

**Friends of the James River Park Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, May 3, 2022 at 6:30 pm**  
**Reedy Creek Headquarters**

**Board Members in Attendance:**

[Mary K. Martin](#)(President), Dean Brunson ( Treasurer), [Greg Velzy](#), [Bill Draper](#), David Broocke, Mel Smith, Jean Linnell, Madge Bemiss, Matt Rigby, Brooks Whitten

**Staff Members in Attendance:**

[Josh Stutz](#) - Executive Director

Shawna W. Shade - Office Administrator

**Guests in Attendance:**

Scott Ross - Riverside Outfitters

Jackie Merrick - Friends of the Pumphouse

Mary Kay called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm

**Board Meeting Minutes**

Greg Velzy asked that a correction be made on page 3 to change the sentence: “Riverside Outfitters donated stone for an alternative river access site since the Wetlands project is incomplete” to read; “Riverside Outfitters donated stone for an alternative river access site since the Huguenot Flatwater project is incomplete”

Greg motioned to approve the minutes from the April board meeting as amended. David Broocke seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Executive Director’s Report – Josh Stutz**

Josh took a moment to acknowledge achievements among Board members unrelated to JRPS.

**Outdoor Classroom Build-** Project is almost completed. Kiosk is built and will be installed shortly w/ Penelope’s guidance. Park staff to dig out river access and add field stones for an improved river access. The classroom is in use and already welcoming field trip groups.

**Wood River Run 5K** - Congratulations to Matt Rigby for being the first board member to cross the finish line! The run netted about \$45,000. 196 people registered @ \$30 each and about 150 ran. A contingency of about 4-5 people registered and ran in California. The run garnered

positive news and social media presence. Josh requests that board members submit thoughts on improvements for next year's run, for which planning will begin in October. Revenue will go to provide scholarships to Passages camps, FOJRP operating expenses, and the proposed Pump House ramp (this may shift to another project based on allocation of city resources).

**River Rescue Summit-** Josh is working on a date for this summit.

**Park 50th Anniversary-** Josh reached out to Shamar Young with City Parks and Recreation to see who would be our point of contact for planning a 50th anniversary celebration. For initial consideration the date of the celebration will be Spet. 15th, the Thursday during River Week, on Belle Isle.

**Legend Beer Update-** The release night for the Raging James Beer will be Thursday, May 19th. All proceeds will go to FOJRP. Josh hopes to get out the invites and social media posts by the end of next week. The beer will run through mid-September, will be distributed statewide and will feature the FOJRP logo. Josh hopes to pursue other joint branding endeavors next year.

**FOJRP Summer Projects Update-** Both FOJRP Board approved projects are scheduled to finish the first week of June. Work on the North Bank Trail entrance started Monday. The start of the 21st street trail improvements may have to wait until after Riverrock. A remainder of \$39,000 exists to apply to summer projects. Some of this will go towards repairs and beatification to the exterior of HQ that was damaged by a fallen tree. Josh will ask the board to approve another Summer Project ask pre the June Board meeting

**Streetlight Data Project-** We are still refining the project scope. A proposal will be presented at the June Board meeting.

**Art Works Gallery Opening** - Art Works in Manchester is going to host a James River-themed art show. The show will open on August 26th with a reception and a silent auction and run for 30 days.

**Hammers and Ales** - The Tool Bank will host an event on Browns Island on June 11th. The event will feature music and beer. Attendees will support the park by building a picnic table, trash hut, etc. under supervision of tool bank staff.

**River Rock** - River Rock is May 20th - 22nd. Josh asks board members to volunteer to man the FOJRP booth. The event hours are Fri and Sat: 12-9; Sun: 12-5

**Volunteer Coordination** - Josh proposes that FOJRP move toward managing our own volunteer coordination as a way to better engage our volunteers. Currently, the city coordinates volunteers for JRPS. FOJRP has made inroads with Dominion and Carmax. FOJRP will coordinate with staff to determine which projects require volunteers. Anti-graffiti work has recently been completed by Dominion Payroll at pipeline, and by park staff and an Americorps group recently worked with park staff at Belle Isle.

**City Park Signage** - Josh has been experiencing difficulty getting the city to agree upon new Belle Isle signage. The signs have been designed and once they go through the Urban Design Committee, we should be good to go.

- Greg Velzy asked about site-specific signage with QR codes that link to online maps. Josh is uncertain of whether that is possible under city guidelines, because there are no unified city signage guidelines.

### **Park Report - Shawna Shade provided on behalf of Michael Burton**

- Park Visitation – **220,319 visitors in April.** 560,466 year-to-date ( new counter for Reedy Creek has been installed, wetlands counter malfunctioned )
- Pump House Dock completed
- Pony Pasture roadwork completed
- New flip signs are being installed at 13 locations
- Outdoor education classroom kiosk under construction
- Huguenot flatwater nearing completion ( last section of concrete has been applied to the top of the ramp)
- CSO work being done at reedy Creek HQ and near 42<sup>nd</sup> tower
- Northbank/ Oregon Hill path pavement has begun starting at Tredegar
- 
- Americorps NCCC week complete
  - Day 1 – Acquired 60 trees from Treelab for future planting. Mulching at TPOT
  - Day 2 – Graffiti removal at Dry Rocks. Painted a retaining wall at Tredegar st. Removed invasives in planting bed at Tredegar.
  - Day 3 – Cobble stone sorting. Fence deconstructed for CSO work at Reedy HQ.
  - Day 4 – Clean-up at North Bank (Texas Beach). Tree tubes removed from flatwater.
  - Day 5 – Tredegar st earth day planting. Planted 60 natives in the fenced switch back area under the suspension bridge to Bell Isle.
  -
- JRA Leadership expedition, lead by Jym Coleman - Planted several trees at Reedy creek HQ
- Massive Graffiti Removal at Belle Isle Quarry Pond near passages zip-line launch
- Mowing season begins
- Chipping and vine removal at several locations

- Field trips are back! All of Broad Rock Elementary's first grade classes visited us for their first-ever field trips. We focused on birds and generally animals found in James River Park System. The binoculars were a hit, so thank you Friends for those. We are looking forward to third grade field trips starting Friday
- Penelope successfully submitted our first round of federal reports for the NOAA BWET project, focused on building RPS's capacity for environmental education by creating an environmental literacy plan. Both financial and performance progress reports were submitted.
- Summer hiring for program staff is nearly complete and planning for the summer is likewise just about ready to roll.
- Tyler and Penelope led a guided hike on Belle Isle for the VA.
- Tyler has been working closely with Josh on the Belle Isle Signage project
- Tyler has been working hard on caring for the specimen garden
- Penelope and Tyler have been working on the Henderson Middle School garden as part of an after school program with Alliance and NextUp, focusing on pollinators and their impacts on the local ecosystems and the watershed. We're excited to take students from Henderson to the Science Museum on Wednesday as part of that project.
- Tyler has been continuing his professional development by attending a weekly Spanish Language conversation group.

**Friends of Pump House Report - Jackie Merrick (sp), Treasurer**

- Pump house has recently had some very good media coverage, including coverage by VPM, RTD, and a local morning show.
- Recently hired a communications coordinator which has improved the quality and continuity of their messaging
- Recently hosted Spring Fest - an exclusive, but highly successful fundraiser.
- Mayor Stoney is scheduled to tour Pump House in a few weeks
- FOPH recently completed the installation of four windows. Visitors can now look into the boiler room area. Pump house has about 30 windows. The average cost of replacement of each window is \$3,000.
- FOPH has been granted money to install a security system, which they hope will deter vandalism (one of their new windows was shot)
- VCU's school of engineering created a 3D model of Pump House's equipment. The rendering team won first place in their apartment.

- FOHP generated publicity with a booth during Garden Week.
- Comments on FOPH Report
  - Greg mentioned that the reopening of the newly reconstructed Pump House platform is on Thursday, May 5 at 1 pm.
  - Josh notes that once FOPH is under FOJRP, we can channel more supporters to FOPH
  - A question was raised about the limited occupancy of 25 ppl. It is believed that the occupancy was determined due to the condition of the building at the time of inspection by fire marshall and limited entry and egress points. Reassessment could put Pump House entry at risk if the condition is deemed worse than on initial inspection. FOPH hopes to increase the max occupancy number.
  - Josh's final thought is that Pump House is a \$20,000,000 project that will flounder without significant Federal and State funding. The longer Pump House remains in a tenuous state, the more the project will end up costing overall.

## **Finance Report**

Josh hopes to spend a restricted donation from Elizabeth Reed Carter before new FY begins. The donation was accepted by FOJRP for work in Byrd Park. Josh is working with Chris and Shamar to spend the \$90,000 for Byrd Park asap.

FOJRP will switch to Quickbooks for Nonprofits by target date July 1/ start of new FY. Dean has generously agreed to cover the costs of QB for the first year.

Josh presented his draft of next year's budget with three main talking points. Larger items included are listed below. Discussion proceeded.

1. Staff and Payroll
  - a. Roughly \$20,000 is designated to hire an Invasive Removal Coordinator. (note: city is also looking to combine two staff member positions into a Natural Resource Manager position).
  - b. Roughly \$20,000 is designated to hire a volunteer coordinator who will start in fall or winter after FOJRP.
2. \$100,000 Capital Improvement Project Match Included. "The City" has designated \$100K for capital improvement projects for JRPS in its current proposed budget. Josh hopes to match that amount in the FOJRP budget. He hopes this will encourage the city to designate more funding to the park. Discussion proceeded predominantly comparing the need for capital project funding versus natural resource preservation of the park.

3. Josh proposed not itemizing JRPS operational expenses - instead of delineating each project, FOJRP will denote the amount designated to JRPS. Josh will discuss further when Giles returns from maternity leave.

### **Advocacy Update**

The proposed Park Ranger Program is slated to pass. The City has designated \$1.1 million to JRPS operations (\$100k of which is towards capital campaigns and \$250k towards the park ranger program)

JRPS's designated funds from City of Richmond amounts to \$0.50 per visitor (compare to maymont at \$1/visitor)

Josh is preparing for the upcoming legislative session. He plans to talk to City Council Rep. Stephanie Lynch about changing the rules around how funds are donated to the city. Currently there is a \$25k cap on gifts unless there is a city ordinance. Josh would like to eliminate that cap for JRPS gifts.

### **Old Business**

**Dumping Debris in the James River Park System:** Missed submission of letter to spring "Rag", her neighborhood's newsletter.

- Josh plans to speak with Giles about delivering letters to homes on the park side of Riverside Drive between The Nickel Bridge and the train bridge.

**Transforming the James River in Richmond by Ralph Hambrick:** Greg Velzy shared copies of Ralph Hambrick's book with interested board members who did not receive a copy at the April board meeting. Friends of the James River Park purchased copies of the book for board members.

### **New Business**

Greg Velzy plans to meet with the city's Director of Planning, Kevin Vonk to visit Diversity Park in order to discuss reclaiming park space there. The park has significantly changed since the development of the neighboring high rise. Developers promised parking spots but never delivered.

Mary Kay - New Committee meetings will begin this week.

**Adjournment:** Bill Draper motioned to adjourn the meeting. Greg Velzy seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, June 7, 2022 at 6:30 pm at ArtWorks.

Respectfully submitted by Jean Linnell, Board Member of Friends of the James River Park.