

CANAL PLACE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Tuesday, November 28, 2023 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 via Zoom from the Western Maryland Railway Station, 3rd Floor, Cumberland, Maryland on November 28, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

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

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: Josh Nolen, National Park Service; Representative for Tina Cappetta, Bill Atkinson, Allegany County Commissioner; Robert Dettinburn (via phone); and a representative from WCBC Radio Station.

I. CALL TO ORDER & CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mrs. Keene called the meeting to order at 1:36 PM. Mrs. Keene introduced new staff member Kim Folk. Mrs. Folk stated that she will be spearheading the marketing for Canal Place and the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area, and assisting Miss Gray with grants administration and any assistance needed with finances at Canal Place. Michael Mudge was introduced as a new board member. Mr. Mudge stated that he is a teacher at the Career Center and Technical Education and instructs the following courses, U.S. History, Criminal Justice, and Business Communications. Mr. Mudge stated he is also a member of the Fort Hill Band Parents Association.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND FINANCIALS

The following motion was offered by Ray Morriss.

RESOLVED, that the open session minutes of the September 26, 2023, open session (Attachment #1) be approved as submitted.

The motion was seconded by Al Feldstein and unanimously approved.

The following motion was offered by Jeremy Bender.

RESOLVED, that the closed session minutes of the September 26, 2023, closed session (Attachment #2) be approved as submitted.

The motion was seconded by Ray Morris and unanimously approved.

Miss Gray reviewed the Expense report (**Attachment #3**), for September and October 2023 (FY24), and the Revenue report (**Attachment#4**), for September and October 2023 (FY24).

Miss Gray stated that expenses for September and October are on target. There were several machinery repair expenses in relation to preparation for the Winter season, and an unexpected phone outage. A first payment was made to WVU for the Economic Impact Study. Our revenue shows our receiving the 1st payment of the FY24 Management Grant in the amount of \$50K. Miss Gray went on to say that we also received \$143,800 from the Fairfield Inn and Suites for the hotel room sales percentage allotment.

The following motion was offered by Al Feldstein

RESOLVED, that the Financial Expense statements for September and October 2023, and the Revenue statements for September and October 2023 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 #5**), by stating:

- The CPPDA welcomes Michael Mudge to the Authority. Mr. Mudge is a Social Studies Instructor with the Allegany County Board of Education. He is also a member of the Fort Hill Band Parents Association and the United Brethren Association for Church Development. Ms. Ritchie acknowledges

Bob Smith and his departure from the board and noted that Mr. Mudge replaced his seat on the board.

- The CPPDA and the PWPCHA is pleased to announce the hiring of Mrs. Kim Folk. Kim lives in Grantsville, MD and has an extensive background in marketing and advertising, as well as grants and financial administration. Her most recent job was with the Garrett County Heritage Area. We are excited to have Kim on board especially since we are in the middle of the heritage area county-wide expansion.
- Ms. Ritchie stated she wanted to remind everyone that the Winter Festival will be held on December 2 and December 9 at Canal Place on the plaza in front of the Western Maryland Railway Station and is hopeful that the festival will be well attended. Ms. Ritchie also noted that the tree lighting held on the plaza on November 24th was a great success.
- Ms. Ritchie stated that Canal Place staff will be in attendance to the following events to include the Allegany County Pre-Legislative Breakfast and Annual Meeting, the MHAA Coalition of Heritage Areas meeting on December 14th, the MHAA Grants Training Session at City Place in Frostburg on January 9th, and the PACE Reception in Annapolis on January 18th.

IV. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE UPDATE

Josh Nolen represented the National Park Service (NPS) for this meeting. Mr. Nolen stated that the 3 main visitor centers are hoping to maintain their regular hours of operation Wednesday through Sunday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. during the Winter at their 3 main sites that include Cumberland, Williamsport, and Great Falls Tavern. Mr. Nolen announced that on December 2nd from 12:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. the NPS will host an open house at their administrative headquarters in Williamsport. Santa will make an appearance at the open house and hot chocolate and cookies will be offered to visitors that day. John Noel, Deputy Superintendent of the NPS has announced his retirement after 23 years of service, and his last day will be December 21, 2023. In addition, Mr. Nolen stated that the last 12 miles of the towpath will be resurfaced from Spring Gap to the Cumberland Terminus, and that work is scheduled for late 2024.

V. OLD BUSINESS

- **Dig Deep Eatery (Rob Dettinburn)**

Ms. Ritchie stated that Mr. Rob Dettinburn requested the opportunity to speak to Canal Place board members during this meeting. Mr. Dettinburn stated he would like to remain in the space located at the Shops at Canal Place and have his lease reinstated. Mr. Dettinburn would like to continue his relationship with Canal Place and is willing to pay his rent for 6 months or a year in advance if the board will consider his request. Mrs. Keene indicated to Mr. Dettinburn that the board would take his request under consideration and get back to him with an answer.

- **River Park/WVU Update**

Ms. Ritchie stated that she spoke with Bobby Smith, Engineer with the City of Cumberland, and he indicated that the 30% preliminary engineering report should be completed by CEC consultants at the end of November. Ms. Ritchie indicated that the River Park Project Manager/Engineer (contractual opening) is posted on Indeed, various social media platforms, and on the State of Maryland website. As of today, we have not received any qualified candidates for consideration. Jinyang Deng, WVU Professor of the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Resources Program, and his team has been here on designated weekends to conduct the Economic Impact Study. Surveys have been conducted with visitors and tourist at Canal Place. Ms. Ritchie anticipates the survey results by the end of December, and plans to take the results of the survey, and the preliminary engineering report to the PACE Reception in January.

- **PWPHA Expansion Update**

Ms. Ritchie stated we continue to have monthly meetings with the Acorn Hill consultants and they have completed a survey with heritage area related questions. This survey will be sent to the board members and stakeholders. Those who receive the survey are encouraged to share the survey with community members that may have an interest in Allegany County becoming part of the heritage area.

- **Canal Place Property Updates**

Ms. Ritchie stated that there have been numerous projects going on at Canal Place in collaboration with the Department of General Services (DGS). Those projects include repaving the main parking lot located at the entrance to Canal Place and the installation of car bumpers. Upcoming projects to include the placement of speed bumps and the reseal of the paving of the main lot will take place in the Spring of 2024. At this time, the ParkMobile signs need to be installed, and patrons will be notified to contact our office for parking passes. Current projects in process are fiber installation which will be offered to tenants at a nominal fee. The brick replacement work and the tree trimming projects are now completed, and the HVAC work is in process at the Shops at Canal Place. The electric bike chargers have been installed and will be operational in the Spring of 2024. Ms. Ritchie was notified by Nikki Shields at the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad (WMSR) that they are requesting temporary fencing be placed on the Wills Creek Pedestrian Bridge to keep the homeless individuals from crossing onto Canal Place property, specifically the area of the train platform where visitors are awaiting boarding the Polar Express train ride. A discussion ensued on potential solutions to this ongoing issue. Mr. Morriss suggested that he, Ms. Ritchie, and Wes Heinz, WMSR Director have a conversation to try and come up with a solution. Mr. Nixon requested that Adam Snyder with the AG office check on what Canal Place could do to resolve the issue. Mr. Snyder noted that he would look into it from a legal perspective.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- **Marketing Strategies**

Ms. Ritchie requested Mrs. Folk to discuss her plan for marketing strategies for Canal Place. Mrs. Folk stated that since she was hired at Canal Place she has created 2 social media platforms which were practically dormant and limited followers. In approximately 2 weeks the followers have increased and she is hopeful we can keep up the momentum. The current website will be tweaked to include a button to donate to the River Park Project. Mrs. Folk stated that there is also a plan to relaunch of the heritage area. Miss Gray requested the official name of our Facebook and Instagram accounts be announced. There was no

public comment, however, Ms. Ritchie noted that she failed to mention a grant was awarded to the Allegany County Chamber in the amount of \$20,000 for much needed repairs to their building.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT None

VIII. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Canal Place Authority is scheduled for Tuesday, January 30, 2024 1:30 p.m. Further details to follow.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Feldstein made a motion to go into closed session at 2:21 p.m. The closed session is to consider a preliminary matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State.

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

Closed Session Attendees: Janice Keene; Rebecca Ruppert, Stu Czapski, Ray Morriss, Jeremy Bender, Michael Mudge, Deidra Ritchie, Nicole Gray, Kim Folk, Adam Snyder and Crystal Lloyd.

IX. RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

The Authority returned to open session at 2:35 p.m.

X. ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was seconded by Mr. Nixon and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 2:35

Respectfully Submitted,
Janice Keene,
Chair