

JEKYLL ISLAND – STATE PARK AUTHORITY  
February 21, 2023 – Approved Minutes

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) and Committees met in Public Session on Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at the Jekyll Island Convention Center and via teleconference.

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

Members Absent: Commissioner Mark Williams

Key Staff Present: Jones Hooks, Executive Director  
Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director  
Tom Alexander, Director of Historic Resources  
Faith Plazarin, Archivist  
Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer  
Brian Lee, Digital Content Manager  
Dennis Gailey, Director of Public Safety  
Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources  
Dr. Terry Norton, Director of Veterinary Services & Wildlife Health  
Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing  
Zach Harris, General Counsel  
Maria Humphrey, Lease Manager  
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 9:31 a.m. All Board members were present either in-person or via teleconference except for Commissioner Williams who was absent.

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

- A. Tom Alexander, Director of Historic Resources introduced Faith Plazarin, Archivist, to present the Collections Management Policy Update for consideration. She explained that the revised document is a requirement for national accreditation through the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (STEPS). The update to the Collections Management Policy aligns the department with current professional practices which have evolved since the policy was last updated in 2003. A few significant updates include:
- Update to mission and goals statement
  - Clarification of the scope of collections
  - Clarification of acquisition procedure
  - Update and clarification of the deaccessioning process
  - Addition of sections outlining safety procedures for both physical and digital materials

Mr. Krueger asked for clarification if best practices are currently being used by the department. Plazarin confirmed that professional standards are being utilized and that the proposed policy update reflects those current practices.

A motion to recommend approving the proposed Collections Management Policy Update was made by Dr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Joyner. The motion carried unanimously.

There were no public comments.

## **II. Finance Committee**

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

- Revenues were \$2,418,009.
- Expenses were \$2,527,960.
- Net Operating Cash Loss was \$109,951.
- Total Traffic Counts were 113,922 vehicles.
- Year-to-date Revenues reported by hotels were \$3.2 million.

B. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the request for \$238,411 to complete the section of the bike path between the Island and the Guest Information Center. She noted that the requested funds would be appropriated from the Tourism Development Fund and combined with the \$150,000 that was approved at the January 2023 Board meeting. She further explained that after requesting \$150,000 in January 2023 to complete the causeway bike path, accounting staff determined that \$234,000 had not been removed from an internal tracking spreadsheet. This amount should have been removed in January 2022 when those funds were reallocated from the causeway bike path to rehabilitating bike path sections G and I, and because of this previous reallocation, the \$234,000 was no longer available to fund the completion of the causeway bike path, leaving a need for \$238,411 to complete the \$388,411 project.

A motion to recommend approving the request for \$238,411 to fund the completion of the causeway bike path section between the Island and the Guest Information Center as recommended by staff, was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Joyner. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Brian Lee, Digital Content Manager presented the request for \$365,500 for the installation and implementation of a Ticketing and Point of Sale System through Vivaticket. After a thorough Request for Proposal (RFP) process and an extensive review of eleven proposals, Vivaticket was selected as the apparent winner, and the Board awarded the RFP to Vivaticket at the November 2022 meeting.

Vivaticket's system will extend JIA's capabilities and provide numerous efficiencies across sales and reporting. With the new system, JIA will be able to unite online and in-person sales into one unified system for ticketing and merchandise, and along with an improved transaction experience for customers, JIA will also have the ability to extend partnerships with hospitality partners to sell tickets and experiences for JIA amenities.

Lee noted that the Vivaticket system meets JIA's current needs and has the capabilities to grow with JIA as needs change. The requested funds would be appropriated from current year

income and combined with the allotted \$170,000 to fund the total one-time cost of \$535,500. The scheduled launch of the new system will be January 2024.

Jones Hooks, Executive Director, further noted that Lee and the committee comprised of staff representatives from several departments have spent months researching systems and have had hours of discussions with different vendors. Additionally, Lee has spoken to clients of Vivaticket and became aware of their positive experiences with the vendor.

Mr. Krueger inquired about the support and training offered by Vivaticket as well as software upgrades offered. Lee confirm that Vivaticket would be on Island to train staff prior to launch of the system and support access will continue after the launch as well. The vendor will also provide two major updates each year.

Mr. Joyner inquired if Shopify was considered as a vendor and if staff considered any plug-ins they may be able to offer as support. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, confirmed that JIA currently uses Shopify for online retail and will continue to use their software for e-commerce. Lee further explained that staff did explore existing plug-ins with Shopify that were potential contenders, but ultimately Vivaticket's software offered the better solution for JIA.

A motion to recommend approving the request for \$365,500 to fund the installation and implementation of the ticketing and point-of-sale system as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Willard and seconded by Mr. Krueger. All present Board members voted to accept the recommendation, except for Mr. Joyner who opposed.

D. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the 2023 Georgia Trauma Commission Grant for consideration. She explained that the Jekyll Island Fire Department was awarded a non-competitive grant from the Georgia Trauma Commission in the amount of \$1,531.92. The awarded funds must be used to fund the purchase of supplies and equipment that support the department's response to trauma related emergencies. Staff has selected two rescue stretchers to be used for confined space, high-angle, or technical rescues. The total cost of the stretchers equals \$1,659.96, leaving a balance of \$128.04 to be paid by the JIA.

A motion to recommend accepting the grant award from the Georgia Trauma Commission in the amount of \$1,531.92 as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Willard and seconded by Mr. Joyner. The motion carried unanimously.

There were no public comments.

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

Buster Evans, Chair

A. Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources, announced Dr. Terry Norton's retirement. Dr. Norton is the Director of Veterinary Services and Wildlife Health and has given more than fifteen years of service to the Jekyll Island Authority through his commitment to the Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC).

Jones Hooks, Executive Director, continued highlighting how Dr. Norton is not only recognized within Georgia and the Coastal Region, but he is also known internationally as an expert in turtle rehabilitation and other wildlife endeavors. Hooks added that Dr. Norton created the vision

behind the GSTC. Hooks also announced a reception will be held for Terry to honor his work and dedication to the Center.

Dr. Norton thanked Mr. Hooks and the Board for their support, stating that his time with the GSTC was a highlight of his career, and though bittersweet to leave, he believes the Center is in good hands and will continue to thrive.

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

- A. Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing, presented the report from the Marketing Department, highlighting the following items:
- JIA's 2022 Progress Report was presented to the Board. The annual report highlights the Authority's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Hawkins expressed her appreciation for her team and JIA's Creative Director for designing exceptional reports each year.
  - The 2023 Jekyll Island Visitor Guide is complete and will be delivered to hotel properties and the guest information center.
  - Georgia's 2023 State Travel Guide highlights Jekyll Island by including a classic photo of Driftwood Beach on one of four of the special covers. Each of the covers features a desired Georgia destination.
  - The Marketing team worked with a writer from *Travel & Leisure* for their "Best Hidden Gems of 2023" feature, and the story was highlighted on *Live with Kelly & Ryan*. The brief clip was shared with the Board.
  - Peter Millar filmed its spring campaign in October 2022, and the final campaign video was shared with the Board, which includes an ariel shot of the preserved beach prairie area.
- B. Hawkins then discussed the Tourism Awards ceremony held at the Georgia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus' (CVB) annual conference. Prior to the conference, the JIA Marketing team submitted a nomination to recognize an individual for his outstanding work contributing to Jekyll's Revitalization. Through this nomination, Dave Curtis of Leon N. Weiner & Associates, Inc was awarded the Bill Hardman Sr. Product Development Tourism Champion Award. Curtis has been involved in revitalizing Jekyll since the 1980's when he was appointed by Leon Weiner to secure private investments that would be used to restore the deteriorating Jekyll Island Club. Since then, Curtis has contributed to more than \$190 million in private investments which has led to increased property values on Jekyll. The award is named in honor of Bill Hardeman Sr. recognizing the tireless support and guidance he provided to the tourism industry. Award recipients are individuals who have taken leadership roles in developing tourism opportunities in communities across Georgia and more specifically, those who have done an outstanding job in attracting capital investments.

Jones Hooks, Executive Director, added that Curtis was not only involved in restoring the Jekyll Club Resort but he also contributed to other properties on Jekyll including the Hampton Inn, Westin, Marriott Courtyard/Residence Inn, Ocean Oaks, as well as a future project north of the Marriott. Hooks noted that Curtis has believed in Jekyll and has made others believe in Jekyll, resulting in investments and public private partnerships. Hooks expressed his gratitude for Curtis's dedication to Jekyll Island.

Dave Curtis expressed his love for Jekyll Island and how grateful he is that Jekyll has been such a significant part of his career. He thanked Hooks, the JIA, Kevin Runner, and Vance Hughes for their collaboration throughout the years.

There were no public comments.

## **V. Legislative Committee**

A. Mr. Willard, Legislative Committee Chair, provided a brief update for the on-going State 2023 legislative session, highlighting the following actions and discussions:

- 23 bills have passed both the House and the Senate, and 500 resolutions have been written.
- The House Means and Ways Committee unanimously voted in favor of an income tax rebate for Georgia residents.
- Buckhead has requested to become an official city.
- The Senate approved the State taking over the federally operated healthcare.gov insurance exchange.
- The Tough on Crime Senate Bill 63 advanced from the Public Safety Committee.
- A bill banning the use of TikTok, WeChat, and telegram on state employee devices was proposed.

Hooks added that the \$1.5 million for the Jekyll Public Safety Complex remains in the FY2023 Amended Budget and the Senate Appropriations Committee will now consider the supplemental budget.

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

A. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, presented RFP #373 for a Pickleball Center and Operator. The Board previously approved \$30,000 for a study to determine how to incorporate pickleball on Jekyll. While researching the appropriate group to conduct a pickleball study, staff had encouraging discussions with architects, non-profits, and constructors of pickleball facilities. These discussions have resulted in formulating RFP 373 for a developer, owner, and operator that would invest and provide an enhanced pickleball experience on Jekyll Island while saving the \$30,000 devoted to the study for any infrastructure required for the facility.

A motion to recommend issuing RFP #373 to engage a developer/owner/operator of a Pickleball complex on Jekyll Island was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Dr. Evans. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Zach Harris, General Counsel presented a loan for Days Inn for consideration. Pursuant to the Ground Lease, Budget Motels, Inc., owns the Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham, located at 60 South Beachview Drive. The lessee, Budget Motels, Inc., seeks to undertake a loan from PrimeSouth Bank in the amount of \$6,000,000 and pledge as collateral its leasehold interest in the Days Inn. Pursuant to the Ground Lease, any new loan on the Days Inn is subject to prior approval by JIA. Charles Woodruff with PrimeSouth Bank was present for questions.

A motion to recommend approving the Lessee's (Budget Motels, Inc.), undertaking of a loan from PrimeSouth Bank in the amount of \$6,000,000 collateralized by the Lessee's leasehold interest in the Days Inn was made by Mr. Gross and seconded by Mr. Krueger. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Maria Humphrey, Lease Manager requested a completion date extension for the Moorings at Jekyll Harbor. The ground lease with The Moorings at Jekyll Harbor, LLC for the

Moorings commenced on November 21, 2019. The ground lease requires the lessee to substantially complete the Residential Units within 30 months after the commencement date, May 21, 2022. The Board voted at its June 2020 meeting to extend the substantial completion date to January 20, 2023, due to unforeseen disruptions and delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The lessee requested an additional six months through July 20, 2023 to complete the residential units due to ongoing supply chain problems, specifically the delay in receiving required elevator parts. A six-month extension would not prevent the lessee from completing the project before July 20, 2023, and lessee's development team anticipates completing the project sooner than the full six months and reports it has closed on approximately 26 units to date. There are 22 units left to close with 21 of those units being in the last building nearing completion. All remaining units are under contract and the lessee is motivated to complete this project.

A motion to recommend approving the requested 6-month extension of The Moorings residential unit completion date to July 20, 2023 was made by Mr. Joyner and seconded by Mr. Willard. The motion carried unanimously.

- D. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, presented the schematic design for Anchor Restaurant at Jekyll Holiday Inn for consideration. He reminded the Board they approved the site plan at the January meeting, and the concept plan was approved at the October 2022 meeting. The proposed facility will replace the current pool bar at the hotel. Additionally, the hotel representatives are aware of the need to be turtle friendly concerning lighting, and they are already engaged in discussions with DNR. DRG members have reviewed and approved the schematic design as presented, and the design development plan will be presented at the March Board meeting.

A motion to recommend approving the schematic design for the Anchor Restaurant at Jekyll Holiday Inn Resort was made by Mr. Joyner and seconded by Mr. Krueger. The motion carried unanimously.

- E. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, presented the schematic design for Hilton Tapestry Beachview Club Hotel for consideration. The concept plan for this expansion was approved at the October 2022 Board meeting and the site plan at the January 2023 meeting. In addition to the schematic design, a sheet with the interior room layout was provided to the Board for reference. Hooks reminded the Board that this property will have a total of 76 rooms. DRG members have reviewed and approved the schematic design as presented, and the design development plan will be presented at the March Board meeting.

A motion to recommend approving the schematic design for the Hilton Tapestry Beachview Club Hotel was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Joyner. The motion carried unanimously.

- F. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director presented a status update on Public Safety Complex since the construction project was awarded to Dabbs Williams Contractors, LLC. Since the award was issued, JIA has worked with Dabbs Williams through two rounds of value engineering (VE) to lower the cost without compromising the form and function of the facility. Dabbs Williams found \$1.179 million worth of VE. Examples of VE used on this project are changes in manufacturers, redesign of certain elements that do not change the operational functionality of the project, and removal of scope that could be installed in a phased construction effort. More specifically, this includes replacing brick veneer with stucco, replacing the proposed fast opening doors with standard roll up doors in the back of the

building, removal a few wall coverings and accent walls, removing an epoxy floor treatment and replacing it with a high polish, and downgrading lighting fixtures. The result of the VE effort has reduced the building construction cost from \$8,345,000 to \$7,116,000, which will be the amount included on the contract to be issued to Dabbs Williams.

Hooks added that he met with the House Appropriations Committee staff in Atlanta after the second round of VE, and they encouraged JIA to include all essential functions of the facility, such as a generator, in the requested total now rather than asking for additional funding in another budget cycle.

G. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, presented the Operations Update noting the following:

- JIA staff is installing bioswales at the Public Safety Complex site. The shapes of these bioswales have been adjusted from the original plans to better fit in the natural environment. Construction activity by Dabbs Williams is scheduled to begin in March.
- The Mercer Clinic has completed the design phase, and a construction permit should be issued this month.
- The Campground Expansion is moving to the next phase of infrastructure. Brand new water and sewer lines will be installed which will benefit not just the expansion but the existing campground as well, providing more dependable water and sewer service.
- The same contractor will simultaneously be working on crossover repairs and the Mosaic Paddock. Crossover repairs will begin at the end of this month. Delays were caused by contractors lacking staff and the challenging tide schedule. When the tide is high, the contractor will work on the vertical structure outside of the Mosaic.
- The steps at Glory Beach Boardwalk are consistently overtaken by sand, so instead of trying to clear the steps, no action will be taken in hopes that in approximately two years, sand accretion will cover the boardwalk, creating a natural ADA compliant site.

H. Jones Hooks, Executive Director, presented the Executive Director's report which included the following highlights:

- Larry's Giant Subs has opened in the Beach Village.
- A tentative schedule provided by GDOT for the causeway bike path project lists a February 2026 as the let contract date.
- Lieutenant Governor Burt Jones has appointed Senator Blake Tillery, Senator Mike Hodges, and Senator Billy Hickman to serve on the JIA Oversight Committee. House members have not yet been appointed.
- The Arbor Day Foundation has recognized Jekyll Island as a 2022 Tree City USA.
- A new vet has been hired for the GSTC. Dr. Shane Boylan will serve as the Vet Medical Officer and report to Michelle Kaylor, Director of GSTC. Dr. Boylan brings seventeen years of experience in aquatics and zoological medicine.

Hooks then announced his intent to retire at the conclusion of the current fiscal year, June 30, 2023. He reflected on his past fifteen years as Executive Director, noting that he was hired to revitalize Jekyll, establish a credible conservation effort, establish partnerships with the private sector to improve cost effectiveness, and to establish a viable Foundation. Hooks is proud of achieving these goals along with additional improvements to Jekyll Island's operations, infrastructure, and facilities. He thanked the Board and private sector partners for their support and the staff for their commitment to assuring Jekyll's character remains intact now and in the future. Projects Hooks plans to have underway before his departure include the FY 2024 budget, public safety facility, Mercer Medical Clinic, and RFP's for the Golf Improvement Plan.

- I. Dale Atkins, Chairman, wished Hooks the best for his future. He noted that under Hooks' leadership millions of dollars' worth of capital improvements have been accomplished, and Atkins praised his ability to balance the residents and tourists of Jekyll Island. Atkins also highlighted the tremendous staff that Hooks has assembled that will aid the next Director.

The other Board members celebrated Hooks's accomplishments and the positive changes that have been implemented under his direction.

Atkins noted that the Board has been provided a draft job description as part of the process to find the next Executive Director.

There were no public comments:

The Chairman continued directly into the JIA Board Meeting.

### **The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board Meeting** **February 21, 2023**

The Board Meeting was called to order at 10:53 a.m., and all members were present either in-person or via teleconference, except for Commissioner Williams who was absent.

#### **Action Items**

1. Mr. Krueger moved to accept the minutes of the January 17, 2023 Board Meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Willard. There was no discussion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.
2. The recommendation from the Historic Resources Committee to approve the proposed Collections Management Policy Update as recommended by staff carried by unanimous approval.
3. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to approve the request for \$238,411 to fund the completion of the causeway bike path section between the island and the Guest Information Center as recommended by staff carried by unanimous approval.
4. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to approve the request for \$365,500 to fund the installation and implementation of the ticketing and point-of-sale system as recommended by staff was approved by all present Board Members, except for Mr. Joyner who opposed.
5. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to accept the grant award from the Georgia Trauma Commission in the amount of \$1,531.92 as recommended by staff carried by unanimous approval.
6. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to release RFP#373 to engage a developer/owner/operator of a Pickleball complex on Jekyll Island carried by unanimous approval.

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7. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the Lessee's (Budget Motels, Inc.), undertaking of a loan from PrimeSouth Bank in the amount of \$6,000,000 collateralized by the Lessee's leasehold interest in the Days Inn carried by unanimous approval.
8. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the requested 6-month extension of The Moorings residential unit completion date to July 20, 2023 carried by unanimous approval.
9. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the schematic design for the Anchor Restaurant at Jekyll Holiday Inn Resort carried by unanimous approval.
10. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the schematic design for the Hilton Tapestry Beachview Club Hotel carried by unanimous approval.

The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Joyner. There was no objection to the motion and the meeting adjourned at 10:58 a.m.