

JEKYLL ISLAND – STATE PARK AUTHORITY
November 15, 2022 – Approved Minutes

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) and Committees met in Public Session on Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at the Jekyll Island Convention Center and via teleconference.

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

Key Staff Present: Jones Hooks, Executive Director
Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director
Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer
Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources
Tom Alexander, Director of Historic Resources
Michelle Kaylor, Director of GSTC
Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing
Zach Harris, General Counsel
Anna Trapp, Executive Assistant

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

Chairman Atkins called the committee session to order at 9:30 a.m. All Board members were present either in-person or via teleconference.

JIA received no online public comments for this meeting.

Per staff recommendation, Chairman Atkins moved to defer Committee of the Whole Item A. Market Analysis for Jekyll Island Amphitheater to a future Board Meeting. There were no objections.

I. Historic Preservation/Conservation Committee

- A. Tom Alexander, Director of Historic Resources, presented an update on the progress made in the Historic District during the 2022 calendar year:
- Fiscal Year 2022 ended with the first \$1,000,000 worth of revenue for Historic District programming, and the 2022 Halloween Living History Character Program made almost \$20,000, more than any other comparable program.
 - The first phase of the oral history project is complete.
 - A survey of mid-century modern homes on Jekyll is underway.
 - The Great Dunes Golf Course is under consideration for a National Registry of Historic Places designation.
 - A grant of \$50,000 was received from the Friends of Historic Jekyll Island to begin preservation work on the Baker Crane Cottage.
 - Preservation efforts continue with Chichota Ruins, which is planned to become a venue for events and educational experiences.
 - Painting and repairs of historic structures continued throughout the year.

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- Two lobby exhibits were created in honor of JIA's 75th anniversary.
- Deaccession of unneeded items continues.
- Refurbishment of Villa Ospo is ongoing as is the Hollybourne Cottage project.
- Four out of six steps have been completed to certify Mosaic as a museum through the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations.
- Education and interpretation programs during 2022 included Dolphin Club Days, Pistols & Privateers, and Gilded Age Ghosts & Ghouls.

Alexander then introduced two JIA employees who take on the roles of historic Jekyll Island figures through the Living History program.

- Emily Robertson, Lead Interpreter, portrays Mrs. Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge, the youngest daughter of William and Amara Rockefeller. Their family lived in Indian Mound Cottage, where most of the portrayals of her take place. This character allows history to be shared through the eyes of a Jekyll Island Club Member.
- Mark Horner, Museum Interpreter, portrays Mr. Ernest Grob, who was the Club Superintendent for 42 years from 1890 to the 1930s. Mr. Grob worked behind the scenes, and with this character, Horner is able to share information about those who worked for the Club and their perspectives of the Club Members.

Jones Hooks, Executive Director, highlighted the positive changes happening within the Historic Resources department including increased revenue and new, improved, and engaging programming.

B. Michelle Kaylor, Director of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC), presented a report highlighting several accomplishments of the GSTC:

- Since opening its doors 15 years prior, the GSTC has welcomed 1.4 million visitors, increasing conservation awareness and educating guests of the threats the Center's sea turtle patients face in the wild.
- The GSTC has educated over 60,000 K-12 students, incorporating sea turtle conservation into their curriculum-based standards.
- The GSTC received its 1,000th sea turtle patient in 2022, and they have released 640 sea turtles back into the wild since 2007, which is a 64% release rate.
- As a teaching hospital, the GSTC has hosted 165 veterinarian students, and staff has written over 100 peer reviewed manuscripts and book chapters.
- Since nesting has been recorded on Jekyll Island, 2022 showed the largest number of sea turtle nests at 243.

Kaylor then discussed the importance of storytelling. She shared the story of Silas Eatonville, a four-year old boy battling liver cancer. Through re-watching an episode of *Go Diego Do* about saving sea turtles during chemotherapy, Silas became passionate about learning more about sea turtles and how to save them. His family read him books and watched videos on sea turtles. Then Silas began to tell anyone and everyone what they could do to protect the sea turtles, promoting sea turtle conservation within his community. After getting to know Silas, the GSTC named a loggerhead sea turtle after him, and Silas was able to attend the release of the turtle at Tybee Island. Silas's story touched his community, staff at the GSTC, and beyond. Because of his story and others, the GSTC will continue to expand youth access to STEM sciences and providing more access to the youth to learn what the GSTC does and what they can do to make an impact.

Jones Hooks, Executive Director, commented on the commitment, experience, and enthusiasm of Kaylor through her 15 years with the GSTC. He noted that this dedication is seen throughout all of the JIA departments which has lead to significant, positive impacts for Jekyll Island and beyond.

There were no public comments.

II. Finance Committee

A. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair, summarized the October Financials including an overview of Revenues, Expenses, Net Operating Cash, Traffic Statistics, and Hotel Revenues for the month.

- Revenues were \$2,808,961.
- Expenses were \$2,620,007.
- Net Operating Cash Income was \$188,954.
- Total Traffic Counts were 113,054 vehicles.
- Year-to-date Revenues reported by hotels were \$61 million.

B. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, brought forward a change to the rate sheet that was presented in June with the FY2023 Budget. The budget included a \$4 parking fee increase during Holly Jolly Jekyll, but the summary sheet did not reflect this. The increased rate would only be for Friday and Saturday nights from 5:00 p.m. through midnight from November 25th to January 8th.

Jones Hooks, Executive Director, continued by noting the annual pass holder would be exempt from the additional fee. He also explained that the decision to include this fee increase was based more on capacity concerns rather than financial. One of the recurring recommendations in the Carrying Capacity & Infrastructure Assessment was to implement dynamic pricing. The hope is that the price increase for Friday and Saturday nights will encourage visitors to come other nights of the week to better distribute traffic between the week and weekend.

A motion to recommend increasing the per vehicle parking fee by \$4.00 on Friday and Saturday nights during the Holly Jolly Jekyll Season, as recommended by staff, was made by Dr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Krueger. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the request to establish a new account with Ameris Bank. This new account is a result of the self-insured health insurance plan that was approved at the October 2022 Board meeting. The account will be used to deposit premiums and for paying claims each week.

A motion to recommend opening a bank account with Ameris Bank to be used for premiums, fees, and claims related to JIA's new self-insured health insurance program, as recommended by staff, was made by Mr. Joyner and seconded by Mr. Wilkinson. The motion carried unanimously.

There were no public comments.

III. Human Resources Committee

A. Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources, announced the retirement of Ronnie Douglas. Ronnie is the Campground Manager and is retiring after 22 years of service to Jekyll Island.

Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, spoke about Ronnie's service and dedication to Jekyll Island and the Campground. His guests always receive exceptional customer service which resulted in many recurring visitors and guests each year. He kept a close eye on the campground, ensuring the safety, security, and enjoyment of everyone who came through.

Jones Hooks, Executive Director, also commented on Ronnie’s commitment to the campground guests. Hooks recalled in his first meeting with Ronnie, Ronnie asked for two things. One was an enclosed pavilion that would allow guests to socialize, which was added once funds were available, and the second item Ronnie always pushed for was expansion of the Campground, which is well underway.

Ronnie then spoke noting that his father worked for the JIA for over 30 years, and because of that, he was raised on Jekyll Island and has deep roots in the history of Jekyll. He noted that he’s happy to see what Jekyll is today, and he thanked Hooks and Jensen for their support.

There were no public comments.

IV. Marketing Committee

A. Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing, presented the report from the Marketing Department, highlighting the following items:

- The GSTC was featured by *AAA Living* in their online article highlighting road trip ideas in Georgia as well as in their November print issue story “Water Worlds” which features places travelers can visit to experience aquatic life. GSTC Education Program Manager, Nicole Thomas, was included in the photo for the printed feature.
- The Marketing team began working with the Discovery Channel in September to host the program “Nature is Fly”. Jamie Gamby, GSTC Rehabilitation Technician II, gave the show hosts a behind the scenes look at the GSTC and what rehabilitation looks like for its patients.
- Commissioner Mark Williams and Jones Hooks were listed on *Georgia Trend* magazine’s “Georgia 500” most influential leaders for 2022.
- The 15th Shrimp and Grits Festival was held November 4th through 6th. To mark the anniversary year, fireworks were included on Friday night, and the Tams and an Allman Brothers Tribute band were feature musical performers. Visitation was approximately 42,000 people over the two days. There were no issues with traffic getting onto the causeway or to parking, the weather was ideal, and vendor turnout numbers were great. Discussion and evaluation of the event is scheduled in order to receive feedback from every touchpoint of the event.
- Holly Jolly Jekyll will run November 25th through January 8th. There will be more than a million lights which will turn on the day after Thanksgiving. Some key events include the 2nd Annual Cold-Stunned Plunge, Winter Carnival & Big Truck Roundup, Holly Jolly Jekyll Light Parade, Holiday Drive-In Movies, and Fireworks. The official site for the season is www.jekyllisland.com/holiday.

There were no public comments.

V. Legislative Committee

No report.

VI. Committee of the Whole

A. The Market Analysis for Jekyll Island Amphitheater was deferred to a future Board Meeting.

B. Dion Davis, Director of the Jekyll Island Foundation (JIF), provided an update. She began by discussing a few ongoing projects and purchases that are being fully or partially funded through the JIF including:

- First floor repairs and exhibitory at Hollybourne Cottage
- An outdoor education space at Mosaic
- Period clothing for Jekyll Island Living History Experience characters
- Wildflower planting and pollinator strip at the Jekyll Island entrance
- A bioswale at Beachview Drive

Completed projects include Chichota Cottage phase I&II, a causeway barrier for Diamondback Terrapins, aeration replacement at Horton Pond, upgrades to Wanderer Memory Trail, and Captain Wylly Pond beautification.

Davis continued by recapping a retreat held for JIF's 22 Board Members which included presentations from JIA Department Directors and a teambuilding competition developed by Davis and Alexa Hawkins. The competition was a teambuilding exploration of Jekyll Island's rich history. Jones Hooks noted that this teambuilding exercise was a beta test, but the Marketing and Sales team plan to offer the experience to various groups that come to Jekyll.

Additionally, during the retreat, the JIF Board passed a new strategic plan and discussed the preplanning for the GSTC expansion feasibility study.

Chairman Atkins thanked Dion and the JIF Board for their support.

C. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, introduced the next presentation, noting that the idea of this study which began after Dr. Evans expressed concerns about affordable room blocks being unavailable during the Georgia Association of Education Leaders Conference (GAEL). After continuing that conversation with leaders from GAEL and JIA's Marketing and Sales departments, it was determined that there needs to be a way to accommodate the legacy groups who have held conferences on Jekyll for many years, including while the new Convention Center was under construction. After additional conversations with hoteliers, an RFP was issued to complete a group demand analysis, and a firm was selected. Ken Bleakly with K.B. Advisory Group along with Linda Wilson of Key Advisors Inc., have spent several months creating this report.

Ken Blakley and Linda Wilson presented an Assessment of Hospitality Group Demand on Jekyll Island.

The key findings of the report include:

- The Convention Center continues to generate strong operating income, which is atypical for the industry and allows for re-investment.
- With 1,397 hotel rooms on Jekyll, accommodating large groups in peak periods will always be challenging.
- Hotel occupancy remains in the mid-sixty percent range, which is typical for seasonal markets.
- In 2022, hotel room rates and occupied rooms continue to increase, as leisure and group demand for Jekyll's drive-to-beach destination remains strong.
- Average group attendance is down statewide, but at Jekyll, the opposite is true.
- Jekyll's average room rates are lower and have increased less than the comparable markets.

- Room inventory on Jekyll is a fraction of the comparable markets. Guest room ratios to convention space are significantly lower on Jekyll, leading to capacity issues in peak periods.

Recommended Key Future Goals for Group Demand include:

- Encourage strong future group demand at Jekyll.
- Better manage historical legacy groups.
- Attract and manage new repeat groups including corporate.
- Address escalations in average room rates.
- Involve more of the hotels in group business.
- Focus on sports, weddings, and family reunions as “in-fill” at the Convention Center.

Hooks asked about what the next steps are to achieve the recommended goals. Bleakly explained that a list of strategies has been created and will be shared with the hotels, JIA Sales Department, and the Convention Center. A meeting is already scheduled to discuss these strategies and come to a consensus on the next actionable steps.

- D. Zach Harris, General Counsel, presented the Westin Jekyll Island assignment for consideration. Harris explained that Jekyll Ocean Front Hotel, LLC (JOFH) is the current owner of the Westin located at 100 Ocean Way, Jekyll Island, GA. New Castle Hotel Resorts acts as the hotel manager, and Leon N. Weiner & Associates, Inc. (LNWA) acts as the asset manager. JOFH and New Castle have collectively agreed to allow Northview Hotel Group the opportunity to purchase a majority ownership in JOFH, including those ownership interests currently held by New Castle, and replace New Castle as the hotel manager. LNWA will continue to act as the asset manager. Harris introduced Dave Curtis of LNWA to begin a presentation on behalf of Northview.

Curtis noted that LNWA and Northview partnered together from 2016 to 2021 for operation of the JICR. Through discussions that began between Curtis and Matt Trevenen, a partner with Northview, it was decided that Northview would take over management of the Westin from New Castle.

Trevenen continued the presentation explaining that he believes Northview truly understands Jekyll Island and what makes it special, since they were responsible for renovations made at JICR, building Jekyll Ocean Club, and buying and renovating the Wharf. He noted Northview’s current portfolio consists of The Boca Raton, Brasada Ranch, and The Beacon Grand. He explained that Northview has operated both upper and mid-scale hotels, with a focus on resorts in the past several years. He briefly discussed Northview’s past portfolio which includes hotels across the United States. He then discussed Northview’s plans for the Westin, noting the hotel will remain under the Marriott system, nearly all employees will be retained, current General Manager, Kevin Runner will be involved during the transition and will ultimately be an advisor with LNWA as the asset manager, and Jeff Elseser will be the new General Manager at the property. The four areas of focus for upgrades will include lobby renovation, guestroom renovation, café enhancements, and amenity improvements. Additionally, they are considering reactivating Harry’s Bar into a better utilized restaurant space.

Mr. Krueger asked for clarification of Northview's long-term goals. Trevenen explained that they plan to continue the growth on Jekyll as LWNA has done through significant renovations to improve Jekyll's convention hotel.

Hooks addressed several concerns regarding the transition. He pointed out that although Northview has an impressive portfolio, they have a record of investing in properties then moving along, explaining that Jekyll prefers hotel groups that offer some longevity and stability. Additionally, he brought up that under Northview, the Crane Cottage Restaurant at JICR was closed. This was a closure that was viewed unfavorably by the public. He encouraged Northview to retain employees, and he expressed the need to keep the relationship between the Westin and the Convention Center intact to ensure availability of space for hotel rooms and meetings.

Curtis addressed the concerns related to the operation and changes made to JICR. He noted the Westin will be different in that Northview is planning to add opportunities and amenities to the hotel, not cut anything. He also explained that meetings and conversations have been held with employees, and they understand the current employees are key to success of the hotel.

Hooks thanked Curtis and acknowledged the positive changes Northview made to JICR including Ocean Club construction revisions, the purchase of the Wharf, and historically accurate improvements to the property.

Two motions were required for this item.

A motion to recommend approving North View Hotel Group, LLC, and its affiliate entity, NVHG Acquisitions, LLC, as the purchaser of a controlling interest in Jekyll Ocean Front Hotel, LLC, lessee under that ground lease for the Westin Jekyll Island Hotel was made by Mr. Joyner and seconded by Mr. Gross. The motion carried unanimously, with the exception of Commissioner Williams who recused himself.

A motion to recommend approving North View Hotel Group, LLC, and its affiliate entity, NVHG Westin Jekyll Hotel Operator, LLC, as the hotel management company for Jekyll Ocean Front Hotel, LLC, lessee under that ground lease for the Westin Jekyll Island Hotel was made by Mr. Joyner and seconded by Dr. Evans. The motion carried unanimously, with the exception of Commissioner Williams who recused himself.

E. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the award of RFP #370 for consideration. This RFP requested proposals from firms interested in providing JIA with a ticketing and retail point-of-sale system for several facilities and departments across JIA. After a thorough review and evaluation of all ten proposals, the evaluation team invited four bidders for interviews: Vivaticket, Accesso, Gateway Ticketing, and Centaman. Following interviews, Vivaticket emerged as the apparent finalist of the RFP.

A motion to recommend awarding RFP #370 for a ticketing and point-of-sale system to Vivaticket, pending contract negotiations and legal review was made by Mr. Gross and seconded by Mr. Joyner. The motion carried unanimously.

F. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, presented the award for RFP #371 for consideration. This RFP requested bids for the construction of the Jekyll Island Public Safety Complex. Three contractors submitted bids for the RFP: Burke Construction, iugis Construction Corporation, and Dabbs-Williams General Contractors. Jekyll Island

Authority staff and Georgia State Patrol staff graded the proposals and interviews, and the process was overseen by the Architectural staff and Principal of Jericho Design, Doug Shaw. Although all three bids were over budget, the process will move to a value engineering phase with the selected contractor to arrive at a final contract value. After careful consideration, the staff determined Dabbs-Williams General Contractors to be the most qualified to construct the Public Safety Complex.

A motion to recommend awarding RFP #371 to Dabbs-Williams General Contractor for construction of the Jekyll Island Public Safety Complex, pending contract negotiations and legal review was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Joyner. The motion carried unanimously.

G. Zach Harris, General Counsel, provided a legal update.

Pending litigation includes:

- Personal injury claims for incidences at Summer Waves and in the Historic District. All claims made against JIA are referred to the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) Risk Management Division for Investigation and Adjustment. DOAS is the insurer of all state agencies and entities. These claims are currently being investigated.
- There are two active cases involving intellectual property which are both being handled by Special Assistant Attorney Generals who have extensive litigation experience in their respective fields.
- There is ongoing lease dispute with a former lessee. It is pending in Glynn County Superior Court and is expected to go to trial if a settlement isn't reached. JIA is being represented by a Special Assistant Attorney General for this case.

Non-litigation legal matters include:

- On-going negotiations for a condominium ground lease extension.
- Improvements to the JIA leasing program in Beach Village and all non-ground business leases.
- Any action that needs to be taken following storm damage will be considered to ensure compliance with the Shore Protection Act as well as Jekyll's Conservation Plan.
- Contracts associated with 2023 employee health benefits are being reviewed and adjusted as needed.
- Interviews and audits will be scheduled with those parties who are required to maintain capital reserves under their leases.
- Agreements with major carrier partners will be adjusted to improve and update in-building distributed antenna systems in order to improved cell service in the Convention Center.
- Through discussions with all JIA departments, especially Marketing, an effort is being made to identify and evaluate Jekyll brands to establish intellectual property rights and potential trademark registrations.

H. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, provided the Operations Update highlighting the following items:

- Design for the Mercer Medical Clinic continues. Mercer has approved the floor plan, and the mechanical and electrical design is underway.
- The planned bike path rehabilitation is complete. The only two areas of bike path left to work on are the path along Driftwood Beach and the incomplete path to the Guest Information Center.

- Most decorations for Holly Jolly Jekyll are in place, including new ladybugs and peacocks that were built by JIA’s Roads and Grounds staff. There will also be a few themed decorated oak tree this season.
 - Jekyll Island Airport was used for parking during the Shrimp and Grits Festival. Staff parked up to 3,400 cars during the festival, ensuring visitors made it onto the transport busses safely and efficiently. The goal of this process is to ensure a positive experience from the time guests park their cars through when they leave.
 - Tropical Storm Nicole resulted in beach erosion and the loss of a few crossovers. The revetment is in great shape as are the dunes.
 - The vote for SPLOST 2023 passed, and the funds JIA receives over time will go towards water/sewer improvements, fishing pier improvements, and continuation of bike bath improvements.
- I. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, presented the Executive Director’s report highlighting the following items:
- JIA will be allotted \$3.1 million from SPLOST.
 - An updated fiscal impact analysis should be complete early in 2023 by the University of Georgia’s Selig Center.
 - The Pine Lakes Golf Course improvements are underway under the advisement of Clyde Johnston, who designed the current course.
 - Captain Billy Lartz with JIA Public Safety completed the Georgia Emergency Medical Services Association Leadership Program with the 2022 class.
 - Representative Jon Burns of Screven County is anticipated to become the next Speaker of the House for Georgia. Representative Burns is a JIA Legislative Oversight Committee Member.
- J. Mr. Atkins presented the Chairmans comments. He thanked all the Board members for their presence and Hooks and staff for all their efforts during Shrimp and Grits.

There were no public comments:

The Chairman continued directly into the JIA Board Meeting.

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board Meeting
November 15, 2022

The Board Meeting was called to order at 11:49 a.m., and all members were present either in-person or via teleconference.

Action Items

1. Commissioner Williams moved to accept the minutes of the October 18, 2022 Board Meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Joyner. There was no discussion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.
2. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to increase the per vehicle parking fee by \$4.00 on Friday and Saturday nights during the Holly Jolly Jekyll Season carried by unanimous approval.

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3. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to open a bank account with Ameris Bank to be used for premiums, fees, and claims related to JIA's new self-insured health insurance program carried by unanimous approval.
4. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve North View Hotel Group, LLC, and its affiliate entity, NVHG Acquisitions, LLC, as the purchaser of a controlling interest in Jekyll Ocean Front Hotel, LLC, lessee under that ground lease for the Westin Jekyll Island Hotel carried by unanimous approval, with the exception of Commissioner Williams who recused himself.
5. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve North View Hotel Group, LLC, and its affiliate entity, NVHG Westin Jekyll Hotel Operator, LLC, as the hotel management company for Jekyll Ocean Front Hotel, LLC, lessee under that ground lease for the Westin Jekyll Island Hotel carried by unanimous approval, with the exception of Commissioner Williams who recused himself.
6. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to award RFP #370 for a ticketing and point-of-sale system to Vivaticket, pending contract negotiations and legal review, carried by unanimous approval.
7. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to award RFP #371 to Dabbs-Williams General Contractor for construction of the Jekyll Island Public Safety Complex, pending contract negotiations and legal review carried by unanimous approval.

The motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Williams and seconded by Mr. Krueger. There was no objection to the motion and the meeting adjourned at 11:53 a.m.