denmark. They have heard about his program and next year they will be actively involved in the Wounded Warrior program. They will have a delegation directed by the Queen of Denmark to come here. They have a meeting coming up about how they can welcome this group back.

Other Business

Sylvia asks about the thank you letters to the guests that speak to the Commission. Billy says that he normally reaches out with a phone call and the Commission will get letters written. Robin Hart to assist.

Public Comment

None

Meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.