

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) and Committees met in Public Session on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 via phone and YouTube, broadcasted to the public.

Members Present: Mr. Joseph B. Wilkinson, Jr., Chairman  
Mr. Bob Krueger, Vice Chairman  
Mr. Bill Gross, Secretary/Treasurer  
Commissioner Mark Williams  
Dr. Buster Evans  
Mr. Trip Tollison  
Ms. Joy Burch-Meeks  
Mr. Glen Willard  
Mr. Dale Atkins

Key Staff Present: Ben Carswell, Director of Conservation  
Ray Emerson, Park Ranger  
Noel Jensen, Chief Operations Officer  
Kate Harris, Director of Strategic Partnerships  
Aaron Saunders, Director of Golf Operations  
Melissa Cruthirds, General Counsel  
Stewart Atkins, Director of Tennis  
Jones Hooks, Executive Director  
Michelle Webb, Executive Assistant

Various members of the public, JIA staff, and press listened online.

Vice Chair Krueger called the committee sessions to order at approximately 9:32 a.m. and introduced those participating via teleconference. The roll was called, and all members were present except Mr. Dale Atkins who was absent until approximately 9:57 a.m.

There were no written public comments submitted online.

### **I. Historic Preservation/Conservation Committee**

A. Ben Carswell, Director of Conservation introduced the final presentation and consideration of the Conservation Plan. He thanked the stakeholders, Ms. Claire Davis, and the whole Marketing Team for their work and contributions. The final draft was presented was offered for consideration by the Board.

Commissioner Williams made a recommendation to revise the plan. The term Special Protection Areas (SPA) used in the proposed Conservation Plan is the same acronym as the State of Georgia's Shoreline Protection Act (SPA). Especially because the areas overlap, there was a potential for confusion. Therefore, he proposed to change Special Protection Areas (SPA) used in the proposed Conservation Plan to Conservation Priority Areas (CPA) to avoid confusion. Commissioner Williams then moved to adopt the 2020 Jekyll Island Conservation Plan, contingent upon the renaming of the Special Protection Areas to Conservation Priority Areas. The motion, including the revision was seconded by Mr. Tollison. The motion was unanimously approved with no objections.

B. Mr. Carswell then spoke to the Jekyll Island Authority Ranger Program. He and Mr. Ray Emerson, Lead Park Ranger, discussed park ranger patrols, the success of gatorology events, popular ranger walks, JIA Conservation and the Golden Ray debris patrols, reporting tools, and ranger staff. Following the presentation, Dr. Evans commented he

noticed less trash on the beach than in years previous. He speculated this might be due to the Golden Ray clean-up efforts. Ranger Emerson responded the Island Treasures Fan Club social media page had encouraged island treasure seekers to pick up trash during their walks. Additionally, Tortuga Jacks offered to dispose of the seekers' trash and a free appetizer, which had become popular.

It was mentioned at this point that there were no public comments received online.

## **II. Finance Committee**

A. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair summarized the November and December financials as included in the meeting materials. Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the Convention Center continued to show financial losses. However, holiday light tours, traffic numbers, and the campground's revenues were all greater than budgeted. Mr. Hooks commented that hotel rates were down from the year previous. However, it was important to note that due to increased leisure travel on the island Jekyll Island, hotels were in much better financial positions than some of the hotels along the I95 corridor.

B. Mr. Noel Jensen, Chief Operations Officer provided information about the Firewise Grant Funds Request. The Jekyll Island Authority was predicted to receive \$5,000 again this year from this fund. If this grant was awarded, staff recommended acceptance of the award and authorization of an additional \$6,800 from the Fire Department Reserve Fund to purchase an Enforcer 30 Firefighting SKID to be used off-road for fires. The motion to approve the request was made by Mr. Tollison and seconded by Mr. Willard. The motion was unanimously approved with no objections.

C. Mr. Hooks then explained the request for a fee deferral from ASM Global for the Jekyll Island Convention Center. He reminded the Board that the previous deferment agreement with ASM was scheduled to end this month. However, even with furloughs and cost saving measures in place, the Convention Center continued to struggle without group business during the pandemic. Hooks proposed an additional six-month deferment with ASM Global. ASM's Chief Financial Officer was receptive to an additional deferment if, like the last deferment, the contract is extended another year (until June 30, 2024). The current deferment would include the fixed management fees and incentive fees for the six-month period. The motion to approve the deferment request was made by Dr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Willard. The motion was unanimously approved.

There was no public comment.

## **IV. Marketing Committee**

A. Kate Harris, Director of Strategic Partnerships presented the Marketing Committee report. In her PowerPoint she highlighted group business record-setting results with vaccine news, new business looking for balanced portfolio of the types of groups including bus groups, and an outreach email program for both new and existing business.

There was no public comment.

## **V. Legislative Committee**

A. Mr. Tollison reported that Mr. Hooks, Chairman Wilkinson, Mr. Atkins, and himself were able to meet with the Governor on December 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss the two proposed capital improvement projects for Jekyll Island (the Campground Expansion and the Public Safety Complex).

The Governor's Office agreed to support slightly less than a million dollars for campground restrooms and bathhouses. Mr. Hooks stated the bathroom facilities would be key to the proposed campground expansion. After value engineering, he planned to bring a financing plan for the expansion to the Board for consideration.

As for the proposed Public Safety Complex, Mr. Hooks was planning to bring design work to the Board before pursuing state funding any further. In February Hooks planned to return to the Board with a Request for Proposal for the final building design.

There was no public comment.

## **VI. Committee of the Whole**

A. Mr. Hooks then presented the Golf Master Plan Next Steps - an overview of maintenance issues. Before introducing Mr. Aaron Saunders, the Director of Golf Operations, Hooks discussed the possibility of Golf Master Plan Work Sessions with Board members. Work sessions would allow in depth discussions of Golf Master Plan issues. He suggested after the March and April meeting, depending on the pandemic.

Mr. Saunders then presented an overview of maintenance issues at the Jekyll Island Golf Course. These included: irrigation control systems, irrigation coverage of #9 Oleander, POGO turf pro, encroachment and shade, current turfgrass management, and the new turf cultivars available.

B. Ms. Melissa Cruthirds introduced O-2020-1, the first reading of an amendment to the False Alarm Ordinance. The amendment proposed to alter line 93-95 to allow a citation to be issued to an agent of the business or property. Additionally, lines 114 - 115 of the current ordinance was proposed to be altered for the same purpose. The red line version of the ordinance would be available on the website for public comment after the meeting. It is anticipated that the new ordinance will be presented for Board consideration next month.

C. Ms. Dion Davis of the Jekyll Island Foundation then provided a Foundation update to the Board. In her presentation she reviewed increased memberships, new tribute gifts, the 2020 appeal for donations, a new corporate sponsorship program, and JIF events over the past year.

D. Mr. Jensen and Mr. Stewart Atkins, the Director of Tennis then discussed the Jekyll Island Tennis Center. Mr. Jensen noted the increased activity and prosperity since Mr. Atkin's tenure. Mr. Atkins then outlined the Jekyll Island Tennis Club awards, his professional leadership and memberships, Jekyll Island Tennis Club information and statistics, Tennis Club tournaments, and USTA League Championships at the Tennis Center.

During questions, Mr. Tollison asked if there have been any questions about pickleball facilities. Mr. Atkins responded that he had six or seven inquiries into pickleball, but due to the abundance of facilities in Glynn County, there had not been much interest. Mr. Hooks stated that all JIA courts are clay courts. Additionally, his conversations with hoteliers about pickleball in other areas confirmed his observations that tennis and pickleball usually do not mix well at the same facility.

Mr. Hooks then reflected that years ago former Board member Bill Jones stated that JIA Tennis either needed to be eliminated or enhanced. He stated Mr. Atkins was the enhancement that had made a big difference. Mr. Hooks thanked Mr. Stewart for all his great work.

E. Mr. Hooks then presented the Executive Director's Report. First, he announced that Mr. Tollison had been recognized as one of the 100 Most Influential Georgians in the January issue of *Georgia Trend*.

Next, Mr. Hooks was pleased to announce that with the help of a private contributor the JIA would move forward with the finalization of the Chichota Ruins project in the historic district and the improvement to the pond next to the golf course on Captain Wiley Road. The Chichota Ruins was listed in the 2014 Master Plan, and it was exciting to finally move it toward completion.

In the Board members blue folders was also a letter to the Glynn County Board of Commissioners regarding Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST) projects. This was an update of the previous letter reviewed by the Board revised to reflect a proposed three year the possibility of another SPLOST. JIA would request \$2.5 million dollars. In December, Chairman Wilkinson and staff had lunch with several of the county commissioners, including new members-elect. Those in attendance intended that the Jekyll projects be included in any 2021 SPLOST proposal to voters. JIA's \$2.5 billion for improvements would focus on bike paths and the Clam Creek fishing pier.

Also in blue folders was an article from *Medium* featuring Mr. Ben Carswell entitled Five Things We Must Do to Inspire the Next Generation. This article focused around issues of sustainability and the environment.

Next Mr. Hooks discussed a study being done by Leon N. Weiner and Associates (LNWA), LLC as a requirement of the lease agreement for the 6.892 acres of the parcel immediately north of the Courtyard construction. This was the last parcel of the original revitalization program. The group RCLCO real estate advisors had been retained and have met with the JIA and LNWA for the kickoff of this analysis. The Board will be kept informed of the progress of this study. Furthermore, it is required that RCLCO make a presentation to the Board of their findings.

Finally, the 2016 SPLOST projects were nearing completion. Mr. Hooks thanked Mr. Jensen for all of his work making certain SPLOST projects stayed on schedule and budget. Mr. Hooks identified these projects as parking improvements at the historic boat house area, Driftwood Beach, St. Andrews Beach, and a new parking area by the airport for sunset viewing. These projects were designed to be in alignment with the Capacity Study to create small nodes of activity to spread people around the island. Mr. Hooks anticipated these projects would be complete by March 1<sup>st</sup> of 2021. This concluded the Executive Director's Report.

F. Mr. Krueger stated in the Chairman's Comments he was glad to see the Authority moving forward during the pandemic. Mr. Wilkinson agreed, and was very appreciative of the work of staff. He had received many positive comments about the Holly Jolly season.

There were no public comments.

The Board moved directly into the Board Meeting Agenda.

The roll was called, and all members were present.

1. Mr. Gross moved to accept the minutes of the December 8, 2020 Board meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tollison. There was no discussion, and the minutes were approved unanimously with no objections.

2. Approval of the revised Jekyll Island Conservation Plan, a recommendation from the Historic Preservation/Conservation Committee, was adopted unanimously without objection.

3. Approval of the Firewise Grant funds request, a recommendation from the Finance Committee, was adopted unanimously with no objection.

4. Approval of the ASM fee deferral request for the Jekyll Island Convention Center, as recommended by from the Finance Committee, was adopted unanimously.

The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Willard and was seconded by Mr. Gross. There was no objection to the motion and the meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.