

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) and Committees met in Public Session on Tuesday, August 17, 2021 at the Jekyll Island Convention Center and via teleconference.

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

Key Staff Present: Jones Hooks, Executive Director  
Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer  
Melissa Cruthirds, General Counsel  
Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources  
Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing and Communications  
Dennis Gailey, Director of Public Safety  
Anna Trapp, Executive Assistant

Various members of the public, JIA staff, and press were also present.

Chairman Wilkinson called the committee session to order at 9:30 a.m., and the roll was called for members attending in person and those attending via teleconference.

Mr. Trip Tollison and Ms. Joy Burch-Meeks joined the meeting via teleconference by 9:40 a.m.

There was one public comment received online for this meeting. A copy of the full comment was given to each Board member and becomes part of the permanent record.

- Steve Smith – Golf Master Plan

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

A. The presentation on the Hollybourne Cottage Final Plan was deferred to the September 21st JIA Board Meeting, due to the scheduled presenter from HW Exhibits being unexpectedly unable to attend the meeting.

There were no public comments.

## **II. Finance Committee**

A. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair summarized the June Financial items that were not available at the time of the July meeting. This included an overview of June's Revenues, Expenses, and Net Operating Cash.

- Revenues were \$4,626,801
- Expenses were \$2,304,161
- Net Operating Cash was \$2,322,639

Mr. Gross also reviewed the July Financials including an overview of Revenues, Expenses, Net Operating Cash, and Traffic Statistics.

- Revenues were \$5,705,136
- Expenses were \$2,712,825
- Net Operating Cash Income was \$2,992,311
- Total Traffic Counts were 178,798 vehicles

July Hotel Statistics were not available, as the JIA needed information from the Club Hotel to complete the monthly hotel report.

- B.** Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer provided an overview of the Year-End Financials. She explained that because of all the uncertainty that came along with the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 revenues and expenses were conservatively budgeted, and staff did a great job of staying below their expenses.

The expenses for FY21 were \$22.3 million, which was approximately \$3 million less than budgeted and \$2 million less than the prior year. The FY21 expenses were the lowest they had been since FY 2016.

Revenues far exceeded the expectations for the FY. The budgeted revenues were \$27.5 million, but the actual revenues were \$30.5 million, which is almost \$3 million more than expected and \$4 million better than the prior FY. This was also an all-time revenue record.

She then explained that the net result at the end of FY21 equaled \$8 million available for designated fund contributions, capital expenditures, and cash reserves. That total was \$5.9 million more than anticipated, and from those funds \$3.5 million was set aside in board designated fund contributions, which included contributions to the Water Wastewater Fund, the Fire Equipment Fund, the Tourism Development Fund, and the Public Area Improvement Fund. During the year, the Board also approved \$2.6 million in funding for capital equipment and projects.

This left \$2.1 available at the end of year for capital projects and cash reserves.

- C.** M. Johnson presented a request to the board for Additional Capital Funding totaling \$1,554,342. This included:
- \$1,018,000 to be paid from the FY21 Operating Funds for the requested Capital Equipment and Projects:
    - Purchase of new CAT backhoe
    - Construction of new Public Works Office/Restrooms/Lunchroom
    - Replacement of carpet flooring in Annex Building with vinyl laminate
    - Replacement of all common area furniture at the JI Convention Center
    - Installation of a fire alarm at the JIA Administration building
    - Replacement of the Tank Chiller at GSTC Hospital
  - \$536,342 for additional projects to be paid from the previously designated funds as follows:
    - Water/Wastewater Reserves: \$21,000
      - Grit pump at WPCP
    - Public Area Improvement Funds: \$281,342
      - Paving of Pier Road parking lot
      - Rejuvenation and restriping of Convention Center and Great Dunes asphalt parking lots
      - Signage at Corsair Beach Park and Ocean View Park
      - Purchase of used garbage truck to replace current one
    - Tourism Development Funds: \$234,000
      - Complete unfinished section of causeway bike path to the Jekyll Island Guest Information/GSP Building

She noted that if the staff recommended capital projects were approved, a contribution of \$1,074,479 would first be made to JIA cash reserves.

A motion to recommend the approval of the Additional Capital Requests as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Dr. Evans. The motion carried unanimously

with no objections.

- D.** Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer reviewed the Georgia Department of Audits Report of JIA Financials. She explained that the state auditing staff selected seven procedures to test JIA financial information. These procedures are selected entirely by the audit staff, and they're the same procedures used when performing engagements for similar entities of JIA's size and structure. These tests ensured that various transactions and records contained adequate and appropriate documentation, numbers matched what was previously submitted to the State Accounting Office, and Federal Grant Awards were in line and on track.

There were no findings in any of the testing procedures conducted by the Georgia Department of Audits.

- E.** M. Johnson moved on to discuss the Georgia Department of Audits Report of JIA's Business and Residential Leases for calendar years 2019 and 2020. During this engagement, the auditors consulted with JIA Lease and Accounting Staff to determine procedures to test. Businesses and hotels are rotated to ensure that they are all tested at least every two years. Additionally, randomly selected residential rental properties are chosen for testing each year. For this year's test, the businesses chosen for testing included the hotels and their subleases along with several residential rental properties.

Eight procedures were selected by JIA staff and the auditors for this engagement which included confirming the mathematical accuracy of the hotel motel tax reports, ensuring businesses reported correct revenues to the JIA, confirming correct rent and hotel tax percentages, and confirming if the business was subject to capital reserve requirements.

The auditors did note some minor calculation errors in the reports and found underpayments of approximately \$13,000 that were due to JIA. They also noted that several of the hotels did not meet the capital reserve requirements of their lease. The hotels, business, and residential properties will be notified of any discrepancies found.

There were no public comments.

### **III. Human Resources Committee**

- A.** Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources, presented a Fiscal Year 2021 Staffing Level Update. The JIA has an average monthly roster of 273 full-time and part-time employees. During FY21, 141 employees left, 116 voluntarily and 25 involuntarily. This was a 21% increase of people leaving employment. This increase is not JIA specific and has been seen throughout other businesses as well. Of the 116 employees who left voluntarily, 73 were part-time employees while 43 were full-time. The reasons for those who left voluntarily are as follows:

- 32% - Opportunity
- 30% - Personal
- 23% - Availability
- 10% - Relocation
- 3% - Retirement
- 2% - Abandoned Job

J. Johnson then broke down the data even further differentiating the reasoning between full-time and part-time employees. She noted that this was the first time the percentage of full-time employees who left for another opportunity or a higher paying position was higher than part-time employees who left for the same reason. She then discussed the turnover trends JIA has seen since FY14 which has fluctuated through the years, with FY21 seeing the highest percent of turnovers. She noted that the actual pay is often a determining factor with hiring and retention, and compensation along with other data is looked at to attract qualified candidates.

Lastly, she discussed the pilot program developed alongside the Boys and Girls Club that allows teenagers to shadow departments that they have an interest in.

- B.** Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing and Communications, elaborated on JIA's Intern Partnership with the Boys & Girls Club. This internship program exposed the participating students to career environments while they worked alongside the JIA teams. The Landscaping Department hosted one intern, and the Marketing Department hosted two 11<sup>th</sup> grade students from Brunswick High School and Glynn Academy for six weeks.

The Landscaping intern assisted with landscape restoration projects, including installation of several commemorative benches around the island. The Marketing interns assisted with social media development, brand photo shoots, and developing group experience team building exercises. Additionally, they each had a capstone project. One intern, who had interest in graphic design, created her version of a Shrimp and Grits poster. The other, who showed an interest in social media, developed a social media content calendar.

Overall, the pilot program served as a great way for the teens to gain experience in a career field they may be interested in pursuing and allowed the JIA staff to gain insight on what career paths students coming out of high school are interested in. Hawkins also noted that discussions continue with the Boys and Girls Club on opportunities to enhance the program.

There were no public comments.

#### **IV. Marketing Committee**

- A.** Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing and Communications, presented the Marketing Department Report. She began her presentation by discussing the Marketing Team's public relations (PR) outreach and news placements. During FY21, particularly April through June, more than 2 billion potential visitors were reached through Marketing's strategies. There were approximately 1,000 media placements for the FY, which was about a 50% increase from the previous year. Marketing did adjust their advertising as the pandemic hit, taking a more targeted approach. They pitched stories around destinations that are worth the drive, remote work, road trips, RV camping, unique museum exhibits, wedding venues, or anything that would encourage visitors to come to Jekyll for a unique experience. One approach they took was to host Familiarization Trips with media journalists in targeted areas. One of those markets was Charlotte, which resulted in a story in *Charlotte Magazine* called "Travel Retreat to Historic Jekyll Island". This story will also run in *Orlando Magazine*.

Additionally, digital media efforts have continued to grow with Jekyll Island's website receiving 4.8 million visits during FY21. Marketing has reintroduced SEO (search engine optimization) with a small budget, which increased their clickthrough rate. A redesigned newsletter rolled out earlier in 2021 which has been performing well. A targeted co-op program with Jekyll's large lodging partners was also reintroduced. Nearly 10,000 clicks were seen through those specific co-op ads to partner sites. Social media was also a top performer, as followers continue to increase on both Facebook and Instagram. Instagram saw a particularly big boost in 2021 with an accumulation of more than three million impressions, a 38% increase in engagements, and followers increasing by 22%.

During the next fiscal year, Marketing plans to continue targeted advertising to reach specific regional markets.

There were no public comments.

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

- A.** Dennis Gailey, Director of Public Safety presented the Request for Approval of the Dispatch Service Agreement with the Joint Public Safety Communications Department (JPSCD). He explained that earlier in the year a resolution was passed by the Board that moved 911 calls from the Georgia State Patrol (GSP) Center to the Glynn-Brunswick 911 Center (GB 911). This request serves as an extension of that resolution, as it allows the GB 911 staff to dispatch Jekyll Island Fire Department (JIFD) units directly from the 911 center in lieu of forwarding calls to GSP Radio Operations for final dispatch. The calculated cost for Jekyll Island is \$41,757 annually, contingent on the number of radios on the system. The JIA will be billed in four equal quarterly invoices by Glynn County.

Gailey explained that this agreement will improve the response times, expedite emergency communications, and enhance mutual aid operations for the JIFD units.

A motion to recommend approval of the Dispatch Service Agreement as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Willard and seconded by Mr. Krueger. The motion carried unanimously with no objections.

- B.** Jones Hooks, Executive Director presented the Request for Approval of the Campground Bathhouse Proposal. He explained that The Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission (GSFIC) approved a grant award of \$999,480 to JIA for construction of new bath houses in the campground. In addition, JIA received \$2.95 million in state bond funding for campground expansion. JIA was required to obtain three competitive bids for the prototype bathroom designed by Ussery Rule Architecture. The three bidders were Woodman Builders Inc, Wildsmith Construction and Overholt Construction. The apparent low bidder, Woodman Builders Inc, was approved by GSFIC to proceed to contract.

Hooks continued by requesting approval to utilize a combination of grant funds and bond funds in the amount of \$1,243,026.24 for construction of the three prototype ADA Compliant Bath Houses at the Jekyll Island Campground and to award the construction contract to Woodman Builders Inc.

A motion to recommend approval of the Campground Bathhouse Proposal as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Gross and seconded by Mr. Willard. The motion carried unanimously with no objections.

- C.** Leigh Askew Elkins, JIA's Consultant from the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute, provided an update on JIA's Master Plan planning process and explained the results from a Public Survey conducted for about a month during the summer of 2021.

The JI Master Plan Survey was a Qualtrics survey with approximately twenty questions that provided responses via the Lickert scale and one open ended question for additional comments. The categories and initial questions were developed by UGA and JIA, and the questions were reviewed and edited by the UGA Survey Research Unit to ensure they met the best survey research standards and practices.

The Survey was organized under six major headings: visitation, conservation and land use, capacity and infrastructure, economic sustainability, activities and amenities, and about you. A total number of 11,497 surveys were submitted, although they were not all completed. Elkins noted that to receive that many survey submissions was truly remarkable. Responses were received from forty-eight states, Canada, and even one response from a fleet post office in the Pacific and one response from an Army post office in allied Europe. Elkins then reviewed several of the questions and responses from the survey, with each falling under one of the above-mentioned categories. For the open-ended questions, there were 5,554 comments that were sorted and categorized by topic and by respondent type: resident, current visitor, previous visitor, and part-time resident.

Elkins then provided a summary of the JI Master Plan Update Town Hall, which took place on June 16, 2021 as part of the public input process. During this session, an electronic town hall software was used that allowed for equal participation from all attendees, which totaled approximately 70. During the town hall the following questions were asked and received the corresponding responses:

- The Jekyll Island Authority has had numerous accomplishments over the past 10 years – what has been most significant to you?
  - Convention Center and Beach Village, Conservation Plan, Great Dunes Park, and Bike Path improvements
- Over the next five years, what do you see as the greatest issues or challenges for the JIA to address?
  - Overdevelopment; Capacity and Infrastructure Concerns; Traffic/Toll Booth
- What are the greatest opportunities for the JIA over the next five years?
  - Pickleball, Restaurants, Pharmacy/Urgent Care
- What else do we need to know?
  - Communication and Community are important

Elkins concluded her presentation by reviewing the next steps in the process which include:

- Gathering data and information to help inform decision-making
- Reviewing input from stakeholders, JIA staff, and JIA Board Members in combination with survey and town hall input
- Reviewing plans and studies that were developed as recommended by the 2014 Master Plan
- Using the above to inform the Findings and Recommendations for the Master Plan Update

**D.** The Operations Update was deferred, as Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, was unexpectedly unable to attend the meeting due to illness.

**E.** Jones Hooks, Executive Director, Presented the Executive Director's Report. He discussed the following points:

- A scheduled public input session for the Code Revision project. The session will provide an update on what the consulting team has done up to that point and will offer participants an opportunity to ask questions or comment on specific concerns. These types of meetings will continue until the project is complete.
- A survey conducted by Longwoods International that showed the influence the Delta Variant of COVID-19 would have on travel plans during the next six months. 34% percent of those surveyed indicated that their travel plans would be impacted. He noted that it was important to look at these trends, as they could potentially begin impacting Jekyll.
- He provided an update on the newly designed signage that has been added throughout Jekyll Island, particularly at beach areas, through the Ranger Program. The preliminary numbers of the effectiveness of these signs show approximately a 35% decrease in violations since the signs were installed. A full report will be given at a later date.
- The Georgia Department of Community Affairs awarded the Jekyll Island Turtle Center \$358,433 through an AmeriCorp grant. This is the third highest award given within the state of Georgia.
- The Environment Protection Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources completed a review of Jekyll's sanitary sewer system. Hooks quoted from the review, "During the inspection, no deficiencies were noted, but recommendations are presented in the enclosed report based upon the operation history. Since the last sanitary survey, this system has been designated as an outstanding performer."
- The Office of Fleet Management rated Jekyll Island as a Tier 1 in their Fourth Quarter Tier Report. There are only four agencies in the State of Georgia who have earned a Tier 1 ranking.
- Per the State Agency Records Manager, JIA is one of the only state agencies in Georgia with a fully revised and updated retention schedule.

- Hooks provided an update on the Golf Master Plan, which has yet to be adopted as methodical steps are being taken to ensure the plan is appropriate. These steps include in-depth review of the plan itself, on-site visits by Board members, and an archeological study. He then shared updated data on golf rounds and golf revenue. He noted that this continual sharing of data is an important aspect of the Golf Master Plan. It is a phased plan that allows decisions to be based on play. Hooks continued by explaining that the Bleakly Impact Study is just an analysis of various ways to pay for development of the Golf Master Plan. The study has not been adopted and it contains various scenarios to be considered. He ended the point by explaining that any erroneous information that has been distributed will be addressed by JIA staff and dialog will continue with the Board as decisions are made on the Golf Master Plan.
  - Hooks addressed the poor cellular service provided by Verizon on the south end of Jekyll Island. These issues are tied to the improvements that are being made at the south water tower and are caused by Verizon not moving forward on the schedule that was provided to them. The interim solution involves raising the Verizon antenna, which much accommodate airport requirements. A full and complete resolution will follow the interim solution.
  - Lastly, Hooks recommended an additional JIA Board meeting to be held on November 16, 2021, due to anticipated Master Plan Updates and additional projects in the works. This meeting will include a teleconference option for Board Members. The Board approved this recommendation with no objections.
- F. During the Chairman's Comments, Joseph B. Wilkinson, Jr., Chairman, showed his gratitude to everyone who has been supportive and helpful to him and his family over the past few months. He noted how proud he is of the JIA staff and what they've accomplished.

There were no public comments.

No break was taken, and the Chairman continued directly into the JIA Board Meeting.

**The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board Meeting**  
**August 17, 2021**

The roll was called, and all members were present except for Commissioner Williams and Mr. Tollison who dropped off the teleconference line.

**Action Items**

1. Mr. Krueger moved to accept the minutes of the July 20, 2021 board meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Willard. There was no discussion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.
2. Mr. Krueger moved to ratify, affirm, and adopt the previous actions, approvals, appointments, or other actions taken by this Board of Directors as a whole, that were within the Board's authority, from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gross. The motion was unanimously approved.
3. Dr. Evans nominated Mr. Krueger to continue the position of Vice Chair. Mr. Krueger consented to the nomination. There were no other nominations, and therefore the Chair declared Mr. Krueger elected to the Vice Chair position.
4. Mr. Kreuger nominated Mr. Gross to continue the position of Treasurer/Secretary. Mr. Gross consented to the nomination. There were no other nominations, and therefore the Chair declared Mr. Gross elected to Treasurer/Secretary.
5. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to approve Additional Capital Requests carried by unanimous consent.
6. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the Dispatch Service Agreement carried by unanimous consent.
7. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the Campground Bathhouse Proposal carried by unanimous consent.

There were no public comments.

**Announcements**

1. Per Chairman Wilkinson's request, Anna Trapp, Executive Assistant to the Director, read the Committee Appointments into the record. The following changes were made from the previous year:
  - a. Dale Atkins was appointed Chair of the Historic Preservation/Conservation Committee
  - b. All Board Members were appointed to the Finance Committee
  - c. The Vice Chair, Mr. Bob Krueger, was appointed to each Committee

The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Krueger and was seconded by Mr. Willard. There was no objection to the motion and the meeting adjourned at 11:12 a.m.