



FRIENDS OF RIVERBEND PARK, INC.

MINUTES

Annual Meeting of Members Tuesday, November 13, 2018 – 7:30 PM Riverbend Park Visitors' Center

The 2018 Annual Meeting of Members of the Friends of Riverbend Park, Inc. (FORB) was called to order at 7:35 PM by FORB President, Hugh Morrow. Twelve FORB Members, including 5 of its 7 Board Directors, were present, and 9 proxies were received. Julie Gurnee was also present to represent the Riverbend Park staff. A complete list of the attendees is presented below.

Attendees

Eleanor Anderson*
Paul Anderson
Fred Bagley
Kevin Dillon*
Tim Hackman
John Hughes-Caley*
Hugh Morrow*
Pat Neuman
Reed Neuman
David Nickerson
Nancy Waugh*
Frank Zeng

Proxies

Claire Abbott
Tabitha Eagle
Catherine Mayes
Teresa Nasif
George Newman
Jane Newman
Charles Nichols
Laura Nichols
Serena Wilson

Riverbend Park Staff

Julie Gurnee

*FORB Board of Directors

The FORB Annual Meeting of Members consisted of three parts:

1. An information overview presentation on Riverbend Park and the Friends of Riverbend Park,
2. A questions, comments and discussion period on issues pertinent to Riverbend Park, and
3. A formal vote on a proposed amendment to the By-Laws of the Friends of Riverbend Park.

INFORMATION PRESENTATION

A summary of FORB's activities for the past year, and a report on the status of Riverbend Park and plans for its future was presented by FORB President, Hugh Morrow (Annex I attached). The presentation was interspersed with many great photos of the Park and FORB's activities at the Park. He remarked that he has started an archive of Riverbend Park photos and currently has over 1,000 from various sources including the Fairfax County Park Authority, Paul Laurenza, Jonathan Foust, Scott Miller and himself.

1. Overview: Riverbend Park is a Natural Resources Park and the emphasis must be to keep it in its natural state for all to enjoy. It is a beautiful preserve with much to see and enjoy at all times of the year. The Park has over 400 acres of woodland and trails with approximately 300,000 visitations per year. There are 3 full time staff employees: John Callow, Park Manager; Julie Gurnee, Visitor Services Manager; and Rita Peralta, Natural Resources Manager. The Park was recently informed that it may fill a fourth position: Senior Interpreter (also referred to as Program Coordinator) which is essential to carrying out its summer camps programs, Riverbend's main source of revenue generation. Riverbend Park is owned and operated by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA). In funding the Park this past year, Riverbend Park generated about \$300,000 from its own programs. The other \$400,000 necessary to fund the Park came from the FCPA General Fund. This means that the Park is not self-sufficient and requires FORB and the general public to be mindful of FCPA, Park Bonds, grant opportunities, and other opportunities to secure funding for Riverbend Park.

2. FORB Mission Statement: FORB's most recent Mission Statement was presented which emphasizes its roles in supporting Riverbend Park:

FORB's Mission Statement

"The Friends of Riverbend Park, Inc. is an independent non-stock, non-profit corporation, established in the Commonwealth of Virginia on August 5, 1999, with the purpose of protecting, enhancing and preserving the physical, cultural, and natural heritage of Riverbend Park by educating the public to the value of environmental protection generally and of the park's wildlife habitat specifically; channeling donations of money, property, and materials to the park for its operation and programs; providing citizen input to plans that may be proposed for the park; and performing any other activities or services necessary or convenient to carry out such purposes, to the extent permitted by Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code."

3. FORB 2018 Board of Directors: The current (2018) FORB Board of Directors was presented. It was noted that the election for new Directors for 2019 was now in progress with Friday, November 16 as the deadline for voting.

2018 FORB Board of Directors

Hugh Morrow, President

Nancy Waugh, Secretary

Kevin Dillon, Treasurer

Eleanor Anderson

Jack Bowles

John Hughes-Caley

Cynthia Nordstrom-Fisher

4. History of FORB: A short history of FORB was presented noting that FORB was founded in August 1999 by Cathy Mayes. The past presidents of FORB and some of their contributions were also highlighted:

Cathy Mayes 1999-2005
 Paul Anderson 2006-2007
 Serena Wilson 2007-2012
 Tim Hackman 2013-2016
 Hugh Morrow 2016-2018

5. FORB Sources of Revenue: An overview of FORB’s sources of revenue for 2017 was presented along with some discussion of expected revenues for 2018

Membership	\$25, \$100 or \$500 Dues	\$5,797
Native Plant Sale	Late April / Early May	\$5,771
Donation Boxes	Visitors’ Center / River Trail	\$5,000
General Donations	Members & Non-Members	\$4,775
Matching Grants	Corporations	\$1,200
Foundation Grants	Munson Foundation et al	\$8,000
Barbeque Benefit	June or September	<u>\$3,700</u>
	2017 Total	\$34,672

It was reported that revenue for 2018 will probably be closer to \$25,000. The Native Plant Sale generated more income this year due to an increase in the number of plants available and the addition of a pre-order option. However, flooding on trails at the Park this year curtailed donations to the donation boxes, and the Barbeque Benefit, which was moved from June in 2017 to September in 2018, did not generate as much income this year.

6. FORB Supported Riverbend Park Programs: The many activities and programs which have been supported by FORB funding during recent years were noted:

-Interns for Riverbend Summer Camps. For the past several years, FORB has provided \$14,400 each year for 6 interns to assist the Riverbend Park staff with Summer Camp programs. Summer programs are a major revenue source for the Park. Interns are normally science-major college students some of whom return to work in the Fairfax County park system.

-Scholarships for Title 1 School Field Trips. The Park charges a fee per student for class trips to the Park. For those schools that can only pay part of the fee, FORB has provided funding assistance.

-Purchase New Bass Fishing Boat. In 2015, FORB provided \$15,000 to purchase a fishing boat for the Park. The boat is heavily used and has generated significant income for the Park as well as being available for safety and rescue uses.

-Purchase 10 New Mad River Canoes. FORB provided \$3,000 to match a FCPA grant to purchase ten new canoes for the park. The original fleet of 10 canoes had been obtained in 2010 by FORB from LL Bean thanks to the efforts of Serena Wilson, President of FORB at that time.

-Supplemental Funding for Staff Education. FORB has provided additional funding for staff continuing education to supplement funding from FCPA. In 2018, FORB provided \$1,500 so additional Riverbend Park staff could attend the National Association of Interpreters Workshop.

-Visitors Center Tabletop Displays. Funding for three tabletop displays at the Visitors' Center was provided by FORB to engage children and young adults in observing and learning about the natural world.

-Nature and Science Books for Children's Library. FORB provided \$300 worth of science and nature books for children at the Visitors' Center.

-Water Quality Measuring Equipment. FORB donated \$2,600 for the purchase of water quality measuring equipment and iPads as part of a program to monitor water quality at Riverbend Park.

-Support for Eagle Scout Projects. FORB has provided funding for construction materials for Eagle Scout Projects in the Park. This past year, FORB provided \$550 for stairs and walkway projects from the parking lot to the picnic area.

7. Future Needs of Riverbend Park: The future projects and goals for Riverbend Park were presented and discussed including:

-Work with FCPA on Riverbend Park 2013 Master Plan. The Master Plan provides a long-range conceptual plan for Riverbend Park and serves as a decision-making guide. The Master Plan is available on the FCPA Riverbend Park website or may be obtained upon request to FORB. The document also includes much interesting cultural, historical, and natural history information about Riverbend Park. FORB and FCPA signed a Memorandum of Understanding May 3, 2018 which lays out an understanding of working together to support, sustain and grow Riverbend Park.

-Move the Riverbend Park Gatehouse down Potomac Hills Street. Moving the gatehouse further down Potomac Hills Street will help to help alleviate backups on Jeffery Road on busy Park days.

-Add Additional Parking at the Top of Potomac Hills Street. Moving the gatehouse would provide extra space for parking at the top of Potomac Hills Street, and might encourage more visits to the Meadow in Riverbend Park.

-Complete Educational Pavilion. The Education Pavilion should be completed by end of 2018/beginning of 2019. There has been a delay in completion due to excessive rain this summer and fall. It is anticipated that this pavilion will see heavy use in the future and generate healthy revenues for the park.

-Fill the Senior Interpreter (Program Coordinator) Position. Approximately 50-70% of the Park's revenue is from programs (summer programs, family programs, school programs) and it is essential that there be a full-time, qualified person to fill this position.

-Construct Maintenance Building. A much-needed maintenance building to house equipment is planned for construction 2020-2021. The planning phase has been moved up and is expected to begin this next year.

-Initiate Concept Design Study for new Interpretative Center in 2020 Park Bond Issue. A photo of flooding of the boat launch area this year at the park vividly demonstrated the precarious state of the current Visitor Center. Flooding has become more frequent, not less severe, and the Riverbend Park staff fears the Visitor Center will eventually be swept away. Planning and preparation now to replace the Visitors' Center with a structure in a safe and secure location are essential. An Interpretative Center, as laid out in the Riverbend Master Plan, would be situated on the bluff above the Visitors' Center and above the Riverbend flood plain. This will be an expensive project but is a priority of the Riverbend staff.

8. FORB Contact Information: FORB contact information for anyone who would like to join or donate to FORB or further information on FORB's activities and programs was provided as follows:

Website: www.forb.wildapricot.org

Mailing address: P.O. Box 1481, Great Falls, VA 22066-8481

Email: forbpark@gmail.com; hughmorrowiii@gmail.com

Phone: Riverbend Park 703-759-9018

Hugh Morrow, FORB President 703-973-4550

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Following the FORB presentation, the floor was opened up for comments and questions:

- Tim Hackman, Dranesville District Representative on FCPA Board, comments:

Tim thanked the FORB Board for all their work and for continuing to be strong and active in supporting Riverbend Park.

With regard to the open Riverbend Park staff position for Senior Interpreter (Program Coordinator), Tim commented that all the comments and letters from FORB members to FCPA, Dranesville District Supervisor John Foust involvement, and Tim's talks with FCPA staff raising the importance of this position resulted in a commitment from FCPA that the position will be filled.

Tim noted that FCPA is trying to get the Education Pavilion done by the end of the year/beginning of the year. The rain has resulted in delays on many projects in the county.

The Maintenance Facility design phase has been moved up to next year- about 1 year earlier than originally planned. Construction still set to begin around 2020.

The Board of Supervisors has been very generous to Riverbend Park. Premiums from bonds have been passed on to the Park for funding.

Tim noted that FORB was the first group to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FCPA and is being used as a template for other MOU with other Friends groups.

- The Long View. John Hughes-Caley, FORB Board Director, commented that his focus is to look long-term for the Park. He thought that FORB and FCPA were doing a good job looking at the future. John commented that it was very important to keep an eye on costs vs expected revenue.

- Increasing Revenue. Hugh Morrow commented that the most important contribution FORB can make is to help the Park generate income. Hugh noted that he and John Hughes-Caley met with Janet Burns, Senior Financial Officer of FCPA, and her message was that if we could help the Park increase its revenue by 5% that would be very beneficial. 5% of the current \$300,000 revenue would mean an extra \$15,000 per year. Hugh noted that he has been talking with John Callow about some ideas to increase revenue such as encouraging corporate sponsorships, perhaps \$1,000 per year and have sponsors name on letters or a plaque at the Visitors' Center, or persuading local businesses to help sponsor the Virginia Indian Festival. Another idea is printing a calendar with photos from Riverbend Park for sale.

- Boat Usage. Frank Zeng asked how much the boats are used in a good (not rainy) year. Julie Gurnee responded that boating runs from the end of May to the end of October. Boats are rented Friday, Saturday, and Sundays, so the 10 canoes are used typically 2-3 days/week, 8 hours/day. They are well used, and a good source of revenue for the park.

- Visitors' Center Sales. Fred Bagley inquired about sales from items at the Visitor Center. Hugh responded that these sales go directly to the FCPA and not to FORB.

- Publicity. John Hughes-Caley commented that one of FORB's challenges is how to build interest and awareness of the Park. Publicity is important. Hugh noted that he has been trying to increase contacts for the FORB mailing list. The list has grown over the last year or two from 250 contacts to about 400 contacts by adding persons from the Native Plant Sale, Barbeque Benefit, etc. FORB events are publicized in the Great Falls Connection and Sun Gazette but another idea might be an advertisement in those newspapers. Frank Zeng suggested posters and signs at the Visitor Center to promote FORB. Hugh responded that there were some notices at the Visitors' Center, Nature Center and Park Entrance for memberships, but no posters or other notices.

Hugh has also started a FORB Facebook page which now is up to about 10 hits per day. Julie Gurnee said they could add the Facebook page link to notices. She also suggested having a Bluebell watch on the FORB website or Facebook page; the Park gets a lot of inquiries asking about the Bluebells in the Spring. Another good topic would be the Eagles nesting. Pat Neuman suggested promoting Park through photos such as of the eagle, or butterflies, etc. She noted that it is important to keep on it, for example one picture a day for 2 weeks and remind people to share it. Hugh noted that he tried sending out photos of the River water levels when there was flooding. It was noted that FCPA has a Facebook page, but there is so much on it that information about Riverbend Park gets lost. It was suggested that Riverbend staff send the info to FORB and FORB can put it on the FORB Facebook page instead.

VOTE ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE BY-LAWS OF FORB

Under Article VI, OFFICERS of the By-Laws of the Friends of Riverbend Park, Inc., adopted on November 16, 1999; revised on August 1, 2007; and reconfirmed on December 15, 2012, it is proposed that an additional Section 8 be added to clarify those officers who are authorized to speak on behalf of the Corporation and to state its policy or position upon matters or issues upon which the Board of Directors has adopted such a policy or position. The new proposed Section 8 is as follows:

“Section 8: The policy or position of the Corporation shall be determined by majority vote of the Board of Directors, and only the Officers of the Corporation are authorized to provide documentation of, represent or state that policy or position to the Riverbend Park staff, the Fairfax County Park Authority, the Fairfax County Park Foundation, other state and Fairfax County officials, the news media, the FORB Membership, and the general public. Failure to observe these protocols is cause for removal from office.”

Tim Hackman moved to adopt the amendment. Paul Anderson seconded the motion. The motion to adopt the amendment was passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.