

CANAL PLACE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Tuesday, January 31, 2023 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 January 31, 2023.

Authority Members Present: Janice Keene; Rebecca Ruppert, Stu Czapski, Ray Morriss, Jeremy Bender, Bradford Nixon and Al Feldstein (by phone).

Staff Present: Deidra Ritchie, Executive Director; Nicole Gray, Financial Manager; Adam Snyder, Legal Counsel; and Crystal Lloyd, Administrative Aide.

Others Present: Paul Mullan, WCBC Radio; Bryan Gowans, WCBC Radio; Greg Larry, Times-News; Melinda Kelleher, Downtown Development Commission; Anthony Bates, National Park Service; Shalena Saccone (via phone).

I. CALL TO ORDER & CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mrs. Keane called the meeting to order at 1:33 PM. Mrs. Keane welcomed everyone to the first board meeting of 2023, and asked that the meeting minutes from the last board meeting of September 27, 2022 be reviewed for any questions or concerns.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND FINANCIALS

The following motion was offered by Stu Czapski.

RESOLVED, that the open session minutes of the September 27, 2022, open session (Attachment #1) be approved as submitted.

The motion was seconded by Mayor Ray Morriss and unanimously approved.

The following motion was offered by Mayor Ray Morriss.

RESOLVED, that the closed session minutes of the September 27, 2022, closed session be approved as submitted.

The motion was seconded by Stu Czapski and unanimously approved.

Miss Gray reviewed the Revenue sheet (**Attachment #3**), and the monthly Financial Expense report for the months of September, October, November, and December 2022 (**Attachment#4**), and stated that on the revenue side, most of the rent payments from tenants are up to date, and we received \$137,000.00 in grant money that had been delayed and we are caught up on grant money due Canal Place. One of the notable expenses were in relation to staff receiving their Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) in November. Other expenses included repairs to the Bobcat, and repairs to the elevator. Miss Gray stated she was happy to announce that the playground area has been mulched (\$2,300) and is ready for use, and we already had many children enjoying the safety of the playground area and all of the playground equipment situated on Canal Place property. We've also paid out 3 different mini-grants totaling \$7,000 and these grants were paid out in the months of November and December.

The following motion was offered by Mayor Ray Morriss and unanimously approved.

RESOLVED, that the Financial and Revenue statements for September, October, November & December FY23 be approved as distributed.

The motion was seconded by Stu Czapski and unanimously approved.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Ritchie highlighted her Executive Director's Report (**Attachment #5**), from the November and December Executive Directors report by stating:

Thank you goes to the City of Cumberland for awarding Canal Place \$2,836 from the hotel/motel tax they received which will be used for movies to be shown next summer on the Festival Grounds.

Cumberland, Maryland was one of the 33 towns awarded the Levitt Amp Multi matching grant in the amount of \$90,00 to present 10 free outdoor concerts annual

in underused public spaces for 2023, 2024, and 2025. A big thank you to all who voted for us.

Attended ARC Conference at Rocky Gap Conference Center 10/11th and 12th. Had a conversation with Gayle Mansion and Governor Hogan regarding the River Park project.

Held a meeting with the Mayor of Ridgeley, WV, town councilman of Carpendale, WV, Kevin Clark from Mineral County Development Authority, Allegany County Tourism, and Bill Atkinson regarding the River Park project. All were in favor of project and are interested in participating in the project.

Attended PACE Reception in Annapolis. PACE meetings included River Park funding discussions with Comptroller Brooke Lierman, Molly Byron, Director of Intergovernmental Relations for the Lt. Governor, and Vice Chair of Appropriations, Delegate Mark Chang.

Attended Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area Board meeting.

Met with DGS regarding the legal agreement to install 4 EV chargers on Canal Place property. Met on site with Potomac Edison regarding the placement and type of chargers that will be installed.

IV. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE UPDATE

Mr. Anthony Bates reported that 2 new park rangers have been hired, and that HR is working to expedite the process. Mr. Bates also announced that the Visitor Center will be open beginning March 4, 2023, Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. He also noted that the Visitor Center hours will be extended during the peak season and those times will be announced at a later date. This will be dependent upon our ongoing concerns with the HR Department. Once the NPS can provide additional information it will be posted on their website, and their social media site. Mr. Feldstein asked if the staffing issues were due to Human Resources (HR) not receiving adequate applications or if it was due to a funding issue. Mr. Bates noted that it is not an issue of HR not receiving applications, but more of an issue with HR having a backlog of applications for review and consideration.

V. OLD BUSINESS

• **River Park Update**

Ms. Ritchie stated that there is a lot to report on that and she will also tie in the status of the current RFP's. As a result, of Maryland Speaker of the House, Adrienne Jones visit to Cumberland, Maryland, specifically Canal Place, and the planned River Park area in late November, Ms. Ritchie been working with both the city and the county to strategize on their next move for the River Park funding. Ms. Ritchie stated that everyone agrees that we should proceed with going after the money. Ms. Ritchie, Mrs. Keane, and Mrs. Ruppert, attended the PACE reception in Annapolis and did a lot of work trying to secure the money for the River Park. Ms. Ritchie thanked both Mrs. Keane, Mrs. Ruppert, and Mayor Ray Morriss for all of their assistance on attending the various meetings held at the Pace reception and that she couldn't have done it without their help. To follow up with the \$20 million request, we met with the Vice Chair of Appropriations, Mark S. Chang, to discuss the River Park and actually met with him at the House Office Building and Jim Christie presented the project to him. Vice Chair Chang was impressed with the project and wants to support it. Ashli Workman with Allegany County tourism was scheduled to meet with the Lieutenant Governor, Aruna Miller, in that afternoon but the Lieutenant Governor was not available due to some last moment commitments she had to attend in relation to the inauguration activities. Ms. Ritchie stated that her and Mrs. Workman met with the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Mollie Bryon, to discuss the River Park project, and how important it was to Western Maryland and the Cumberland, Maryland area. Director Byron seemed very impressed with the project and offered to help support it. Ms. Ritchie also noted that they met with the Comptroller, Brooke Lierman, in person and she was enthusiastic about the planned River Park project as well. Ms. Ritchie stated that she heard many PACE participants express how impressive it was that the City of Cumberland, Allegany County, and Canal Place partnered on the request for the funding for the River Park Project. Ms. Ritchie stated that there are some follow-up meetings being planned in collaboration with the City of Cumberland and Allegany County to ensure that the money of the project gets put in the budget. The \$20 million discussed as a number doesn't mean that said amount will be disbursed all in one year. It may be disbursed in increments of, for example, \$5 million every fiscal year. Congressman Trone requested that we provide some detailed costs to complete the project. Robert Smith with the City of Cumberland's Engineering Division agreed to write up an RFP to find a consultant engineering firm who could provide Canal Place with the cost estimates of each

phase of the project as it will be completed in phases, and not all at one time. The project went out to bid, and after reviewing the companies that submitted bids, Canal Place once again selected Civil Engineer Corps (CEC), and they are working on getting those cost estimates so that we can determine exactly what funds we will need to complete the project. Again, the project will be completed in phases. Ms. Ritchie expressed that this is great news and expressed her appreciation for all of the support Canal Place has received working towards the River Park Project.

- **Status of Current RFP/Contracts**

Ms. Ritchie stated that we are waiting on our legal counsel to advise on the Community Trust Foundation Agreement and if we will be able to partner with them. Our legal counsel, Adam Snyder, responded stating that Canal Place had sent him a fairly lengthy to do list, and once we are able to get the EV car charging stations and the parking kiosk matters resolved, he will review the other items on his agenda for Canal Place. Ms. Ritchie confirmed that we have sent a list of items for Mr. Snyder to review and approve all at once, and we are understanding that these items can be time-consuming. Mrs. Keane asked if there was any additional old business that needed to be discussed before we moved on to new business. Mayor Morriss added that he wanted to reiterate what Ms. Ritchie had discussed earlier regarding the success of the PACE reception. Presenting the River Park Project as one voice was well received by Comptroller, Brooke Lierman, and presented a road map of what our next steps should be. Ms. Ritchie deserves a lot of credit for all of her efforts of setting up the various meetings to present the River Park Project. Mrs. Keane agreed with Mayor Morriss and added that it was the most efficient 48 hours that she ever participated in, and the most beneficial PACE Reception that she has attended to date partially due to the participation of the Greater Cumberland Committee. Mrs. Keane also thanked Ms. Ritchie for her leadership at this event. Mr. Nixon asked if there was a website where he could find additional information about the River Park noting that he had not done any research on his own. He also stated that several people have approached him about their interest in learning more about the project and he wants to point them in the right direction. Ms. Ritchie explained that they can find information on our website or reach out directly to her for further information. Mr. Czapski inquired about the \$20 million dollars and was wondering if the entire amount was coming from one source or if the funding was coming from more than one entity. Ms. Ritchie responded saying that funding will be coming from the Governor's Capital Budget.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Ritchie gave an overview of the past tenant to the future tenant of occupancy of Building A-2. Cumberland Trail Connection's lease expired on December 31, 2022. The former owner passed away and the family decided to close the business. Mandela Echefu of Wheelsup is now leasing the building. Due to him having a current bike shop business, he was interested in leasing the building mainly because of its location to the C&O Canal Towpath. The agreement between Canal Place and Mr. Echefu was that he would occupy the building rent free for the first 3 months of 2023 so that he could bring the space up to par as it was in disrepair. An agreement was made between Canal Place and Mr. Mandela Echefu d/b/a Wheelsup Adventures with an opening of April 1. Repairs will be made at his cost and all said repairs must go through the approval of Canal Place Board of Directors. Mr. Feldstein asked the question on what type of merchandise was left at the bike shop. Ms. Ritchie explained that some of the inventory was left for Mr. Mandela to purchase at his discretion. Ms. Kelleher stated that Mr. Echefu has been a great tenant to work with at his WheelsUp location on the Cumberland mall. He is passionate, enthusiastic, and in her opinion, you could not ask for a better tenant. Ms. Ritchie ended the discussion noting that Mr. Echefu would not only be selling and repairing bikes, but would also be promoting hikes and events on the festival grounds and she believes that his business will be a dynamic addition to Canal Place.

- **Ratification of Online Votes for the Approval of Future Tenant to Occupy Building A-2**

The following motion was offered by Mayor Ray Morriss.

RESOLVED, ratification of online votes for the approval of future tenant to occupy building A-2.

The motion was seconded by Rebecca Ruppert and unanimously approved.

- **Mini Grants MHAA FY23**

Ms. Ritchie stated that Canal Place had received block grant money for FY23 from the Maryland Heritage Area Program. An announcement was made that there was an online training for those who wanted to apply. As a result, we received

several applications and an email was sent to those who were awarded. Ms. Ritchie provided a quick overview of the mini grants that were awarded. Allegany Tourism was awarded \$700 for the reprint of George Washington Trail brochures. Allegany County Historical Society was awarded \$2,500 for their project, Hands on History, Frostburg First was awarded \$2,000 for brochures and maps of Frostburg's Historic District, Emmanuel Episcopal Church was awarded \$5,000 for signage and promotion of Hoye House and Tourism Center, and Allegany County Tourism was also awarded \$1,287 for temporary advertising (cling-ons) for display at the Frostburg Depot and the Western Maryland Railway Station. This was a holdover from November BOD meeting that was cancelled and the grants have already been awarded. All attendees approved and no attendees was against the approval, however, Al Feldstein opted to abstain. Ms. Ritchie stated that one item had been left off of the new business line was the FY24 Maryland Heritage Area grant application process is now open and the intent to apply for that capital and non-capital funding with a deadline of today, January 31, 2023, but that she had requested an extension for those applications. Capital grants (\$100,000), and non-capital grants (\$50,000). Canal Place will be applying for an operating and a block grant program as well. Applicants may go online and apply through the Maryland Historical Trust site. Applications will be considered providing the project is located within the heritage area. The complete grant application is due in March 6, 2023. Awards will be announced in July.

- **Annual Board of Director's Reporting**

(Ethics, Conflict of Interest, and Attendance) Nicole Miss Gray stated that it is that time of the year again to complete the ethics, and conflict of interest forms and noted that they do not take very much time to complete and that she would appreciate a prompt response from all board members. She will be sending out the email following the close of this meeting. Miss Gray also reminded board members that we have 6 Board of Director's meetings per year, and that members are required to attend at least 3 of those (50%). We are required to complete an annual form with attendance records. Those board members not attending at least 3 of the meetings will be sent a form from the State of Maryland requiring clarification on why you were unable to attend said meetings. Calendars were sent out at the beginning of the year with meeting dates and we are asking that you attend those scheduled meetings.

- **Upcoming Session/Budget Testimony**

Ms. Ritchie stated that once again this year, Canal Place will be required to attend, in person, our budget request to the House & Senate committee on February 27. Ms. Ritchie also noted that she has requested to meet virtual, but is not sure that will happen.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Ritchie suggested Melinda Kelleher provide an update on the collaboration with Canal Place to hold a variety of events here while the downtown mall is under renovations. Mrs. Kelleher stated that a meeting was held a couple of weeks ago between herself, Ms. Ritchie, and Miss Gray so as to establish a plan going forward for events previously held on the downtown mall and the temporary use of Canal Place and its' festival grounds in the interim. Construction is being in April of this year including the Farmer's Market, Friday after Five and the Levitt Amp Concert series to name a few. Mrs. Kelleher mentioned that this information has not been publicly announced due to them working out the details. Mayor Morriss added that he is so pleased to hear that Canal Place is working with DDC to ensure the renovations going on downtown will not interrupt future happenings for our community. Greg Larry asked if there was any update on meeting with Delegate Gary Howell about the River Park. Ms. Ritchie stated that several meetings have been held with the Mineral County Development Authority, and the Mayor Bill Shepherd and town council members of Ridgeley, WV. Mayor Shepherd is excited to move forward and there is plans to light the Blue Bridge that goes from Maryland into West Virginia. Mr. Larry also questioned an update on the task force and if it has disbanded. Ms. Ritchie stated that it has not disbanded because it is a legislative mandate and Delegate Jason Buckel and Delegate Mike McKay requested the task force bring forth some ideas on how to solve these issues. Ms. Ritchie stated that she continues to meet with the city administrator and Allegany County officials to come up with a solution. Task Force meetings will reconvene now that the state is back in session and they will try and come up with a solution that will meet with Delegate Buckle's approval. Ms. Ritchie asked Mayor Morriss that since he sits on the task force has he heard of any updates. Mayor Morriss stated that there have been no recent meetings, and now that the state is back in session things will move forward as planned. No further questions from the public.

VIII. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Canal Place Authority is scheduled for Tuesday, March 29, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.*through Zoom if need be due to Covid-19 restrictions

Mr. Morriss made a motion into closed session at 2:18 p.m. The board will now adjourn this open meeting and proceed into a closed session to perform an administrative function, namely, to discuss tenant proposed changes/uses for Building B 1-2-3 (Charis Winery), Building C (European Desserts, Simplee Kountry, Dig Deep Café, and Cumberland Railroad Museum).

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

Closed Session Attendees: Janice Keene; Rebecca Ruppert, Stu Czapski, Ray Morriss, Jeremy Bender, Bradford Nixon, Al Feldstein (by phone), Deidra Ritchie, Nicole Gray, Adam Snyder and Crystal Lloyd.

IX. RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

The Authority returned to open session at 2:34 PM.

No action was taken in Closed Session.

X. ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was seconded by Mrs. Ruppert and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 2:34 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Janice Keene,
Chair