

CANAL PLACE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Special Session Meeting Minutes Tuesday, December 19, 2023
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 Board of Director's meeting of the Authority was held in person at the Western Maryland Railway Station, 3rd Floor, Room 304, Cumberland, Maryland on December 19, 2023 at 1:00 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 (via Zoom), Kim Folk, Administrative Specialist/Marketing Director, and Crystal Lloyd, Administrative Aide.

Others Present: Chris Stevens, National Park Service as Representative for Tina Cappetta; Bill Atkinson, Allegany County Commissioner; Peggy Keene, Daughters of the American Revolution; Chuck Park, Charis Winery; Sandi Saville, Robert Smith, City of Cumberland; Eugene Frazier, City of Cumberland; Terry Crawford, Crabby Pig; Christina Michael, Crabby Pig; Lori Lewis, Allegany Law; Melinda Kelleher, Downtown Development Commission; Larry Brock, Mountain Maryland Trails; Juli McCoy, Allegany Chamber of Commerce; Lydia S., RTL Productions; Mandela Echefu, Wheelsup Adventures; Tim Martin, Tim Martin Home Improvements contractor for Canal Place Authority; Robin Summerfield, Senator Cardin's Office; Jasmina Vasic, Jasmina Hair Salon; Sasha Vasic, European Desserts; Jason Buckel, Maryland State Delegate; and Mike McKay, Maryland State Senator.

I. CALL TO ORDER & CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mrs. Keene called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM. Mrs. Keene requested that all board members and the executive director introduce themselves. In addition, she asked all attendees introduce themselves and the business they were representing.

II. RIVER PARK UPDATE

Ms. Ritchie stated that the engineering report (30%) is to be completed in January. An economic impact study is being conducted by WVU on the River Park project, and a \$6 million earmark was awarded by Senator Cardin, Congressman Trone, and Senator Van Hollen. Delegate Buckel questioned from what fiscal year the \$1.5 million grant is for and Ms. Ritchie confirmed it is funding for Fiscal Year 2024. She introduced Bobby Smith, City of Cumberland Engineer, to provide an update on the status of the project. Mr. Smith discussed in considerable detail, preliminary cost estimate, continued communication with the Army Corps of Engineers, and

their support of the removal of the dam for the past 20 years. A discussion ensued between Mr. Smith, Delegate Buckel, and Senator McKay regarding the removal of the dam, and who will claim ownership of said dam. The dam was originally built to assist the Kelly Springfield Tire Company and was built during the flood control program. Mr. Smith believes, in his opinion, that the project would take two to potentially three years to go through the design and permit process, and this part of the process would not include completion of the project. Mr. Smith estimated the project to be completed somewhere between December 2027 and December 2028 timeframe. Delegate Buckel stated that he believes that the cost stated for the project will increase substantially during this time. Senator McKay questioned how removal of the dam will affect the water flow upstream, specifically, near the Allegany County Fairground area, and if Canal Place has been in contact the State of West Virginia legislators or their attorney general and Senator McKay suggested that Ms. Ritchie contact them before further proceeding with the River Park project. Ms. Ritchie confirmed that the Civil & Environmental Consultants (CEC) have been in contact with government officials representing West Virginia. Senator McKay expressed the concern of the dam removal and the adverse effect it may have on the fish hatcheries in relation to Jennings Randolph Lake which is situated between Garrett County, Maryland and Mineral County, West Virginia. Ms. Ritchie further stated that the dam removal will improve the water quality of the Potomac River and the temperature of the water will decrease due to the removal of the dam. Delegate Buckel expressed concerns regarding the substantial amount of money it will cost to complete the project, and he believes that over the next two to three years the State of Maryland will be unable to support this type of project considering project completion estimated cost at \$25 million. Mr. Smith stated that Canal Place is in the process of recruiting a contractual Project Manager for the River Park project.

III. 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION DISCUSSION

Senator McKay stated that he has requested a bill that would decouple Canal Place and the heritage area. Canal Place became the first heritage area in Maryland and is the only heritage area of the 13 in the State of Maryland that manages property. The heritage areas that followed Canal Place (now called Passages of the Western Potomac Heritage Area) are not following suit with that model. A discussion ensued and an attendee questioned Senator McKay on when the bill would be available for public viewing. Senator McKay responded that the bill is in draft form. The Senator plans to meet with Canal Place representatives to provide the details of this bill once it is completed. A discussion ensued between Senator McKay, Delegate Buckel, board members, and attendees. Topics included that funds allotted for Allegany County are being drawn from the same source of funding. Delegate Buckel stated that the attendees of the meeting should not imagine Canal Place as it is today, and a brief discussion ensued with Mrs. Keene. Senator McKay stated that during the legislative audit last year he was notified that Canal Place requested they become a state park, and noted that this information had not been shared with him or Delegate Buckel or the board members. Ms. Ritchie confirmed that the request was made but was part of the budget testimony. At that time, Ms. Ritchie recollected, she was advised by Delegate Buckel that Canal Place becoming a state park “would not happen”. Delegate Buckel confirmed this statement. The discussion concluded with Delegate Buckel requesting confirmation that Canal Place did not request additional funding for the River Project for Fiscal Year 2024. Ms. Ritchie confirmed that Canal Place was not seeking funds for Fiscal Year 24.

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Mrs. Keene stated that if there were no further questions or comments the meeting from the attendees or any public comment, the meeting would be adjourned.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no additional questions from the public at this time.

V. ADJORNMENT

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

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bender and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 2:11 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Janice Keene, Chair