



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
2nd Floor of City Hall
Richmond, VA 23219
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Meeting Minutes - Final Urban Design Committee

Thursday, August 8, 2019

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

Call to Order

Roll Call

Present -- 7 - * David Johannas, * Andrea Quilici, * Andrew P. Gould, * James W. Klaus, * Emily Smith, * Chair Andrea Almond and * John Reyna
Excused -- 1 - * Jill Nolt

Approval of Minutes

1. [UDC MIN 2019-07](#) Minutes of the regular meeting on July 3, 2019

Attachments: [DRAFT UDC MIN 2019-07](#)

A motion was made by Committee Member Johannas that these Minutes be approved. Committee Member Reyna seconded, the motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 4 - David Johannas, Andrew P. Gould, Emily Smith and John Reyna
Excused -- 2 - Jill Nolt and Chair Andrea Almond
Abstain -- 2 - Andrea Quilici and James W. Klaus

Secretary's Report

The Secretary, Joshua Son, reported two recent banner approvals, for Hip Hop Nutcracker and The Price Is Right.

Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

A motion was made by Committee Member Gould that UDC 2019-21, Conceptual review of a new neighborhood dog park in South Barton Heights, 1920-1804 Greenwood Avenue, be deleted from the agenda. Committee member Reyna seconded, the motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 5 - David Johannas, Andrew P. Gould, Emily Smith, Chair Andrea Almond and John Reyna
Excused -- 1 - Jill Nolt
Abstain -- 2 - Andrea Quilici and James W. Klaus

CONSENT AGENDA

There were no items on the Consent Agenda.

REGULAR AGENDA

There were no items on the Regular Agenda, UDC-2019-21 having been deleted (see above).

2. [UDC 2019-21](#) Conceptual review of a new neighborhood dog park in South Barton Heights, 1920 - 1804 Greenwood Avenue

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)
[Location & Plans](#)

This item was deleted from the Regular Agenda with the intent of returning for review at a later date.

This Location, Character and Extent Item was withdrawn by the applicant.

Excused -- 1 - Jill Nolt

OTHER BUSINESS

James River Park System Master Plan Presentation

Bryce Wilk introduced himself as the James River Park System Superintendent, having taken the place of Nathan Burrell, also present, who is now the Facility Maintenance Manager. Mr. Wilk introduced Chris DeWitt of VHB, who provided a brief presentation about the project.

Mr. Johannas asked if an effort had been made to connect the North Line Trail with Maymont. Mr. Wilk stated that no specific attempt had been made to do so. Mr. Burrell stated that Maymont leadership had been consulted regarding the plan, and that they do not want bicycle paths to lead onto pedestrian paths at Maymont. For now they are keeping a gate in place to separate Maymont.

Ms. Smith asked if, in light of the many inaccessible areas and the wish to keep impermeable pavement to a minimum, thought had been given to signage directing handicapped visitors to the accessible areas of the park. Mr. Wilk stated that fundraising for a universal accessibility ramp at Huguenot Flatwater is underway, and that there are areas in and adjacent to the park, such as Great Shiplock and Belle Isle, which are accessible. Ideas for increasing visibility of accessible areas include marking them on maps and adding information about them to the parks website. Ms. Smith pointed out that increasing public access and use of outdoor spaces is part of the Richmond master plan, and asked if in addition to maps, apps or other technological aids might be available to help visitors find accessible areas. Mr. Wilk stated that maps and a welcoming center would be the first steps in providing information, that he currently sends emails about this as needed, and that the existing "Friends of" website could be updated to provide more accessibility information. Ms. Smith stated that the National Parks Service has been recently working on improving public awareness and participation. Mr. Wilk stated that the Friends Of group and the James River Outdoor Coalition include wheelchair-using constituents who provide feedback.

Mr. Klaus asked if there were plans to increase public/private partnerships in order to increase funding for the Park System's resources. Mr. Burrell stated that historically the James River Park System has been both the most utilized and the least funded of the

Virginia park systems. Funding and staffing have improved in the past 5-6 years, partly due to the advocacy and support of the Friends of network. The involvement of this group causes the park to function already as a public/private partnership. Though public/private partnerships and the conservancy model are mentioned in the plan, the intention is to explore these ideas without necessarily committing to them, as they are contentious.

Mr. Klaus asked if the Friends of the James River Park System is a 501c3 non-profit organization; Mr. Burrell confirmed that it is. Mr. Klaus asked if the Friends group was providing a significant proportion of park funding. Mr. Burrell stated that the City is the main funder. The Friends group in addition to providing some funds also does grant work, and raised the funds for the current project.

Mr. Quilici asked if private sources for funding, for example boat rentals, events, or concession stands, had been considered – and, if such sources exist, where the revenue from them goes. Mr. Burrell stated that various private entities have permitted operations within the park, and those permit fees all go into a fund for James River Park System's operational and maintenance needs. Other funding opportunities are considered, but the conservation easement limits this. Efforts are being made to insure that all activities are appropriately permitted.

Ms. Almond asked how many park visitors are from the immediate vicinity, and how many are from outlying regions. Mr. Burrell stated that the last figures are from 2012, showing 60% visitors – about 2 million annually – from outside the city. Though city visitors may have increased, Mr. Burrell expressed doubt that they total more than 45%. This is reflected also in the counties from which survey feedback has come.

Mr. Burrell stated that one hope and recommendation is that more cohesive riverfront management is developed, although whether via a conservancy model or public/private partnership or other means is difficult to determine. Mr. Burrell stated that Maymont receives as much city funding as the park, but that Maymont also receives funds from surrounding counties, which the park does not.

Mr. Klaus asked if partnerships had been sought so as to defray expenses, for example sharing a building with VCU's Rice Center or the James River Association. Mr. Burrell stated that, though the park management has good relations with such groups, they already have a lack of usable office space, so it is not feasible to share at this point.

Ms. Almond stated that she'd received citizen feedback to the effect that they would like a pedestrian crossing near the Nickel Bridge, but lower and more trail-connected than that bridge. Ms. Almond asked if the applicants had heard about this, to which they said that they had not. Mr. Burrell stated that, when the Nickel Bridge does get redeveloped, this will be an opportunity to connect the bridge to the river and not just to the city grid, but that building a new bridge would be a considerable task. Ms. Almond stated that she had heard there are some railroad pylons in place. Mr. Burrell stated that there are some by the CSX rail bridge, but that they don't extend all the way to the city-owned area.

Ms. Almond stated that she had also heard historic preservation considerations would limit what could be done with the Nickel Bridge. Mr. Burrell said this was outside of his remit, being an RMA matter.

Mr. Johannas stated that the Richmond Downtown Master Plan in the early 2000s called for the river to become the city's central park. Mr. Johannas thanked the staff present for their successful efforts in making the park a central focus of the city.

Resolution of Appreciation for Chris Arias

Mr. Son stated that he is working on the wording of a resolution of appreciation for recent Committee member Chris Arias, and will be emailing Committee members to solicit any suggestions they may have.

Discussion regarding changing the “static arts” position on the Urban Design Committee

Ms. Almond stated that the process of changing the “static arts” Committee position, to something the Committee finds more useful, consists of: the Committee writing a description of what they would like the position to be; submitting the description to the Planning Commission for approval; and then submitting it to City Council for approval. Ms. Almond had stated that she would write up an initial description draft, but wanted to check in with Committee members before doing so. Urban Planning had been suggested as an area of focus for the position, so that someone with a background in transportation planning, pedestrian infrastructure, and urban development could be recruited.

Mr. Son stated that the Urban Design Committee may request to review applications of new Committee members, but may only make comments to the Land Use, Housing and Transportation Committee, which makes the decision. Ms. Almond stated that this Committee met about 4 weeks ago to select a new at-large UDC member, and that she had informed them of the need for Urban Design expertise. The Committee discussed what attributes would be most desirable in a new Committee position description, in terms of both balancing out the Committee membership traits and addressing expertise needs of the City.

Adjournment

Committee member Almond adjourned the meeting at 11:57 AM.