

CANAL PLACE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Tuesday, July 28, 2020, Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom Western Maryland Railway Station, Third Floor Conference Room
Cumberland, Maryland

Pursuant to notice distributed to members of the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority, posted in the main entrance of the Western Maryland Railway Station, and circulated to the press, a meeting of the Authority was held via Zoom at the Western Maryland Railway Station, 3rd Floor Conference Room, Cumberland, Maryland, on Tuesday, July 28, 2020.

Authority Members Present: Janice Keene, Chair; Rebecca Ruppert, Leanne Mazer, Jeremy Bender, Stuart Czapski and Christiana Hanson representing the National Park Service.

Staff Present: Deidra Ritchie, Executive Director; Eric Harman, Financial Officer; Paul Cucuzzella, Nicole Gray, Administrative Specialist.

Others Present: Kathy McKenney, City of Cumberland.

I. CALL TO ORDER & CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mrs. Keene called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM.

II. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND FINANCIALS

The following motion was offered by Mrs. Ruppert:

RESOLVED, that the open session minutes of the May 26, 2020 open session (Attachment #1) be approved as submitted.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Czapski and unanimously approved.

The following motion was offered by Mrs. Ruppert:

RESOLVED, that the closed session minutes of the May 26, 2020 closed session (Attachment #2) be approved as submitted.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Czapski and unanimously approved.

Mr. Harman reviewed the Revenue sheets (**Attachment #3**) and the monthly Financial reports (**Attachment #4**) for May 2020, and reported that revenue is still low as many tenants are not paying rent due to the financial hardship of COVID-19. For expenses, which were also deemed normal by Mr. Harman, there was the annual payment for legal services of \$34,000.

The following motion was offered by Mr. Czapski:

RESOLVED, that the Financial and Revenue statements for May of FY20 be approved as distributed.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bender and unanimously approved.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Ritchie highlighted her Executive Director's Report (**Attachment #5**), by stating:

- Staff continues to telework due to COVID-19 restrictions and are only in the office on Wednesdays to complete duties that cannot be done through telework.
- Continued with a regular conference call on the Cumberland River Park Project. Current topics of discussion are the dam removal/mitigation and proposed funding opportunities.
- Participated in Google Meet calls with the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority reviewing the recent grant applicants. This was a two-day review.
- Reviewed data for the economic impact study which is being conducted for the heritage areas.
- Will be meeting with the Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area site visit meeting on July 29, 2020.
- Staff continues to work on year end close out and various other end of year reports that are due to the state.

IV. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE UPDATE

Christiana Hanson of the National Park Service reported that the park is open and is having a lot of traffic due to people getting out and enjoying the outdoors. This increase, with decreased facilities, is creating some additional graffiti and trash which park employees are working on removing as best they can. Volunteers are being slowly phased back into the park. Currently no visitor centers are open but they are working with Allegany County Tourism to have an outdoor pop-up center for visitors in the Cumberland area. Mr. Czapski asked if there was any way to gauge the reaction to the center not being open. Ms. Hanson replied that they don't have any way to get that information but that there has been an increase in digital use of park platforms and they are keeping an eye on that for negative responses.

V. OLD BUSINESS

- **Ethics Reporting**

Ms. Ritchie stated that ethics reporting is an annual responsibility of being a board member. She encourages those members that have not completed the filing to do so as soon as possible.

- **Community Legacy Grant**

Miss Gray reported on the project of automatic doors which was made possible by the Community Legacy Grant given by the city of Cumberland. All the doors have been installed and some have been connected and are operational, others are still in need of connection. Those

that are connected have been turned off due to the building being locked at this time. Glass Services has made the first draw from the city for the project that will cost \$50,000, when completed.

- **Website for Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area**

Ms. Ritchie announced that there is a new website for the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area. The new site can be found at www.passagesofthepotomac.org. The site was created by Dave and Meg Romero of Vibrant Image of Cumberland. Ms. Ritchie feels that the new site is very visual and inviting and is pleased that staff can manipulate event and news features.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- **MHAA Grants Awarded**

Ms. Ritchie stated the following grants were awarded for the FY21 grant round from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority:

- Allegany County Commissioners – Marketing Grant in the amount of \$22,610
- Downtown Development Commission/City of Cumberland – Baltimore Street Access in the amount of \$20,000
- Emmanuel Episcopal Parish – Conversion of the Barkdoll house into a History Museum/Tourism Center in the amount of \$40,000
- Canal Place – Management Grant of \$100,000

Mrs. Keene stated that these grants exemplify the reason an entity would want to be within the heritage area and wondered if the county would be interested in letting the heritage area expand. Ms. Ritchie expressed interest in discussing further expansion with the interim county administrator.

- **Board of Public Works – Rent Forbearance**

Ms. Ritchie stated that at the last board meeting that Senator Edwards and tenants requested rent forbearance for the months of April, May and June. That request was presented to the Board of Public Works and was approved for the non-governmental offices and business tenants. Additionally, money was requested to cover this funding gap. Upon notice that the gap funding money is secured the tenants will be notified of the rent forgiveness for the identified months.

- **PIA Request**

Ms. Ritchie reported that with the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad (WMSR) departing the station requests from media have been coming in. A request for information was also received from an individual, Cassie Conklin, who is a blogger and writer for a local university paper. The request was for written correspondence between Canal Place and the WMSR including leases and rental payments. Ms. Ritchie stated that the information was given but was not sure when or

where the information may be made public by Ms. Conklin, but wanted the board members to be aware of the ask.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Kathy McKenney reported that she just learned that there will be a new Community Legacy Sustainable Communities grant round this year. It will be happening later than is typical but she hoped that Ms. Ritchie would be able to participate as she had before.

VIII. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Canal Place Authority is scheduled for Tuesday, September 29, 2020 at 1:30 PM.

Mr. Czapski made a motion to enter into closed session under General Provisions Article § 3-305(b)(4) to consider a preliminary matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State, relating to leases at Canal Place.

The motion was seconded by Mrs. Mazer and unanimously approved.

Closed Session Attendees: Janice Keene, Chair; Rebecca Ruppert, Leanne Mazer, Jeremy Bender, Stuart Czapski, Deidra Ritchie, Eric Harman, Paul Cucuzzella and Nicole Gray.

IX. RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

The Authority returned to open session at 2:50 PM.

No action was taken in closed session.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Czapski offered a motion to adjourn the open session.

The motion was seconded by Mrs. Mazer and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 2:51 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Janice Keene,
Chair