

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) and Committees met in Public Session on Tuesday, May 18, 2021 via phone and YouTube, broadcasted to the public.

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

Key Staff Present: Jones Hooks, Executive Director
Melissa Cruthirds, General Counsel
Michelle Webb, Executive Assistant
Alexa Orndoff Hawkins, Director of Marketing and Communications
Kevin Udell, Sales Manager
Maria Humphrey, Lease Manager
Ben Carswell, Director of Conservation
Andrea Marroquin, Museum Curator
Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources
Noel Jensen, Chief Operations Officer

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

There were no public comments received online for this meeting.

I. Historic Preservation/Conservation Committee

A. Ben Carswell, Director of Conservation, gave a Comprehensive Waste/Recycling Assessment and Planning Update. Mr. Carswell began by explaining a study was conducted by the University of Georgia College of Engineering to establish a baseline of the waste being produced on Jekyll Island in the hopes of decreasing waste and increasing recycling in the future. With a JIA contribution of \$6,500 to offset the studies expenses, a report was completed. The report included mapping of all the garbage and recycling cans on Jekyll Island as well as a quantitative analysis of the waste produced on the island. A key finding of the report showed that plastic made up 21% of the total waste of the island, of which, 18% was recyclable. However, this recycling portion was being sent to the landfill. He proceeded to explain that currently, the waste being recycled from the island is being sent to a facility in Conyers, Georgia owned by Pratt Industries. Here 100% of the paper waste was recycled into new paper and the rest of the unrecyclable items were put into a gasifier which converted them into energy to fuel the plant. Recyclable plastics and metals are sold for future use.

Lastly, Mr. Carswell spoke on the pollinator meadow at the Solar Farm created in conjunction with Cherry Street Energy as a part of their lease. In addition to providing electricity, the area now supports bees and hosts up to 60 varieties of native plants with the help of soil and seeds from the Authority.

Mr. Hooks and Mr. Carswell highlighted another key finding of the study which found that some businesses were working hard to use recyclable products. However, there was use of commercially compostable products, that could not be recycled in this region. The Authority would use this finding to better communicate with businesses to use more environmentally friendly products such 100% recycled plastics or biodegradable plastic instead.

There were no public comments received online.

II. Finance Committee

A. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair summarized the April financials as presented in the meeting materials. Revenues for April were \$2,477,632, which was \$4000 less than budgeted for the year. Year-to-date revenues reflect a favorable \$1.4 million variance from budget and unfavorable \$197,000 variance from prior year-to-date. The largest variances from budget were traffic, which was \$197,000 greater than budgeted and the convention center was behind \$380,000. The campground was \$43,000 better than budgeted and showed a favorable \$486,000 from fiscal year-to-date. Hotel taxes were also better than budgeted and expenses were 13% better than budgeted. Year-to-date expenses were \$2.6 million less than budgeted and \$2.9 million less than prior year-to-date. The largest variances were Human Resources, off by \$101,000 due to vacant positions, advertising and sales by \$74,000 due to cutbacks during the pandemic, and maintenance as several projects were held back due to the uncertain circumstances with the pandemic. Net operating cash income was \$273,000 better than budgeted. The year-to-date net operating income was \$4 million better than budgeted and \$2.7 million better than prior year-to-date income. Total traffic was 133,944 vehicles, which was 94,000 better than April 2020. The year-to-date traffic count was 146,339 better than prior calendar year-to-date. Hotel revenues were \$5.4 million more than April 2020 and the hotels had a 79% occupancy rate. Their year-to-date revenues were \$4.7 million greater than prior year-to-date.

There were no public comments.

IV. Marketing Committee

A. Alexa Orndoff Hawkins, Director of Marketing and Communications gave the report from the Marketing Department. Under the direction of Creative Director Claire Davis, the Authority Marketing Department recently won several awards at the Hermes Creative Awards for JIA publications. The four awards were: Platinum in the Illustration and Design category for the Jekyll Island Junior Ranger Field Guide; Gold in the Website Design Category for the Holly Jolly Jekyll campaign and website design; Gold in the Design category for the Jekyll Island Conservation Plan 2020, and an Honorable Mention in the Advertising category for the brand campaign launched for the summer in light of the pandemic. Also, several stories from the 31-81 publication had recently been featured in other large publications, namely the story of the ship The Wanderer as “The Water and the Blood” in The Smithsonian Magazine, as well as the “In Service of Others” which was published in Jacksonville Magazine. Both features centered around Black History on Jekyll Island. Ms. Hawkins noted that a new page on the website chronicled the timeline of Black History on the island.

Kevin Udell, Senior Sales Manager, then discussed group business at the convention center. Mr. Udell stated that 100 groups were definitively booked for May 2021-December 2022 and 20% of those will be new customers. These bookings would amount to \$13 million in hotel revenues and potentially a new record for the pace of bookings. For the rest of 2022, there are leads for 134 groups, 57% of whom are new customers. In conclusion, the Georgia State Republican Convention was planned for the first time on Jekyll in June 2021. The convention will bring in 2500+ attendees and May be the largest group in the convention center's history. Also mentioned was the Georgia Society of Association Executives in June 2022, which will return for the first time since 1998 with over 200 attendees.

There was no public comment.

VI. Committee of the Whole

At the start of the Committee of the Whole Mr. Gross moved that items B, Request for Quotation #342 – Sewer Cleaning and Mapping Award – Appeal Hearing Decision; and D, Assignment of Lease for Caroline's Gifts, be removed from the agenda as both issues had become null.

Ms. Melissa Cruthird, General Counsel, explained that item D. the Assignment of Lease for Caroline's Gift was null as sale of the business was no longer moving forward. Therefore, there was no Assignment. Item B. for RFQ #342 Sewer Cleaning and Mapping Award – Appeal Hearing Decision was removed at the advice of the State of Georgia Attorney General's (AG's) Office. A protest of this RFQ was received regarding qualifications of the bidders. JIA staff has followed protest procedures and the Executive Director cancelled the solicitation. The State AG's Office advised as there was no denial, only a cancelation, the protestor had no grounds for a hearing.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Willard and the motion to remove the items carried unanimously.

A. Mr. Hooks and Andrea Marroquin, Museum Curator presented the Request for Proposals #366 – Phase I & II Archaeological Investigations of the Jekyll Island Golf Courses. Mr. Hooks introduced the project. Proposers are asked to bid on both phase I and II of the archaeological investigations to determine potential archaeological sites and cultural resources at the golf courses. This is of particular need due to the proposed Golf Master Plan. Ms. Marroquin stated that the consultant would then assess the significance of those resources and recommend the best course of action to mitigate potential damage to those resources. A final report would also document the entire investigation. Mr. Hooks noted that the endeavor would be coordinated with the Golf Operations and Maintenance Departments to ensure the least amount of disruption.

Mr. Hooks stated that Ms. Marroquin was not only the JIA Curator, but an archaeologist by training and had participated in previous studies. He noted that even when swimming pools are dug on Jekyll, Ms. Marroquin and her team survey the work for historic artifacts.

The motion to approve RFP #366 was made by Dr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Atkins. The motion was approved unanimously with no objections.

C. Ms. Cruthirds then proceeded by introducing the Second Reading and Consideration of Adoption of Ordinance #O-2021-2, Rental of Certain Vehicles. Ms. Cruthirds began by stating that this ordinance was designed to manage the safety and traffic on the island's multiuse paths. The Authority had received many comments both for and against the proposed ordinance, and it had elicited discussion in the local community. She clarified for the Board that the proposed ordinance would only prohibit licensing to rent or deliver e-bikes to the island. Current owners of personal e-bikes would be allowed continue their use if the ordinance passed.

Ms. Cruthirds emphasized the proposed non-substantive wording change from the first reading. This change was from "no person shall be engaged in the business of renting vehicles on the island or for *use* on the island" to "no person shall be engaged in the business of renting vehicles on the island or for *delivery* to the island". This was to clarify that use was not forbidden, but that the rental of e-bikes off island to be brought in for use on the island was also prohibited.

Mr. Hooks clarified that the new ordinance would also not target pedal-assisted mobility aids, which generally only go up to 20 mph. The ordinance instead targets e-bikes with throttles as these can exceed 25 mph and be potentially dangerous when used on sidewalks amongst walkers and regular bikers. He also noted that the ordinance would forbid e-bike tours and require regular bike tours to be licensed. Therefore, the Authority could limit such tours to a reasonable group size on the bike paths. According to Mr. Hooks, presently licensing does not limit the number of bike rentals, just the number of bike rental opportunities available on the island. In the future, in accordance with recommendations of the capacity study, the number of bikes available for rent may need to be restricted.

The motion to approve was made by Mr. Gross and seconded by Mr. Willard. The motion was approved unanimously with no objections.

E. Ms. Cruthirds then discussed the First Amendment to Rental Agreement with Lighthouse Trolleys. She explained that this amendment would simply entail moving the leased parking spots for the trolleys to the opposite side of the parking lot. This amendment was proposed to due to the discovery that the trolleys were visible in the background of photos taken at the nearby Morgan Center, frequently used for formal events such as weddings. The owner of Lighthouse Trolleys, Mr. Fendig, was agreeable to the minor change.

The motion to approve was made by Mr. Atkins and seconded by Mr. Willard. The motion was unanimously approved with no objections.

F. Mr. Hooks then gave the Executive Director's Report. He began by reminding members of the Finance Committee that the committee meeting to review budget recommendations for 2022 would be held on June 2nd at 9:30 a.m., Board members not on the committee were welcome to call in and join.

Ms. Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resource then discussed staffing shortages. Ms. Johnson stated there were 34 positions within the Authority vacant, which was an abnormally high number. She stated that currently of 105 positions in amenities and public services, only 88 were filled. She noted that as these positions do not require extensive skill or education, the hourly wage was less than \$15 an hour. She noted that as the governor of

Georgia and Department of Labor had announced the State would be leaving the federal unemployment benefits system, and it was believed there would be a rise in applications.

Dr. Evans asked Ms. J. Johnson how long it had been since the JIA has preformed a comprehensive salary compensation study. Ms. Johnson stated that while the Authority constantly looked at the market in this region and what other local businesses are advertising for wages, a formal salary study had not been completed in a while.

Mr. Hooks then updated the Board about the departure of Ms. Kate Harris, Director of Strategic Partnerships for over two years. She recently resigned to pursue other opportunities. Following this, he introduced Ms. Anna Trapp, who will be replacing Ms. Webb and will be able to train with her for several weeks before Ms. Webb departs.

Next, Mr. Hooks gave the Board a report regarding the Master Plan Update process with the University of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government. He stated that the first public input session to discuss the Master Plan will take place June 16th from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. He stated that the opportunity to attend this meeting will be publicized on the website. An online survey is now available through June 30, 2021. Board members were reminded about their interview opportunities.

Mr. Hooks stated the Ordinance revision project was underway. The consultants were currently working with staff and a public meeting would be scheduled for the future. This concluded the Executive Director's report.

G. Acting Chairman Krueger gave the Chairman's Comments. Mr. Krueger stated that much was going on with the island and that it was an exciting and hopeful time to be a part of the island's future. Mr. Wilkinson was participating on the phone and did not have any comments.

Mr. Krueger then opened the floor to public comments. There was one comment received from resident Mindy Egan. Ms. Egan began stating her belief the Authority's efforts to include input from residents, visitors, and other members of the public had greatly improved. She was thankful for the livestreamed Board meetings. She then shared a personal story with Board about her husband having a biking accident on a Jekyll Island Road, causing them to consider safety issues on the island. Ms. Egan's public time expired, but she also delivered written copies of her comments to the Board.

The Board moved directly into the Board Meeting.

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board Meeting
May 18, 2021

The roll was called, and all members were present.

1. Mr. Atkins moved to accept the minutes of the April 20, 2021 board meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Willard. There was no discussion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Approval of Request for Proposals #366 – Phase I & II Archaeological Investigations of Jekyll Island Golf Courses, a recommendation of the Committee of the Whole, was carried by unanimous consent.

3. Adoption of Ordinance #O-2021-3, Rental of Certain Vehicles, a recommendation of the Committee of the Whole, carried by unanimous consent.

4. Approval of the First Amendment to Rental Agreement with Lighthouse Trolleys, a recommendation of the Committee of the Whole, carried by unanimous consent.

The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Evans and was seconded by Mr. Willard. There was no objection to the motion and the meeting adjourned at 10.40 a.m.