

JEKYLL ISLAND – STATE PARK AUTHORITY
January 18, 2022 – Approved Minutes

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) and Committees met in Public Session on Tuesday, January 18, 2022 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
Mr. Dale Atkins
Commissioner Mark Williams via Teleconference
Mr. Glen Ward via Teleconference
Mr. Trip Tollison via Teleconference

Members Absent: Dr. Buster Evans
Ms. Joy Burch-Meeks

Key Staff Present: Jones Hooks, Executive Director
Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director
Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer
Kevin Udell, Senior Sales Manager
Ray Emerson, Lead Park Ranger
Cliff Gawron, Director of Landscaping and Planning
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 9:32 a.m. Roll was called for members attending in person and those attending via teleconference.

There were two public comments 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
- Jon Stevenson – Financials, Bike Paths, and Parking Passes
- Mindy Egan – 2021 Master Plan Update and Citizens Resource Council

I. Historic Preservation/Conservation Committee

A. Ray Emerson, Lead Park Ranger, provided an update for the Conservation Department. He first highlighted the Junior Ranger Field Guide, a collaborative project between the Conservation Department, the Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC), and the Marketing Department. This guidebook serves as a fun tool for children to learn about the animals and nature on Jekyll Island. Inspired by the Field Guide, Park Ranger Ayron Moleen developed the Junior Ranger After School Program which, through a partnership with the Boys & Girls Club, allows students to participate in field trips with park rangers three days a week. Throughout the week the students are guided through the marsh, the forest, and the beach. They complete the Field Guide, and the week concludes with a small graduation where the students recite the Junior Ranger Promise and receive a certificate, designating them as Jekyll Island Junior Rangers. Emerson then recognized his team, introducing Park Rangers Ayron Moleen, Alexia Darnell, and Andrea Deck.

Emerson ended his presentation with an update on the bald eagle nesting on Jekyll Island. He noted that there are currently two nests on Jekyll Island, one on the Crane Road bike path and

one at Driftwood Beach. The Rangers have observed the Crane Road nest for the past seven years, and it has fledged at least one eaglet every year. The Driftwood Beach nest has historically been less successful at producing eaglets, but it has not only fledged an eaglet two years in a row but there are currently two eaglets in that nest, meaning that for the first known time, Jekyll could have four eaglets in the same season.

Jones Hooks, Executive Director, thanked the Rangers for their outstanding efforts in promoting educational programs on Jekyll.

- B. Cliff Gawron, Director of Landscaping and Planning, discussed the restoration efforts of the Conservation Protection Area next to Villas by the Sea. This oceanside area originally consisted of mostly maritime forests and scrub vegetation, two hurricanes, particularly Hurricane Irma, wiped out much of this vegetation. Additionally, this non-leased property had been encroached upon and migrated into an active use lawn area. JIA's Conservation Department and Villas by the Sea management collaborated to determine the best way to restore this habitat. Through this partnership, thousands of plants were planted in this area including clump forming grasses, which includes native grasses, shrubs, green saw palmettos, and cabbage palms.

Gawron thanked the Villas by the Sea Property Owners Association and General Manager, Dick Coyle for their commitment to restoring this area back into a viable and natural environment. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, also thanked and recognized Mr. Coyle and the other property owners who were present.

There were no public comments.

II. Finance Committee

- A. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair summarized the December Financials including an overview of Revenues, Expenses, Net Operating Cash, Traffic Statistics, and Hotel Statistics.
- Revenues were \$ 2,684,143.
 - Expenses were \$1,899,351.
 - Net Operating Cash Income was \$784,791.
 - Total Traffic Counts were 103,165 vehicles.
 - Hotel Revenues were reported at \$3.7 million with a 52.5% Occupancy Rate.
- B. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the request for FY 2022 Operating Budget Adjustments. The requested budget adjustments include expenses for tree work on the golf course, an update to the National Golf Foundation Study, schematic designs for the GSTC expansion, a marketing analysis for the Amphitheater, landscaping improvements, and several repairs. The total additional expenses are \$328,892.79 to be funded from the current FY 2022 budget surplus.

A motion to recommend approval of the FY 2022 Operating Budget Adjustments was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Atkins. The motion carried unanimously.

- C. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the request for FY 2022 Capital Equipment and Projects. She explained that the request can be broken down into three parts:
- \$856,900.00 requested from current year operating funds for new cameras at Summer Waves, replacement of current cameras at other amenities, improvements to the Annex building, landscaping improvements, site prep work for the public safety building, new cabanas for Summer Waves, and a few pieces of equipment.

- \$192,000.00 requested from the Water/Wastewater Improvement Fund for 4 new pumps at the wastewater treatment plant and 600 water meter replacements.
- \$375,000.00 requested from the Tourism Development Fund as well as reallocating \$234,000 set aside for the Causeway Bike Path project for Section I and Section G of the bike path. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, added that the use of the \$234,000 previously approved for the Causeway Bike Path, would be better used for Sections I and G of the bike paths to continue rejuvenation, noting that construction of the Causeway Bike Path is not expected to begin for another three years.

A motion to recommend approval of the FY 2022 Capital Equipment and Projects requests as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Atkins and seconded by Mr. Krueger. The motion carried unanimously.

There were no public comments.

IV. Marketing Committee

- A. Kevin Udell, Senior Sales Manager, gave an update on Convention Center sales. He first discussed how the Convention Center has recovered in CY 2021 by comparing numbers to CY 2019, the best year on record prior to the pandemic. He stated that the numbers for 2021 were slightly lower than those seen in 2019, noting that there were 70 business groups for CY 21 compared to 86 groups in 2019.

Udell then discussed future business for CY 2022, noting 75 definite groups planned for the year which would equate to 40,000 attendees, 54,000 hotel rooms, and \$11 million in hotel revenue.

Udell closed his presentation by noting that FY 2022 looks comparable to the best fiscal year on record and that more groups are returning to Jekyll Island and transitioning to multiple year contracts.

There were no public comments.

V. Legislative Committee

- A. Trip Tollison, Legislative Committee Chair, commented on the four days of legislative sessions conducted in Atlanta, noting that Governor Kemp presented the Governor's proposed budget the previous week.

Jones Hooks, Executive Director, noted that the funds requested for the Public Safety Facility on Jekyll were not included in the proposed budget. However, continued discussions about the funding for this project are planned.

There were no public comments.

VI. Committee of the Whole

- A. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, reminded the Board of the Market Analysis conducted by RCLCO, a consulting firm retained by the lease owners of the property previously known as the Buccaneer site. He noted that the study was revised to include updated numbers based on

post-pandemic data, and he explained that the study recommended residential use of the property.

Maria Humphrey, Lease Manager, then provided a brief history of the property. When Leon N. Weiner and Associates (LNWA) acquired the lease from Trammel Crow in 2015, the parcels totaled 15.4 acres which includes the current Marriott and Ocean Oaks sites and the undeveloped Buccaneer site. LNWA rearranged the properties and combined parcels to create the 6.892 acres that the study focuses on. The marketing study was added into the lease in 2017 to determine the best use for the property, either for a hotel or a residential unit. This study was purposefully conducted after the completion of the Marriott Courtyard/Residence Inn, to better understand the impact that hotel property would have on Jekyll's Island's carrying capacity. She noted that if the Board approves the study, the permitted use can be included in the lease, and a completed project development agreement would be required within 60 days.

A motion to recommend approval of the Market Analysis completed by RCLCO for the Jekyll Island Buccaneer Site, was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Gross. The motion carried unanimously.

- B. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, discussed the Request for Proposal (RFP) #368, requesting a Market Analysis for the Jekyll Island Amphitheater. Hooks noted that the previous RFP issued for the improvement and operation of the amphitheater did not receive any technically responsive submissions. The first RFP was issued in April 2021 on a rolling basis with no deadline, and a revised RFP was issued in September with the deadline date of November 12, 2021. Having received only a few inquiries and no legitimate responses to that RFP, staff conducted research and spoke with external groups familiar with amphitheater operations and determined that a marketing analysis would be beneficial for this property to help determine the potential uses and opportunities of the amphitheater.

A motion to recommend approval of RFP #368 for the Jekyll Island Amphitheater Market Analysis was made by Mr. Gross and seconded by Mr. Krueger. Roll was called, and the motion carried unanimously.

- C. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, presented the request for an assessment update from the National Golf Foundation (NGF). This update would stem from an assessment they completed for the JIA in 2017. Their services will include a full update of the market demand, area supply and key economic drivers of the Jekyll Island golf economy, as well as a renewed look at the actual and projected performance of the four-course golf facility. The estimated cost is \$18,000 plus expenses.

A motion to recommend approval of the National Golf Foundation Assessment Update was made by Mr. Gross and seconded by Mr. Atkins. Roll was called, and the motion carried unanimously.

- D. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, provided an Operations Update highlighting on-going projects:
- An RFP is planned to be presented to the Board in April 2022 for the Airport Terminal Building.
 - The Public Safety Complex has a complete design and construction documents are ready for permitting. As funding options are considered, site prep will be conducted to continue momentum on this project.

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- The Environmental Assessment Procedure (EAP) is complete for the Campground Expansion, and the tree protection is underway. The next steps will be to begin bathhouse construction, selective clearing, and infrastructure installation. The anticipated completion date of the expansion is during the first quarter of 2023.
 - The landscaping at the Marriott hotel has been corrected in compliance with the approved design development documents.
 - An ADA compliant sidewalk was constructed from the crossover to the ADA compliant beach overlook ramp. Collapsible bollards will be installed in this area to prevent golf carts and Red Bug carts from driving on the sidewalk, while still allowing access for mobility assistant devices.
 - The crossover at Austin Lane was undermined, losing three to four feet of sand and being washed out underneath. The crossover collapsed and twisted and will need to be rebuilt. Jensen noted that almost every crossover on Jekyll has experienced damage due to Mother Nature, and improved construction strategies are always being considered.
- E. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, Presented the Executive Director’s Report. He discussed the following points:
- Introduction of Zach Harris, who will join the JIA as the in-house general counsel in February 2022.
 - Recognition of Trip Tollison who was named by *Georgia Trend* as one of the 100 most influential Georgians.
 - Golf Course Improvement Strategy
 - A revised draft of the Archaeological Report has been sent to the Historic Preservation Division for review at the state level.
 - A work session will be planned by June of 2022 to discuss the NGF assessment and golf improvement schedule.
 - Disappointing Destination: Hooks presented a *First Coast News* article discussing the exorbitant crowds seen during the holidays in St. Augustine, FL. Hooks explained that the JIA wants to avoid issues of overcrowding, and an internal debriefing session will be held to critique Holly Jolly Jekyll to determine what went well and what can be improved.
 - New Castle Hotels & Resorts accepted investments through an online marketplace for investors at CrowdStreet.com, and a webinar focusing on the Holiday Inn Resort is available to view online.
 - In CY 2021, forty-one random residential license inspections were conducted. Part of the inspection process includes mandating fire extinguishers in licensed rental properties. This mandate proved incredibly important as the use of a fire extinguisher in a home on Bliss Lane is credited with preventing the fire from spreading throughout the home.
- F. Mr. Wilkinson presented the Chairman Comments expressing appreciation for the JIA staff from every department and level of management.

There were no public comments.

The Chairman continued directly into the JIA Board Meeting.

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board Meeting
January 18, 2022

The roll was called at 11:00 a.m., and all members were present either in-person or via teleconference except for Dr. Buster Evans and Ms. Joy Burch-Meeks, who were absent.

Action Items

1. Mr. Kruger moved to accept the minutes of the December 14, 2021 board meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Atkins. There was no discussion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.
2. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to approve the FY 2022 Operating Budget Adjustments carried by unanimous consent.
3. The recommendation from the Human Resources Committee to approve the FY 2022 Capital Equipment and Projects Requests carried by unanimous consent.
4. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve Market Analysis completed by RCLCO for the Jekyll Island Buccaneer Site by unanimous consent.
5. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve RFP #368 for the Jekyll Island Amphitheater Market Analysis carried by unanimous consent.
6. The recommendations from the Committee of the Whole to approve the National Golf Foundation Assessment Update carried by unanimous consent.

There were no public comments.

The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Atkins and was seconded by Mr. Krueger. There was no objection to the motion and the meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.