

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) and Committees met in Public Session on Tuesday, June 15, 2021 at the Jekyll Island Club Resort Ballroom and via teleconference.

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  
Mr. Dale Atkins

Members Absent: Mr. Glen Willard

Key Staff Present: Jones Hooks, Executive Director  
Melissa Cruthirds, General Counsel  
Michelle Webb, Executive Assistant  
Anna Trapp, Executive Assistant  
Taylor Davis, Historic Preservationist  
Ben Carswell, Director of Conservation  
Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing and Communications  
Kevin Udell, Sales Manager  
Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources  
Noel Jensen, Chief Operations Officer

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

Vice Chairman Krueger 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.

Commissioner Mark Williams joined the meeting via teleconference at 9:46 a.m. and Mr. Trip Tollison arrived in person at 9:50 a.m. Mr. Glen Willard was absent.

There was one public comment received online for this meeting. The name of the commenter and the subject of the public comment was read into the record as shown below. A copy of the full comment was given to each Board member and becomes part of the permanent record.

- John Stevenson – Overdevelopment

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

**A.** Taylor Davis, Historic Preservationist presented information on Mid-Century Architecture on Jekyll Island. Davis presented photos of five homes that were constructed between 1955-1972, chronologically in line with the national Mid-Century movement in residential areas. Some recognizable architectural features include centrally located chimney stack, breezeblocks, and carports. Davis noted that local architect Cormac McGarvey designed several of the structures on Jekyll Island. Additionally, Jekyll still has the blueprints for all the discussed properties. Some are completely unaltered exteriorly. Davis hopes this information will help build awareness and appreciation for the unique collection of Mid-Century structures that help tell Jekyll's unique history. The goal is to eventually document and survey the current collection, and with homeowner involvement,

work towards getting these properties registered with the National Register of Historic Places.

Hooks commented that Taylor Davis partners with the University of Georgia to allow college students to spend a Maymester working under Davis to learn about historic preservation. These projects help distinguish Jekyll Island from other tourist destinations, as they continue to promote education, preservation, and conservation.

**B.** Ben Carswell, Director of Conservation along with members of the Unified Command provided an update on the Golden Ray. Carswell introduced Lieutenant Commander Pat Frain who was joined by Unified Command members Scott Jackson, John Maddox, Michael Hines. Commander Frain provided the wreck removal progress. He stated they are about halfway through the removal process with four out of eight sections removed, as they are working on removing the fifth section. The Unified Command anticipate several more months of wreck removal. Commander Frain noted that despite their best efforts and planning, there may still be fires, discharges of oil and debris, and noise as they move forward with. He also confirmed that they are prepared for heavy weather as hurricane season approaches.

Scott Jackson provided the environmental update. He explained the environmental protection program which is a multilayer defense system. The environmental protection barrier (EPB) was developed to corral the oil floating near the ship, and there is underwater netting to catch larger debris. Anything that makes it through the EPB layer, is handled by on-water crew which includes skimmers and other boats. Anything that gets past them can end up on the beaches. They have teams that walk the beaches to remove the debris. Jackson noted that oil and debris numbers are decreasing. However, there was some oil impact in a marsh, but they have teams applying a substance to the oil that makes it less sticky and reduces the ability for it to transfer to the wildlife. Some other monitoring they are conducting include air quality monitoring and water bottling sampling that occurs during and after the cuts to the ship.

Lieutenant Commander Frain closed the presentation by sharing their community outreach page [www.stsimonssoundincidentresponse.com](http://www.stsimonssoundincidentresponse.com).

Jones Hooks thanked Lieutenant Commander Frain's team for communicating regularly with the JIA Conservation Department and for actively cleaning up debris.

There were no public comments.

## **II. Finance Committee**

**A.** Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair summarized the May financials as presented in the meeting materials. Revenues for May were \$3,267,464, which is \$358,000 more than budgeted for the month. Year to date revenues reflect a favorable \$1.8 million variance from budget and a favorable \$1.7 million variance from prior year to date. The locations with the largest variances from budget were: Parking up \$252,000, Summer Waves down \$164,000, Golf up \$73,000, and Hotel/Motel taxes up \$71,000.

The expenses for May were \$1,969,369, which is \$39,000 or 2% less than budgeted for the month. The year-to-date expenses were \$2.6 million less than budgeted and were \$2.5 million less than prior year to date expenses. The largest expense variances for the month

were: Human Resources down \$102,000, due to vacant full time and part time position, and Repair & Maintenance up \$116,000, due to project timing differences from earlier in the year.

The net operating cash income for May was \$1,298,095 which is \$398,000 better than the budgeted net operating Income of \$900,582. The year-to-date net operating cash income is \$4.4 million better than budget and \$4.2 million better than Prior year to date Income.

The total traffic count for May was 148,670 vehicles, which was 53,954 more vehicles than May 2020. May 2020 traffic numbers were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which explains why this number is so large. As a comparison, May 2021 traffic was 15,582 more vehicles than May 2019. The year-to-date traffic count is 577,227 vehicles, which is 200,293 vehicles more than the prior calendar year-to-date traffic count.

Revenues reported by the hotels are \$6.3 million, which is \$3.9 million more than May 2020. The Occupancy Rate was 81.4%, which was up from 43.2%. Revenue per Available Room was \$177.51, which was up from \$73.48 in May 2020. The average daily rate was \$218.05, which was up from \$170.09. Year-to-date revenues reported by the hotels was \$19.9 million, which was \$8.6 million more than year-to-date 2020 revenues. The Occupancy Rate was 63.0%, which was up from 50.4%. Revenue per Available Room was \$118.47, which was up from \$73.79 for Year-to-date 2020. The average Daily rate was \$188.03, which was up from \$146.50.

**B.** Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer presented a request for acceptance of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Bike Path Grant, Funding Request for Matching Funds, and Signature Authorization. M. Johnson advised that JIA has been selected to participate in a federal grant program for the Jekyll Island Causeway Bike Path Project. The project would complete the preliminary engineering for approximately 6 miles of bike path from the Jekyll Island Guest Information Center to Highway 17. GDOT would provide \$227,706.17 in funding and the JIA would be responsible for \$45,541.23 in matching funds.

Jones Hooks, Executive Director discussed how this project is a continuance of a project that began with a Federal Transportation Enhancement (TE) grant which aided in the construction of a bike path that falls short of the Jekyll Island Guest Information Center, due to engineering and funding complications. The goal of the proposed project is to complete the path to the Guest Information Center, then continue the bike path from the Guest Information Center to Highway 17 intersection, which would connect Jekyll Island to the Coastal Georgia Greenway and to Brunswick and St. Simons Island by bicycle. Hooks explained that as the proposal currently reads, construction could begin by the end of calendar year 2025. However, because of the elongated schedule, JIA has requested 6.5 feet of additional shoulder, on both sides of the road, rather than an additional path in hopes that the construction time will be expedited. If the design changes, any extra funds that JIA matches or contributes can be transferred over, even with the presented proposal approved as is.

M. Johnson proceeded to explain the three items that require approval:

1. Accept the grant from GDOT in the amount of \$227,706.17.
2. Approval for funding of \$45,541.23 for the matching portion of the grant. If approved, these funds would be set aside as capital funds from FY 2021 income.

3. Approve the Memorandum of Agreement with GDOT and authorize the Executive Director to sign on behalf of the JIA.

The motion to recommend approval of the request for acceptance of the Georgia Department of Transportation Bike Path Grant, funding request for matching funds, and signature authorization was made by Dr. Evans and seconded by Commissioner Williams. The motion was approved unanimously with no objections.

C. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer presented a request for approval of Campground Grant Funds from the Georgia State Financing & Investment Commission (GSFIC). M. Johnson explained that GSFIC notified staff that an application for funding of four bathrooms in the campground was committed for possible funding in February 2021, and on May 28, 2021, staff received approval to place the projects out for bid from GSFIC. GSFIC will provide project management and oversight of the approved project. The construction bids are currently pending and due June 17, 2021.

M. Johnson additionally noted that this works hand in hand with the State held bonds sold on June 8, 2021, and the bonds for the remainder of the campground expansion was included in that sale. The funding from the bond sale is \$2,950,000.00 and those funds will be available on or about July 1, 2021.

M. Johnson advised that staff recommends accepting the grant award from GSFIC for four identical Campground Bathrooms totally \$999,480.

Jones Hooks, Executive Director clarified that with the \$2.9 Million in conjunction with the \$999,480 grant funds that the Board will vote on is all the money needed for the Campground Expansion Project.

The motion to recommend the approval of the request for approval of the Campground Grant Funds from the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Tollison and seconded by Mr. Krueger. The motion was approved unanimously with no objections.

There were no public comments.

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

A. Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources, highlighted the retirement of Mark Bowen of the Vehicle Maintenance Department. He retired with twenty-five years of service. Ben Rushing, Fleet Manager spoke on Mr. Bowen's dedication to the Jekyll Island Authority.

There were no public comments.

### **IV. Marketing Committee**

A. Kevin Udell, Senior Sales Manager gave an update on the Jekyll Island Motorcoach Market. The Sales and Marketing teams were asked to assist Historic Resources in improving the motorcoach market on Jekyll, which was extremely robust several years prior but for various reasons has declined. The industry experienced an all time low for motorcoach tours due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Sales team is looking to change Jekyll Island from its current "spoke" model to a "hub" model to keep people on the Island

overnight and in the hotels. So far, they have increased the active Tour Operations in the sales database from thirty-five to more than two hundred. To increase this number, the team networked and joined several state associations including the Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and South-Central Motorcoach Associations and the national American Bus Association (ABA). Jekyll has participated in three virtual meeting planner showcases with over fifty pre-set appointments scheduled in April, May, and June 2021. There are many tour operators who are interested in Jekyll returning to and being active in this market, especially as recreational activities increase within the motorcoach market. The sale goals include a twenty-five percent increase in motorcoach traffic by fiscal year 2023 and a fifty percent increase by fiscal year 2024.

B. Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing and Communications gave an update on the 2021 Turtle Crawl Race. Over \$24,000 was raised for the Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC) through the event, which was the largest amount raise to date from the Turtle Crawl Race. A check was presented to the Jekyll Island Foundation.

There were no public comments.

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

- A. Noel Jensen, Chief Operations Officer gave an update on the Jekyll Island Authority's Hurricane Preparedness Plan. On May 27, 2021, JIA participated in Glynn County's Emergency Management Hurricane Exercise which gathers participants from the City of Brunswick, JIA, Glynn County, Georgia Power, and other private partners together to walkthrough a hurricane scenario, exactly as they would during a real event. The scenario is led by a National Weather Service Meteorologist from Jacksonville, and it runs from outside of six hours to past impact. Talking through these scenarios serve as a great opportunity for JIA to create checklists to ensure there are no gaps in the set processes before an active hurricane hits. Jensen mentioned a few important notes for everyone as they are preparing for potential storms. First, he suggested that everyone proactively pack a hurricane ready kit now and have a plan for lodging should an evacuation be needed. He also discussed re-entry passes for businesses. The State of Georgia controls this process. Businesses will need to visit the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency's website <https://gema.georgia.gov/plan-prepare/re-entry> to apply for a re-entry permit. Businesses need three items for re-entry after an evacuation: a permit, a letter stating the individual has a security obligation to receive that permit, and picture identification. Jensen then explained the five phases for re-entry. Phase one is for initial emergency responders. Phases two and three are critical workforce, which would include JIA employees, hotels, and businesses. Phases four and five are residents and guests. Jensen then discussed the importance of signing up for Nixle, which is JIA's emergency communication system. Registering for Nixle allows residents, business owners, and guests to receive updates during hurricanes as well as other community messages such as road closures. JIA's Emergency Preparedness webpage and Nixle registration can be found at <https://www.jekyllisland.com/livinghere/emergency-preparedness/>. The last item Jensen noted was Glynn County's Emergency Management Dashboard which consolidates emergency information including evacuation information, potential storm surge, Georgia Power outages, and severe weather reports. At the end of his presentation, Jensen showed two pictures of storm debris to reiterate the



importance of waiting to re-enter during the assigned phases, as critical workforce needs time to clear roads and ensure the area is safe for residents and guests to re-enter.

- B. Melissa Cruthirds, General Counsel discussed R-2021-6 a resolution to adopt amendments to JIA by-laws and policies. The two main reasons for this resolution are to ease administrative burdens and to establish an emergency management policy. The easing of the administrative burdens on the Executive Director is to allow a proposed Deputy Director to take on responsibilities such as signing contracts on behalf of the JIA. This adoption will also amend the definition of quorum in the by-laws. It currently reads that five members present make up a quorum, but it is proposed to change it to “the majority”. This is to cover any transitional periods between board member appointments. The amendments will also provide various clarifications and updates to the by-laws regarding the appointment of the chairperson and technological advancements, such as videoconferencing and teleconferencing. It also amends the policy to timely address litigation issues. Currently, it requires the Executive Director to present litigation documents to the board. Cruthirds advised that waiting every month for board approval could hamper some advantages in litigation. The amendment would allow the Executive Director, with consultation from General Counsel and the assigned Litigation Attorney, to make those decisions. The amendments will also allow the Executive Director to execute contract amendments that do not have much substance to them, such as corrections to Scribner’s errors. This change will improve administration efficiency in the Authority. The last update is to the Emergency Management policy which will provide authority and responsibility to the Chairman of the Board, the Executive Director, and the Deputy Executive Director. Noel Jensen, Chief Operations Officer, spoke on this item. He advised that these changes came after he completed an independent study course through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in which he realized that the Authority did not have high marks in three categories: proclaiming the state of emergency, imposing restrictions such as curfews, and ordering evacuations or restricting reentry. After consulting with General Counsel, it was determined that the JIA did not have clear guidelines on how that should be carried out. Jones Hooks, Executive Director clarified that this is formalizing the process that the Authority typically follows during an emergency, and these by-law changes will ensure compliance with FEMA recommendations.

The motion to recommend adoption of R-2021-6, Resolution to Amend By-Laws and Policy Manual as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Gross and Seconded by Mr. Evans. The motion was approved unanimously with no objections.

- C. Melissa Cruthirds, General Counsel discussed the Third Amendment to Executive Director’s Employment Agreement. Cruthirds advised that the current term of the Executive Director’s Employment Agreement would end on June 30, 2021. The original employment agreement automatically renewed until it was terminated, but the Second Amendment to the employment agreement had a termination date of June 30<sup>th</sup> due to a directive made during the change of governorship, advising that state agency head employments should list an end date. However, since no such directive has been made since then, the JIA would like to return to the original employment contract for Jones Hooks which would be automatically renewed unless terminated.

The motion to recommend the approval of the Third Amendment to Executive Director's Employment Agreement as proposed by staff was made by Mr. Gross and Seconded by Mr. Evans. The motion was approved unanimously with no objections.

- D. Jones Hooks, Executive Director began discussion on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Budget. He noted that all Board Members received a copy of the proposed budget and the Finance Committee Members participated in a public session to discuss the proposed budget on June 2, 2021. Hooks then gave an overview of highlighted budget items. First, the JIA experienced a robust Fiscal Year 2021 due to an increase in leisure travel following the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the JIA is anticipating at the end of the fiscal year to have a projected \$6.339 million for capital projects, equipment, and reserves. The recommended Fiscal Year 2022 Budget totals \$30.401 million. Hooks noted a few of the highlights including: significant cash reserves, a two percent merit raise for employees, the creation of a separate park services departments to enhance janitorial operations for guests, \$100,000 participation in the Golden Isles Convention and Visitors Bureau, \$100,000 for website redesign improvements, \$75,000 for an oceanside bike path engineering, \$130,000 for a golf course archeological study, \$70,000 for additional computer security, \$17,000 for trademark registration fees, increased personnel coverage for the Beach Village for janitorial and landscaping purposes, \$70,000 for painting and pressure washing at the Beach Village, a shift in marketing toward more Public Relation promotion rather than traditional advertising promotion, a \$203,000 water tank maintenance expenditure, \$20,000 for the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebration of Island Treasures, \$50,000 to replace mini-golf carpet, and \$307,000 towards Summer Waves improvements. Also highlighted in the budget presentation were an increase in Tennis Center revenues which increased from \$53,000 to \$132,000 over the past five years. Golf Revenues are also trending upward across the nation.

Hooks continued to note that 44% of all revenues are projected to come from JIA operated amenities and about 16% of revenue is projected to come from parking fees.

Additional highlights include full-time position changes which include an accounting director, a waste-water attendant superintendent, and to promote the Chief Operations Officer, Noel Jensen, to Deputy Executive Director. These changes would also include elevating the JIA firefighter and paramedic positions for full-time coverage on Jekyll Island. Additional proposed positions include: a Marketing Coordinator for Social Media and Public Relations, a Human Resources Recruiter, a Museum Collection Specialist, a Park Services Manager, and a Georgia Sea Turtle Center Hospital Technician. Eliminated positions include a Museum Interpreter/ Tour Guide and the Ambassador position.

Hooks then moved on to discuss proposed Capital Equipment and Project Requests which included: golf course improvements, an airport hangar, new medical equipment at the GSTC, and mini-golf improvements. Additionally, bike path rehabilitation and construction at Section F and Section H would be funded from the Public Improvement Fund, and bike path improvements for Section B2 and Section E would be funded from the Tourism Development Fund.

From the Water/Wastewater Fund, there will be continued improvements including a sewer vac truck, estimated at \$300,000. From the Fire Equipment Fund, \$199,500 is recommended by staff for additional expenditures.

Hooks also addressed proposed Rate Increases which include: Golf Memberships, Golf Round rates, Bike Rental rates, GSTC Admission rate, Water rates (for commercial and hotel only), Sewer rates, and Trash fees.

The motion to recommend adoption of The Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Budget and its components as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Gross and Seconded by Mr. Tollison. The motion was approved unanimously with no objections.

- E. Jones Hooks, Executive Director presented the Executive Director's Report. He began by discussing the previous ransomware attack. The total expenditure for the LifeLock security reviews and enrollment for individual persons was \$94,197.60. This did not include IT expenditures, nor the staff time that was spent on this. However, JIA did not pay the ransom request. JIA offered LifeLock support to the seven thousand and forty-six persons who were potentially impacted. Four hundred and six individuals actually participated in the service. JIA is waiting for reimbursement from the State, which will hopefully cover fifty percent of the cost.

Hooks then spoke on the recent GOP Convention, which was organized in about ninety days. A convention of this size would usually require at least eighteen months. Hooks highlighted the work that was put into this event by the Convention Center staff, the JIA sales force, and regular employees. He then shared a note he received from the GOP event planner who complimented the efforts that were put into making the event a success. However, Hooks used two photos he took to help iterate the need to understand capacity on Jekyll Island and how to improve the quality of larger events in the future, through updated policies and procedures, to avoid becoming a Disappointing Destination.

Hooks then discussed an item the JIA donated to the Friends of Historic Jekyll Island (FOHJI) Annual Auction which was a day of shadowing JIA senior staff. The item was won for \$800 by Tim and Christie Kinsey who sent a thank you note afterwards to express how much they enjoyed the experience. The note was included the Board's Blue Folder.

Lastly, Hooks discussed the Master Plan. The highly involved process is underway with the first public input session being held on Wednesday, June 16, 2021 at 5:00 PM. Other components of this process include conversations between the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government and JIA Board Members as well as staff members, meetings with stakeholder groups, a widespread survey, and an overview committee that will include partners from various agencies such as Georgia's Department of Natural Resources.

- F. As the Chairman's Comments, Mr. Krueger thanked all the JIA staff for how they have performed during the pandemic and the recovery. He also thanked the Board Members for their support as the JIA worked to return to normal.



During Public Comment Ms. Beverly Hopkins encouraged the Board to continue to broadcast Board Meetings past the point of the pandemic to allow those who cannot attend in-person an opportunity to listen in.

Jones Hooks responded to this public comment by advising that audio recordings of each meeting would be uploaded to the website for anyone to review moving forward.

The Board took a 10-minute break before continuing to the JIA Board Meeting.

**The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board Meeting**  
**June 15, 2021**

The roll was called, and all members were present except: Mr. Glen Willard and Commissioner Mark Williams.

1. Mr. Atkins moved to accept the minutes of the May 18, 2021 board meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Evans. There was no discussion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Mr. Gross moved to accept the minutes of the June 2, 2021 Finance Committee Budget Meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tollison. There was no discussion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Acceptance of the Georgia Department of Transportation Bike Path Grant, Funding Request for Matching Funds, and Signature Authorization, a recommendation of the Finance Committee, was carried by unanimous consent.

4. Approval of Campground Grant Funds from the Georgia State Financing & Investment Commission, a recommendation of the Finance Committee, was carried by unanimous consent.

5. Adoption of R-2021-6, Resolution to Amend By-Laws and Policy Manual, a recommendation of the Committee of the Whole, carried by unanimous consent.

6. Approval of Third Amendment to Executive Director's Employment Agreement, a recommendation of the Committee of the Whole, carried by unanimous consent.

7. Adoption of the Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Budget and its components, a recommendation of the Committee of the Whole, carried by unanimous consent.

The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Atkins and was seconded by Mr. Gross. There was no objection to the motion and the meeting adjourned at 11:24 a.m.