

**CANAL PLACE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**Tuesday, January 25, 2022, 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, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room, Cumberland, Maryland, on Tuesday, January 25, 2022.

**Authority Members Present:** Janice Keene, Chair; Al Feldstein, Ray Morriss, Stu Czapski, Becky Ruppert, and Jeremy Bender.

**Staff Present:** Deidra Ritchie, Executive Director; Nicole Gray, Financial Manager and Crystal Lloyd, Administrative Aide.

**Others Present:** Melinda Kelleher, Downtown Development Commission; Bill Atkinson, Atkinson Eco LLC; and Anthony Bates, National Park Service.

**I. CALL TO ORDER & CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

Mrs. Keene called the meeting to order at 1:33 PM.

**II. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND FINANCIALS**

The following motion was offered by Mayor Ray Morriss:

**RESOLVED, that the open session minutes of the November 30, 2021, open session (Attachment #1) be approved as submitted.**

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

Miss Gray reviewed the Revenue sheets (**Attachment #2**) and the monthly Financial Expense reports (**Attachment #3**). Miss Gray reported on the expense reports for November and December 2021. Expenses in November on par, and December for CEC and Atkinson ECO were \$21K (combined) Additionally a second audit payment of \$12,500 was made to SB and Company in December. Revenue collected in November included \$50,000, from MHAA as well as the Fairfield Inn & Suites room sales annual payment which was in excess of \$90,000.

The following motion was offered by Stu Czapski:

**RESOLVED, that the Financial and Revenue statements for November and December of FY22 be approved as distributed.**

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

### III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Ritchie highlighted her Executive Director's Report (**Attachment #4**), by stating:

- Paul Cucuzzella has taken position of Principal Counsel with the Department of Natural Resources and Rieyn DeLony has been appointed as interim legal counsel for CPPDA.
- Jen Ruffner, has vacated her position as administrator at MHAA. Andrew Arvizu is Acting Director of MHAA as the position is currently being advertised.
- Attended several Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) meetings as well as MHAA Coalition meetings.
- Reminder that MHAA grant applications are now open with the Intent to Apply due January 28, 2022.
- The RFP for the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area Management Plan Update and boundary expansion is near completion. The RFP is expected to be advertised before the end of January.
- Participated in a call in regards to Maryland's AmeriCorps Program.
- Responded to FY23 Budget questions from the Office of Legislative Services. The CPPDA's Budget Testimony for the House is virtual and will be held on January 26<sup>th</sup>. State testimony will be held on January 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Attended planning meetings for the International Woman's Day to be held at Rocky Gap in March.
- Met with Ursulla Lemanski from the National Park Service's River, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. Topics discussed were the River Park at Canal Place project and the upcoming boundary expansion for the heritage area.
- Met with the new Cumberland City Administrator. Jeff Silka.
- Participated in Zoom call with Delegate Brook Lierman to provide information on the River Park at Canal Place project.
- Met with DDC to discuss MHAA grant opportunities.
- Met with John Wunderlick to discuss a proposed Fort Cumberland project.
- The filing period for the 2021 financial disclosures are now open. The reports are due April 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Attended a meeting of the Carver Center.
- Met with Senator Edwards regarding status of CPPDA.
- Participated in meetings with National Park Service and Army Corp to discuss the River Park. Also met with M2M regarding upcoming grant opportunities for the River Park.
- Processing several tenant leases for renewal.
- Department of General Services Prebid meeting for Shops HVAC to be held on January 26, 2022 at Canal Place.
- The January legislative reception for the Maryland Heritage Area Coalition has been cancelled due the increase in Covid-19 cases.

- “Like a Woman”, an International Women’s Day Event, will be held at Rocky Gap on March 18, 2022 beginning at 10:30 a.m.

#### **IV. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE UPDATE**

Mr. Anthony Bates, Parks Partnership Coordinator, (standing in for Tina Cappetta) attended the meeting representing the NPS and provided the following updates: the park continues to work toward an agreement with Allegany County Tourism to solidify their relationship in order to reopen the Visitor Center in Cumberland; all park employees who were to return to work(RTW) at the end of February 2022, but will not be returning due to the increase in COVID-19 cases and an RTW date has not yet been identified; Stephanie Semiek has vacated her position and the NPS does not have a date of when that position will be backfilled; NPS is currently working with the Allegany County Tourism Office on finalizing a general agreement on the management of the rental unit. Mr. Bates also indicated that they are looking for volunteers, or organizations, who would be interested in supporting that effort. He also announced that he would be interested in the Heritage Project Expansion and would like to be listed as the contact person for that project.

#### **V. OLD BUSINESS**

- **River Park Update**

Mr. Atkinson reported that they are moving forward with the project and it has been through the public comment period with U.S Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and they are preparing a response that is due by the end of the month (January 2022). At that point, Atkinson Eco will know if there is additional action required on their part. Nate with Water Land Solutions is moving forward with gathering data, and putting modeling information together so they are ready to move forward once it gets approved through the USACE and MDE. M2M Ventures is doing the grant writing for a \$10 Million EDA grant with a match from Water Land Solutions and Mr. Atkinson believes that this will strengthen the application. He has also met with Mr. Bates (NPS) and the USACE on how it will affect the C&O Canal towpath, trails, and the NPS’s right of way and made it clear that there was no responsibility regarding the maintenance on their part. Mr. Atkinson stated that the pump that feeds into the NPS canal basin will be gravity fed once the dam is removed. Water Land Solutions is presenting their designs and will be handling the movement of the pump. They are identifying how deep and how much water is needed in the preliminary engineering design. Mr. Atkinson also noted that he will be meeting with Jeff Silka, City Administrator, on Thursday, January 27<sup>th</sup>. He expects a 200-300-day permit review.

Mrs. Keene asked Mr. Atkinson what are the odds of the permit review being expedited. Mr. Atkinson replied that Congressman David Trone has met with USACE and expressed his feeling on this subject with them on the importance of expediting the permit review. The question remains will the MDE be open to the request to expedite the permit, and that part of the equation remains questionable.

- **Heritage Area Expansion RFP & Steering Committee**

Ms. Ritchie reported that Paul Cucuzzella has finalized the draft to put the Heritage Area Expansion out to bid. Part of the project included a steering committee made up of stakeholders who would benefit from the Heritage Area. She has reached out to numerous individuals who she would like to consider as part of this committee, and has received some positive feedback. Those being considered are: Sarah Milbourne representing Rocky Gap, Wills Mountain and Public Lands; Joe Rogers, Maryland Department of Planning, Jessica Palumbo, Allegany County Tourism; Sandi Saville, citizen at large; Julie Westendorff, Allegany County Arts Council; Ruth Davis Rogers, City of Cumberland; Rebecca Ruppert, Allegany College of Maryland; Melinda Kelleher, Downtown Development Commission; and Anthony Bates, NPS. Ms. Ritchie has reached out to City of Frostburg, and would like to have a representative from Georges Creek as well.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

- **Personnel Changes**

Ms. Ritchie introduced new staff member, Crystal Lloyd. Paul Cucuzzella has resigned and is now with Maryland Department of Natural Resources as principle counsel and Rieyn DeLony will be a temporary replacement for Mr. Cucuzzella. Maryland Heritage Area Program Administrator, Jen Ruffner has left and the assistant administrator has left as well. Andrew Arvizu is temporarily handling the office until a replacement has been found.

- **Board Members Ethics Filing/Conflict of Interest**

Miss Gray reported that from January 1 through April 30, 2022, all board members need to complete their Ethics Filing and Conflict of Interest form. Board members need to sign pages 5 and 6 of the Conflict of Interest Form and return them to the office. An email will be sent out to the board members with the Ethics filing link. All board members must complete with no exceptions.

- **State Park Proposal**

Ms. Ritchie indicated that everyone should have received letter of request attached to the meeting invite (**Attachment #5**)-Ms. Ritchie gave some background to this topic explaining that she and Mrs. Keene had a meeting with Senator Edwards before Christmas. The discussion was based around the frustration due to the lack of response from the task force because it has started to affect the tenants and shops at Canal Place as well as concern over the 3 jobs within Canal Place. There have been no Task Force meetings since August 2019. Senator Edwards has indicated that he is a member of the State Park Investment Commission, and suggest that Canal

Place look into becoming a State Park. Ms. Ritchie read the Commissioner's report and Senator Edwards suggested that she reach out to the Secretary of the DNR to see if Canal Place could be included in the State Park System as there is many similarities between Canal Place and the State Park System. State Parks are looking for additional public land specifically land with water access, trail connections, water trails, historical parks and parks that tell a story of underrepresented communities. All of these aspects seem to match Canal Place. Ms. Ritchie feels that the River Park being set up very similar to the other state parks in Maryland and close proximity to Will's Mountain State Park. The State's investment will still be protected, regardless of what is going to happen at Canal Place. Ms. Ritchie noted that if for some reason Canal Place is dismantled, the State is going to have to take care of all of the buildings and property at Canal Place. With the upcoming River Park and what it will cost to operate and maintain, Ms. Ritchie thinks it will be a perfect fit. For DNR to be located in downtown Cumberland and all of the outdoor recreation activities and all of the economic development being brought to the downtown Cumberland area, Ms. Ritchie reiterated that this idea seems to be a perfect fit. Mrs. Keene added that they requested a visit so that we can physically show representatives from the DNR around and show them what Canal Place has to offer along with the River Park Project.

Mr. Feldstein asked that he heard on the radio that Delegate Buckel is going to release his findings from his task force study in the next couple of months. Mrs. Keene replied that she is not aware of this and has not heard from Delegate Buckel.

Mr. Czapski asked what is the downside of Canal Place becoming a State Park would be in relation to the tenants and railroad. Ms. Ritchie says she cannot see a downside and that it would be good for economic development. The relationship with the Fairfield Inn should remain the same and it would continue to generate income. Ms. Ritchie feels that there is still a lot of conversations to be had about this potentially happening. Mr. Czapski stated that both sides should be looked at and wonders what can and cannot be done on the grounds if Canal Place becomes a State Park. Mr. Czapski additionally wanted to know what limits will be put on the property and its usage, reminding everyone that the Del Fest event was successful. Mrs. Keene suggested that her opinion would be that it would lend a lot of stability and be a catalyst for economic development in broad terms. Mr. Czapski stated that economic development is generally not related to State Parks. Mrs. Keene affirmed that it will draw participants into the park and will benefit Allegany County, Cumberland, and the surrounding counties. Ms. Ritchie indicated that by becoming a state park it would lessen the taxpayer burden on the the City of Cumberland and Allegany County.

## **VII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

## **VIII. NEXT MEETING DATE**

Canal Place Authority  
Meeting Minutes  
January 25, 2022

The next meeting of the Canal Place Authority is scheduled for Tuesday, March 29, 2022 at 1:30 PM.

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

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

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bender and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 2:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Janice Keene,  
Chair