

CANAL PLACE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Friday, February 16, 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 special session meeting of the Authority was via Zoom from the Western Maryland Railway Station, 3rd Floor, Cumberland, Maryland on Friday, February 16, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom

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

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; Bill Atkinson, Allegany County Commissioner; Melinda Kelleher, Downtown Development Commission; Laurie Marchini, City of Cumberland; Eugene Frazier, City of Cumberland; Mandela Echefu, Wheelsup Adventures; a representative from WCBC Radio Station; Chuck Park, Charis Winery; Christina Michael, Crabby Pig; Joy Reckley Murphy, Dr. Joy & the Native Sun Counseling and Wellness; Ashli Workman, Allegany County Tourism; Robin Summerfield, Senator Cardin's Office; Terry Crawford, Crabby Pig; Nan Mann, Senator Van Hollen's Office; Matt Miller, CEDC; Greg Larry, Times-News; JoAnn Circosta, FSU; Juli McCoy, Allegany County Chamber; Nick Scarpelli, Scarpelli Funeral Home; Julie Westendorff, Allegany Arts Council; and Senator Mike McKay.

I. CALL TO ORDER & CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The special session meeting was called to order at 11:10 a.m. by Mrs. Keene, and she noted that the agenda would be set up differently than our regularly scheduled board meetings due to the subject matter relevant to Senate Bill 1070. She indicated that she would present a PowerPoint about the bill, which would decouple Canal Place and the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area. Mrs. Keene requested that attendees save their questions and comments until after all pertinent information has been presented.

II. SENATE BILL 1070 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Mrs. Keene's PowerPoint presentation described the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority (CPPDA) and the Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area (PWPHA) and the legislative proposal to decouple the two entities. Mrs. Keene described how the heritage area management and functions would look under the proposed legislation, including a breakdown of how the transfer of state-owned properties would change the structure of the current model. Mrs. Keene opened the floor to board members for discussion of the proposed legislation. Mrs. Ruppert made a motion to write a letter opposing Senate Bill 1070. Mr. Nixon seconded the motion. Mrs. Keene opened the floor to board member for discussion of the motion. Mr. Bender asked if anyone had reached out to Senator McKay to ask any questions about the proposed legislation. Mrs. Keene responded that Canal Place staff had not reached out to Sen. McKay and opened the floor to board members to comment on Mr. Bender's question. Mr. Mudge responded that he believed the Board should get any questions they may have answered before making any decisions on how to move forward. Mr. Nixon stated that, with all the unanswered questions about the legislation, he would like for any board member(s) to present a cogent argument as to why the Board should support the legislation. Ms. Cappetta stated that her concern was the ambiguity of the legislation and the effect it would have on Canal Place, the National Park Service (NPS), and the Visitor Center located on Canal Place property. Mr. Mudge commented that he believes that this bill proposes a lateral move for Canal Place, not a reduction of its role, but there are still several items about the bill that need clarification. Mrs. Keene stated that she disagreed, that this bill does not propose a lateral move, but proposes distinctive changes in a variety of ways.

III. RESOLUTION ABOUT SENATE BILL 1070

The following motion to prepare a letter of opposition and submit testimony regarding Senate Bill 1070 was offered by Mrs. Keene.

RESOLVED, that a letter of opposition be prepared and submitted as testimony regarding Senate Bill 1070.

Mr. Feldstein, Mrs. Ruppert, Mr. Nixon, Mr. Mudge, and Ms. Cappetta voted yea, Mr. Bender voted nay, and Mr. Morriss and Mr. Czapski abstained due to the fact that their employers, the City of Cumberland and the Cumberland Economic Development Corporation, respectively, are affected by the legislation and, therefore, their voting on the resolution could present a conflict of interest.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Frazier stated that he did not agree with the bill's amending the Authority's Board to substitute a 9-member board with a 3-member board of elected officials who essentially would decide the fate of Canal Place. Christina Michael from the Crabby Pig asked a question via text in the chat box: "What is the benefit of the bill?" Mrs. Keene responded that the question should be directed to Senator McKay's office. Greg Larry with Times-News asked, "Has the bill been cross-filed?" Mrs. Keene responded, "Not to our knowledge."

V. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Feldstein offered a motion to adjourn the open session. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Ruppert and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janice Keene

Chair