



Resort Advisory Commission
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RESORT ADVISORY COMMISSION MINUTES

DATE: March 2, 2017
TIME: 3:00 pm
PLACE: Virginia Beach Convention Center, Room 4AB

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

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

Gerrie West

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Kristina Chastain

OTHERS PRESENT

Molly Ward, Secretary of Natural Resources
Brad Van Dommelen, CVB
Officer Matt McInerney, VBLE
John Uhrin, Council
Bill Reed, BEACON
Stacey Parker, The Pilot
Mike Eason, CVB/Resort Mgmt.
Robin Hart, CVB/Recorder

Vice-Chair BJ Baumann called the meeting to order at 3:00p.m.

Motion carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the February 2, 2017 meeting as written.

Sea Level Rise – Molly Ward

Secretary Ward has previously served as both Mayor and Treasurer of the City of Hampton, as well as having worked with the Mayor of Virginia Beach on the HRTPO, HRMFFA and other regional committees. Although not a technical expert, Molly is very familiar with sea level rise and has anecdotes and personal opinions on the issues based on experience.

She realizes the balance between the need for relevant concern instead of unnecessary fear about sea level rise for our coastal communities, and will not discuss the efforts of other groups; however, one thing to take into consideration is the projected sea level rise reported by VIMS. A 1 ½-foot sea level rise from 1992 levels is predicted to occur between 2033 and 2063. We are up about four inches from then. If the level rises four more inches in another 20 years, worst-case scenario, if CO2 levels continue to rise, ice continues to melt and man-made factors have an effect, the rise could be as much as two feet by 2040.

Within that range of concern, we need to plan for both long-term and short-term scenarios. It requires planning (for at least 2033) in our everyday decision-making as well as consideration of storm activity and emergency preparedness plans. Designing hardscapes, parking spaces, green spaces and buildings should all be taken into concern. Nor'easters can be as impactful as hurricanes, and a revolving loan fund, for example, was created for people to raise their houses was created in Hampton under her leadership. She is noticing that the city is not making these types of long-term planning decisions.

In the short-term, during a VDEM meeting, they have realized that they do not have efficient one-way emergency planning on the interstates in case of evacuation. VDEM is also reviewing the Shelter In Place program, which gets people to a higher ground for safety from flooding.

Another issue of concern besides sea level rise is subsidence - the sinking of land due to overuse of the Potomac aquifer, which is responsible for half the water supply for Virginia. Water reduction strategies need to be supported in order to change permits for users who extract water, such as Franklin, West Point and James City County. The SWIFT Project (by HRSD) reuses wastewater, pumping it back into the aquifer.

She wanted to get those main long-term and short-term points and strategies across today to get us thinking about planning for the future.

QUESTIONS

John Hawa asks how a two-foot rise in sea level would manifest itself in the area and Molly replies that she is not specifically sure. Mike Eason advises John that there are storm surge maps online and he will try to get that for him. To Molly's point, there are evacuation plans that require three days' lead-time, and it is a hard decision for which to pull the trigger and if you happen to make the wrong decision, the outcome can be worse.

Molly says that the biggest concern is the sea level rise plus the storm surge.

Pumping the wastewater into the aquifer might start in 2030 and the goal is to be in a stable place in 2050. Other parts of the country are doing something similar, but not something as complicated as what we are doing with our region's aquifer. She has confidence in the science, the DEQ and HRSD. She has tasted the recycled wastewater and it tasted like bottled water, with the only negative response being the perceived "Ick Factor". The previous EPA was supportive of it and she hopes that the current EPA will be, too.

On the question of "moving to higher ground", Mike Eason replied that Erin Sutton, with Emergency Management, has been tasked by the State to come up with an evacuation plan, of which Shelter In Place will be a big part. The plan has gone to the State and is being finalized.

On the question of what types of buildings can stand a Cat 3 hurricane, Molly says that many schools are built to withstand strong winds, but the real force is the water. She says that our own emergency management office would know. Mike added that the Fieldhouse was reviewed as a potential emergency shelter, but he will check for a list of available resources.

Billy Almond asked what group makes the decisions to change the building codes and ordinances when needed after the impact of an event.

Molly replies that there is a state building code that is adopted by the localities. There has to be a political will, and unfortunately, it typically does not occur until disaster strikes.

Preston Midgett asks if our area is trouble spot No. 2 under New Orleans. He also asks what happened to an idea on having floodgates at the HRBT and Lynnhaven Inlet.

Molly does not see floodgates as a viable alternative, as it leaves many people unprotected, and it is expensive. She sees the real energy coming from us, creatively by locality, not by the State. She thinks that we need to change how we think about things - why we have certain requirements and whether they are necessary. There is technology available that can help planners change their thinking.

BJ Baumann asks if the insurance industry is in touch with her department in reviewing all this data and Molly replies that her department is involved with state parks and the VMRC; however, insurance is a constant issue regarding the flood maps and they are always trying to make sure that everyone can have it.

Laura Habr asks if there is a timeline on working with the municipalities and state level on any particular effort.

Molly replies that there is no coordinated effort, but there was a request in the legislative packet for a Secretary of Sustainability, but that did not pass. They will try to come up with a coordinated effort among all three Secretaries that deal with this but at the end of the day it belongs to public safety and is a long-term, local planning issue. It is not a natural resource issue.

Committee Reports

Transportation, Parking, Pedestrian Committee (TPPC)

Preston Midgett reports that Rob Fries reported to their committee for the annual parking report, which included an increase in revenue from last year, and the desire to be able to better advertise their parking app, Passport, which has many potential benefits.

They had a discussion on the Bayfront Shuttle and Shoppers Express. Since ridership and interest on the Shoppers Express has waned, they made a decision to stop that route and approved the Bayfront Shuttle that runs from the oceanfront to the Lesner Bridge and back. The funding starts July 1 and the TPPC drafted a letter to Council to eliminate the Shoppers Express and divert that money to the Bayfront Shuttle to allow it to start Memorial Day weekend. Preston asks the Commission to review the letter and consider a motion to support the Bayfront Shuttle start date being moved to Memorial Day weekend under the above-mentioned circumstances. Bill Gambrell seconds the motion saying that both the VBRA and VBHA have written support letters for the service. **Motion carried to support the letter to Council on the implementation of the Bayfront Shuttle, and moving that start date up to Memorial Day Weekend.**

In January, the RAC had a presentation from the City concerning the Atlantic Avenue realignment and the Cavalier project. RAC had asked TPPC to get the presentation from the same group and they have not been able to; therefore, they cannot make a recommendation one way or the other concerning the project.

Planning and Design Review (PDR)

Billy Almond reports that they had a presentation from Eagle Bay Hardscapes concerning a new product that serves as a cleaner and sealer for concrete pavers. The product will be demonstrated as a city seal painted into the pavers at 20th Street in the public connector park, with no signage associated with it. PDR approved that and they will get that done before the season starts.

The sandwich board ordinance was changed to include the addition of plastic for the materials allowed for the signs. After more discussion, they sent Kevin Hershberger back to the City Attorney's office to discuss how the signs would be weighted down, verbiage, size, advertising, etc.

Mie Standing came back with the final drawings for the Chix Café construction projects, which was approved.

They had some discussion about the clear path required for the cafes on Atlantic Avenue, which was determined to be eight feet from the café to the planter.

Oceanfront Enhancement Committee (OEC)

Sam Reid describes the presentation they received from Billy Almond for the triangle area by the Visitors Center. They discussed landscaping and a BMP water feature. They also discussed having surfboards lining the 264 east and westbound on the perimeter. Sam makes a motion that the RAC endorses the art concept for the Sense of Arrival as presented to the OEC on 2/24/17, to include lighted surfboards for the perimeter of I264, with an accompanied CIP. The OEC also endorses a water feature as part of the water quality management plan for the Sense of Arrival.

Since one member was not comfortable with voting on a design that he had not seen, Randy Thompson clarifies that the motion was more to support the idea of the art element on each side and to seek funding for that, and conceptually, they were voicing their support for the BMP-oriented water feature at some point.

Billy says that he can present the idea next month, but he thinks that Councilman Uhrin was trying to separate the perimeter treatment because the center triangle would be controlled by the city but the outside part is still under VDOT jurisdiction. They contacted VDOT again, and VDOT has replied with optimism. Randy adds that they took a \$2M dollar project and split it to make it more manageable and later if the arena comes on board, then the BMP plans could help fund the remaining portion of their water plan.

BJ asks if we need to amend the motion. Mike Eason says that you characterize it as approving an art element with the understanding that the final concept can come back to this commission and other stakeholders. BJ requests that we defer the motion until the next RAC meeting until they can see the presentation.

Resort Investment Committee (RIC)

BJ Baumann reports for Chair Kristina Chastain that they met yesterday to discuss speakers for the RAC. They are open to suggestions for speakers for the end of the year.

Oceanfront Strategic Growth Area Committee (OEG)

BJ Baumann says that there is no report for the OSGAC.

G.R.E.E.N. Committee

Chair Laura Habr recognizes award-winners announced at the 4th Annual Virginia Green Travel Star Awards seminar in Charlottesville in February. Recipients included Preston Midgett for Jungle Golf, Brad Van Dommelen for the VBCC, the Virginia Aquarium and Adventure Kayak Tours, and the Doubletree hotel at 19th Street and the Pebble Tea and Spa.

Earth Hour coming up on March 25. Town Center is involved and Laura encourages others to join. The City of Virginia Beach has signups under www.vbgov.com Energy under Earth Hour.

A Keep Virginia Beach Beautiful cleanup on March 11 at the ViBe Parklette between Cypress and Mediterranean Avenues.

Earth Day is April 22 and it will mark this city's 10-year anniversary in the Virginia Green program. Laura asks people to join their committee to plan a party.

Staff Report

Regarding today's discussion led by Molly Ward, Mike Eason suggests having someone from Emergency Management come to the RAC to speak on our overall program. BJ agrees, and Mike will find out when someone is available.

- Billy Almond's committee worked on the café regulations, which will go to Council on March 25.
- FYI there will be a Navy SEAL monument built at 38th Street and the boardwalk. Construction will begin soon and be complete by the end of May.
- The construction for the road on Pacific Avenue is ongoing. Mike tells John Hawa that they had asked for improvements between 22nd and 25th Streets. They are dealing with two facilities: Public Utilities and Public Works, and they want to make sure they are talking to each other. The area is in desperate need of enhancement and Preston tells John that this was unfunded and the worst part, between 22nd and 25th Streets, is the part they are trying to get paved.

Billy Almond asks for an update on the Shamrock Marathon this year, and Mike confirms that the plan is staying the same. Billy was looking for notice and Bill Gambrell echoes the concern over closure of public roadways and the timing of the closures for events. Mike will explain the process of the road closures to the VBRA if requested.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Public Comment

None

Meeting adjourned at 4:00p.m.