

**CANAL PLACE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**Tuesday, July 30, 2024 Meeting Minutes**  
**Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority**

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 at Evergreen Heritage Center, Mount Savage, Maryland on Tuesday, July 30, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.

**Authority Members Present:** Janice Keene; Rebecca Ruppert, Michael Mudge, Brad Nixon, Stu Czapski, and Al Feldstein, Ray Morriss, Jeremy Bender (via Zoom).

**Staff Present:** Deidra Ritchie, Executive Director; Nicole Gray, Financial Manager; Adam Snyder, Legal Counsel; Kim Folk, Administrative Specialist/Marketing Director, and Crystal Lloyd, Administrative Aide.

**Others Present:** Chris Stevens, National Park Service; Representative for Tina Cappetta; and a WCBC Representative (via Zoom).

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

Mrs. Keene called the meeting to order at 12:21 P.M. and gave an overview of Evergreen Heritage Center.

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

The following motion was offered by Mr. Feldstein.

**RESOLVED, that the minutes of the May 28, 2024 open session (Attachment #1), be approved as submitted.**

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

Miss Gray reviewed the Expense report (**Attachment #2**), for May 2024, and the Revenue report (**Attachment#3**), for May 2024 and stated that expenses were modest due to our going into fiscal year 2025. Revenue for the month of May remained about the same. All rent from tenants is up to date with the exception of the National Park Service (NPS), and we are working with them to resolve the issue. The annual rent increase occurs annually in February and it took several months last year for them to pay rent that was in arrears. Ben Helwig, the Chief of

Business Management, with the NPS has been assisting Canal Place with resolving this discrepancy. Our parking revenue has increased due to the numerous events that have taken place at Canal Place. Mr. Feldstein asked who our internet provider is to which Ms. Gray responded Breezeline.

The following motion was offered by Mr. Feldstein.

**RESOLVED, that the Financial Expense statements and the Revenue statements for May 2024 (FY24) be approved as distributed.**

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

### **III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

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

- The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) awarded the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area (PWPHA) the following FY25 grants: CPPDA/PWPHA Management Grant for \$100k; CPPDA/PWPHA Block Grant for \$25k; CPPDA/PWPHA Augmented Reality, History Trail for \$39k; and Wills Creek Museum for \$100k.
- The CPPDA contracted with SB & Company for the CPPDA's FY22 and FY23 audits and recently participated in the entrance meeting to begin the audits.
- Staff attended Lonaconing Days on June 29<sup>th</sup> to represent Canal Place and the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area.
- New and updated signage has been placed around the Canal Place Heritage Park. All signs are anticipated to be updated and placed around the property by the end of August.
- Take notice of the calendar listing all of events taking place on Canal Place property through the end of September.
- The Levitt Amp Concert Series and the Famers Market held on the Festival Grounds this season have been very well attended.

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

Chris Stevens stated that a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) has been prepared for Paw Paw Tunnel. The CLR covers the land around, over, and through the tunnel, and the NPS staff is in the process of reviewing the report. Funding for a project to begin next year has been confirmed for a structural engineering firm to assess the Paw Paw tunnel structure. Mr. Stevens stressed that this is an important project given ongoing moisture issues and the use of inadequate bricks and mortar repair used during the 1960's.

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

- **River Park Update**

Ms. Ritchie stated that we have signed the contract with Ecologix Group. Several meetings have taken place regarding the \$6 million grant for the trail project. Ecologix will be taking the lead on the sediment testing which should take place in the September or October 2024 timeframe. Their vast experience with federal and state processes is exceptional, and they are also assisting Canal Place Authority with the FY26 capital budget.

- **PWPHA Expansion Update**

Ms. Ritchie stated that for the sake of time, the PWPHA expansion will be discussed during Acorn Hill's workshop that will take place later in the meeting.

- **Marketing Strategies Update**

Ms. Richie stated that Mrs. Folk is doing wonderful job with marketing for Canal Place and the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area. She has been consistently posting on our social media platforms, and is currently working with our tenants to promote and enhance their businesses in the shops area of Canal Place.

#### **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

- Approval MHAA Mini-Grant -Cumberland Masonic Temple for the Highland Piper Showcase -\$4,000.

The following motion was offered by Mr. Feldstein.

**RESOLVED, the approval for the MHAA mini-grant for the Cumberland Masonic Temple for the Highland Piper Showcase for \$4,000.**

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

- Acorn Hill Strategy Meeting

Ms. Ritchie provided an overview and update on the mission of Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority along with the (PWPHA) Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area with a PowerPoint presentation (Attachment#5). This presentation emphasized our capability to remain a self-sustaining agency. Ms. Ritchie turned the meeting over to Augie Carlino with Acorn Hill Strategies for the board and staff workshop (Attachment#6). Attendees that included both board members and staff members introduced themselves and Mr. Carlino discussed the process that has taken place for Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority and the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area over the past 21 months in relation to the expansion of the heritage area. This included several meetings with staff, board members, stakeholders and the general public. A workshop covering the PWPHA goals and priorities will be covered during the meeting today and he intends to work through an exercise to gather actions and strategies to incorporate into the management plan. A meeting will follow tomorrow at the CPPDA office with staff and Acorn Hill to summarize these findings. The final management plan will be presented to the general public at a later date. Ms. Ritchie stated that she was pleased with the final situational analysis report and the amount of positivity from those who participated in the survey was impressive. A discussion ensued between attendees concerning the importance of expanding the heritage area in Allegany County, Maryland.

Mr. Carlino introduced Mr. Samuel to present his findings from the survey results. Mr. Samuel pointed out, specifically page 68, which addresses the question of what type of goals the PWPHA intend to accomplish in the next three years. Those goals listed in order included, to acquire additional funding for the expansion in Allegany County, accomplish additional projects by adding county partners, focus on conservation, emphasize tourism and economic development, increase awareness of what a heritage area is and the location of the heritage area in detail.

A discussion ensued regarding the importance to increase awareness of the heritage areas. Mrs. Folk stated that awareness is needed at both the state and county level, and Mrs. Keene added that educating students and young people about the history surrounding the heritage areas is a crucial part of the expansion.

Mr. Carlino stated that the findings from the situational analysis revealed that some participants were not aware that they could apply for grants and had donated funds to other heritage organizations, which means that there is an opportunity for the PWPCHA to register as a non-profit. One question arose regarding if any of the participants of the survey had donated to government agencies to which Mr. Carlino replied “No”. A discussion ensued on this topic. Mr. Feldstein suggested creating an advisory committee.

Mr. Carlino suggested that the attendees participate in a group exercise to gauge the matrix of the programs, projects, goals and objectives derived from the plan created in 2014. A handout was given to attendees to review the goals and objectives for CPPDA and the PWPCHA and feedback was requested on which of those goals and objectives that are no longer relevant to the agency. A discussion ensued between attendees and Mr. Carlino. Ms. Morgan suggested revising the language as stated under Objective 2: “by adding softer strategy that supports the expansion that of the establishment of the historic district throughout Allegany County”. Mr. Carlino invited attendees to review the goals and objectives from the previous plan and come up with some new ideas for goals and objectives for CPPDA and the PWPCHA as part of a collaborative exercise so that a list can be made under each category. Each attendee provided input on the subject matter. Mr. Czapski interjected with the idea of presenting information about the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area at events held on Canal Place property such as on the festival grounds would be a way to capitalize on distributing and exposing information about the heritage area and the proposed expansion. Mrs. Ruppert first stated that we need a way to connect the downtown Cumberland area and Canal Place. She stated when she travels she is looking for the “experience” For example, she likes a restaurant with a spectacular view of a river or lake and enjoys going to wineries. A discussion ensued between attendees in conjunction with Mrs. Ruppert’s comments. Mr. Mudge stated that we need to include more of the rural

areas as points of interest for visitors and include promoting those areas within the heritage area.

Other topics discussed was the success of the Farmers Market that takes place on the festival grounds at Canal Place, and the numerous local breweries and wineries in our area. Mr. Carlino stated because there are so many versions of the mission statement, he would like to have a discussion with Canal Place staff members and incorporate the multiple versions into one mission statement.

Mr. Carlino stated that in his opinion, the workshop held today was quite successful due to all of the attendees engaging in conversation and participating in with the goals and objectives exercises presented. In conclusion, Mr. Carlino stated he was appreciative of all of the time and effort spent by all of those involved on this expansion project.

#### **VII. PUBLIC COMMENT** None

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

Mrs. Keene adjourned the meeting at 2:33

Respectfully Submitted,

Janice Keene

Chair

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, September 24, 2024 at 1:30 p.m. at the Western Maryland Railway Station via Zoom.