

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board of Directors met in Public Session Tuesday, September 19, 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  
Dr. Buster Evans  
Ms. Joy Burch-Meeks  
Commissioner Walter Rabon (Via Teleconference)  
Mr. Joseph B. Wilkinson Jr. (Via Teleconference)  
Mr. Glen Willard (Via Teleconference)  
Ruel Joyner (Via Teleconference)

Key Staff Present: Mark Williams, Executive Director  
Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director  
Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer  
Yank Moore, Director of Conservation  
Michelle Kaylor, Director of Georgia Sea Turtle Center  
Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources  
Zachary Harris, General Counsel  
Alexa Hawkins, Director of Communications & Marketing  
Anna Trapp, Executive Assistant

Chairman Dale Atkins, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. All members were present in-person or via teleconference.

JIA received one online public comment for this meeting:

- Jon Stevenson – Splash Pad and Blue Book

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

Bob Krueger, Chair

- A. Yank Moore, Director of Conservation, presented Jekyll Island’s 2023 Community Wildfire Protection Plan. He first provided background information on the plan noting that Jekyll Island became a Firewise Community in 2009 and developed a Prescribed Fire Management Plan in 2014. Following a wildfire at Jekyll Island’s entrance gates in 2017, the JIA increased the prioritization of fire management and the allocation of resources towards prescribed fire and forest management. In 2018 Jekyll Island worked with Glynn County as part of their Community Wildfire Protection Plan which was organized by the Georgia Forestry Commission. However, due to the uniqueness of Jekyll Island, the JIA decided to create its own detailed protection plan. A few highlights of the plan include:
- Set guidelines for allocation of resources.
  - Prioritization of new firebreaks and fuel management.
  - Recognition of risks associated with prescribed fire on Jekyll Island.
  - Guidance on how to manage the different habitats and ecosystems on Jekyll.
  - Outlines best practices for fire management.

- Includes an action plan, providing a direct approach to address each issue that may arise.
- Establishment of the plan allows the JIA to apply for funding from FEMA, USDA programs, and U.S. Forest Service.

B. Michelle Kaylor, Director of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center presented an update on the GSTC operations highlighting the following programs:

Sea Turtle Nesting Season

- Jekyll had 217 sea turtle nests this year, and over 10,000 hatchlings emerged, making it the 2<sup>nd</sup> busiest nesting season on record.
- Thanks to genetic work completed in collaboration with the University of Georgia, it was determined that over 60 unique loggerhead sea turtles nested on Jekyll Island this season.
- 8 sea turtles were rehabbed and released.

Diamondback Terrapin Conservation

- 447 females were encountered on the causeway.
- 12 injured terrapins were rehabbed.
- 240 eggs were incubated resulting in 132 hatchlings. The GSTC will house 20 of those hatchlings through the winter, and the remaining will be released into the marsh this season.

Education Programs

- 1,061 programs were held in the center with 36,000 attendees learning about the conservation efforts on Jekyll Island.
- 1,035 guests participated in the offered beach programs that gives guests the opportunity to experience seeing a sea turtle nesting or turtle hatchlings. 40% of those participated in turtle walks and 60% completed the ride along turtle patrol.
- 2023 was the 2<sup>nd</sup> best Adopt-a-Nest year since its inception in 2013. With a \$30 donation that goes back to the GSTC, any guest can adopt a nest and track its progress through the season.

There were no public comments.

**II. Finance Committee**

Bill Gross, Chair

- A. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair, summarized the August Financials including an overview of Revenues, Expenses, Net Operating Cash, Traffic Statistics, and Hotel Revenues for the month.
- Revenues were \$4,279,682.
  - Expenses were \$2,642,053.
  - Net Operating Cash Income was \$1,637,629.

- Total Traffic Counts were 102,594 vehicles.
- Year-to-date hotel revenues totaled \$51.3 million.

B. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the request to accept a grant from Southern Tennis Association (USTA Southern). The grant totals \$500, with no matching funds required, and can be used to offset costs for food and supplies during National Tennis Month events. The Tennis Center will use the funds to support a happy hour event at the Southern Clay Court East Tournament.

A motion to recommend accepting the grant totaling \$500 from the Southern Tennis Association as presented by staff, was made by Dr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Krueger. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the capital project request for a splash pad at Jekyll Island Beach Village. She explained that the firepit unit at the Beach Village has eroded due to the salt air exposure, it requires complete restoration. As an alternative, staff recommends replacing the unit with a 45' x 45' recirculating Splash Pad that is more suited to the climate on Jekyll Island. The proposed Splash Pad will feature a variety of interactive water features including fountains, water jets and LED lighting. A new Splash Pad will offer a safe and enjoyable water feature for families and will operate year-round beginning in the Spring of 2024. The estimated cost of the Splash Pad, UV treatment system, and lighting for this project is \$450,000. Funding for this project will come from the Beach Village Event fund and the Public Improvement fund.

Ms. Burch-Meeks asked what other options were considered for the location and why a Splash Pad was considered the best option. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director explained the options were to either refurbish the fire pit or implement a splash pad. JIA staff consulted with the Westin and Beach Village shop owners, and the consensus was that a more family friendly feature was preferred to increase visitor activation in that area.

Mr. Krueger asked how close the Splash Pad would be to the pedestrian walkways in Beach Village. Jensen explained that the Splash Pad would be in the middle of the Village green with grassy area on either side for families to enjoy.

Mark Williams, Executive Director, added that during the short winter periods when the Splash Pad is inactive, the area can be walked across or used as event space.

A motion to recommend approving the Capital Project Request totaling \$450,000 for a Beach Village Splash Pad as recommended by staff, was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Dr. Evans. Ms. Burch-Meeks abstained from the vote, and all other members voted in favor of the motion.

There was one public comment:

- Al Tate, a Jekyll Island resident, spoke against the proposed Splash Pad. Noting the funds required for the project could be used elsewhere to better serve Jekyll Island's mission to educate.

**III. Human Resources Committee**

Buster Evans, Chair

- A. Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources, presented the Retirement Presentation for Danny Sheppard. Sheppard has worked in JIA's facility department as the Carpentry Supervisor for 26 and a half years.

Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, spoke to Danny's time with the Authority noting that he has worked on almost every carpentry project on Jekyll Island, big and small. He highlighted Danny's master craftsmanship and the quality in his carpentry work. Jensen congratulated Sheppard on his retirement and wished him and his family the best.

There were no public comments.

**IV. Marketing Committee**

Joy Burch-Meeks, Chair

- A. Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing & Communications, presented a department report which included a summary of media highlights and announcements.

- Rick Reichmuth with Fox & Friends highlighted Jekyll Island and the Georgia Sea Turtle Center through four live broadcasting segments.
- The Atlanta Journal-Constitution featured the sea turtle hatchings on Jekyll Island, noting that the patrols offered by the GSTC are a one-of-a-kind opportunity.
- Holly Jolly Jekyll has gone through a small rebrand with more emphasis on the lights in the branding artwork.
- A giveaway of a Holly Jolly Holiday was launched on social media August 16<sup>th</sup>- 31<sup>st</sup>. From this, JIA received 14,169 new email subscribers and 6,086 new social media followers.
- The Fall/Winter 2023 issue of the 31•81 magazine will be on island in October and hit mailboxes shortly after that.
- In addition to this publication, 31•81 will become A Jekyll Island Lifestyle Brand to include various merchandise sold online and on island.

There were no public comments.

**V. Legislative Committee**

Glen Willard, Chair

No Report

**VI. Committee of the Whole**

Dale Atkins, Chair

- A. Zach Harris, General Counsel, presented the First Reading of Codified JIA Ordinances. Through the engagement of a consultant, GMC, a consolidated and revised code of ordinances was approved by the Board in June 2022, and a greenspace ordinance was established and approved in October 2022. Since that approval, the revised ordinances needed reformatting to fit Municode.com, JIA's code hosting provider. The presented

codified form of the ordinances is substantively the same as what was approved in 2022. These ordinances will be posted online and open for public comment from September 19<sup>th</sup> to September 29<sup>th</sup>.

B. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, presented an Operations update, highlighting the following:

- Hurricane Idalia did come through Jekyll Island, but thanks to JIA crew and staff, the Island had a quick recovery. Roads and Ground and Landscaping staff has collected approximately 16,500 cubic yards of debris following the storm. There's more debris left to be picked up, but compared to Hurricanes Matthew and Irma, Idalia resulted in far less debris.
- Mercer Medical Clinic on Jekyll Island opened on September 18, 2023, as a soft opening, and the ribbon cutting is scheduled for Friday, September 27<sup>th</sup>.
- A new cell tower has been erected, and three carriers, Verizon, T-Mobile, and AT&T will move to this tower once the contracts are complete. The purpose of this new cell tower was to remove the carriers from the water tower which has amassed over \$800,000 in damages.
- The Golf Improvement Plan is progressing. Two site visits have been completed by the golf course architects, and a preliminary concept has been delivered. The architects are members of the Walter Travis Society and are committed to ensuring the course returns to what Walter Travis envisioned in his 1927 design.
- The three SPLOST 2022 approved projects include safety improvements at the fishing pier, rehabilitation of the driftwood beach bike path, and a wastewater survey. The wastewater survey is partially funded by the JIA and is on-going. Every single piece of sewer main on Jekyll Island is being viewed with a camera, cleaned, and inspected. There have been a few areas discovered that have intruding roots. Those areas as well as other areas in poor condition will be repaired. The survey allows issues to be isolated and repaired instead of replacing an entire line.
- The Public Safety Complex construction has gone vertical and continues.

Dr. Evans inquired about a previous RFP that was issued for a pickleball complex. Jensen explained that several site visits were conducted but no one submitted a responsive bid. The RFP will be rereleased within the next year.

C. Mark Williams, Executive Director, presented his report highlighting the following:

- There was Colonel's Island Terminal substation power outage that impacted Jekyll Island on September 17<sup>th</sup>. He thanked Georgia Power for the constant and consistent updates leading up power being restored.
- He thanked Noel Jensen for staying on the Island during Hurricane Idalia and prioritizing getting the Island operational by the next day. The campground guests were able to return on Thursday, the GSTC was open by noon, and Mosaic was open during their normal hours of operation.
- Williams participated in a panel at the Convention Center for the Governor's Tourism Conference.
- Staff has been diligently preparing for both the Shrimp & Grits Festival and Holly Jolly Jekyll.

- A meeting was held with Jekyll Island’s Citizens Association president, Tim Kinsey, and additional meetings with other Jekyll Island associations such as Rotary and the Arts Association are scheduled.
- Walter Rabon has been announced as the permanent Commissioner for DNR.

D. Dale Atkins, Chair, thanked Mark and other staff members for their reports.

There were no public comments.

**The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board Meeting**  
**September 19, 2023**

The Board Meeting was called to order at 10:39 a.m., and all members were present in-person or via teleconference.

**Action Items**

1. Mr. Krueger moved to accept the minutes of the August 15, 2023 Board Meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gross. There was no discussion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.
2. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to accept a grant totaling \$500 from the Southern Tennis Association as presented by staff carried by unanimous approval.
3. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to approve the proposed Capital Project Request totaling \$450,000 for a Beach Village Splash Pad as presented by staff carried by unanimous approval, except for Ms. Burch-Meeks who abstained.

The motion to adjourn the Board Meeting was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Gross. There was no objection to the motion and the meeting adjourned at 10:41 a.m.