

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board of Directors met in Public Session Tuesday, October 17, 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  
Mr. Joseph B. Wilkinson Jr.  
Mr. Ruel Joyner  
Commissioner Walter Rabon (Via Teleconference)  
Ms. Joy Burch-Meeks (Via Teleconference)  
Mr. Glen Willard (Via Teleconference)

Key Staff Present: Mark Williams, Executive Director  
Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director  
Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer  
Zachary Harris, General Counsel  
Alexa Hawkins, Director of Communications & Marketing  
Brian O’Neal, Director of Retail Operations  
Anna Trapp, Executive Assistant

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

Chairman Dale Atkins, called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. All members were present in-person or via teleconference.

JIA received two online public comments for this meeting:

- Tim Kinsey – Mix and Mingle with Jekyll Island Citizens Association
- Cheryl Peavyhouse – Shops of Pier Road

**I. Historic Preservation/Conservation Committee**

Bob Krueger, Chair

No report

**II. Finance Committee**

Bill Gross, Chair

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

- Revenues were \$3,575,008.
- Expenses were \$2,859,209.
- Net Operating Cash Income was \$715,799.
- Total Traffic Counts were 98,543 vehicles.
- Calendar year-to-date hotel revenues totaled \$57 million.

- B. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the request to accept a grant from Georgia Tennis Association (USTA Southern). The grant totals \$1000, with no matching funds required, and can be used to offset the cost of trophies for USTA Southern tennis tournaments that are held at the Jekyll Island Tennis Center.

A motion to recommend accepting the grant totaling \$1000 from the Georgia Tennis Association as presented by staff, was made by Mr. Wilkinson and seconded by Mr. Joyner. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Buster Evans, Chair

No report

### **IV. Marketing Committee**

Joy Burch-Meeks, Chair

- A. Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing & Communications, presented a department report which included an overview of upcoming events.

- The 2023 Shrimp & Grits Festival will be held on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. The Tams will return to perform, and there will be Fireworks on Friday night. Additionally, several restaurants local to Jekyll Island and Glynn County will be featuring their shrimp and grits recipes.

Also, as previously discussed, the festival has transitioned from a three-day festival to a two-day festival. Reasons for this shift include vendors often selling out of merchandise by Sunday and JIA staffing constraints. Historically, the entire JIA staff works tirelessly up to the event, continues, working Friday, Saturday, and Sunday during the festival, and returns to normal operating hours on Monday. Switching to a two-day festival will relieve some of those staffing restraints.

- Holly Jolly Jekyll will kick off on November 24<sup>th</sup> when all the Christmas lights on Jekyll Island are turned on, followed by the Cold-Stunned Plunge on November 25<sup>th</sup>. The season will continue through January 7<sup>th</sup>. Events and activities through the season include the Winter Carnival and Big Truck Roundup, Holly Jolly Jekyll Light Parade, Holiday Drive-In Movies, Fireworks, plus Holly Jolly Light Tours, Peppermint Land, Holly Jolly Trading Post, and more. The official website for the season is [www.jekyllisland.com/holiday](http://www.jekyllisland.com/holiday).

There were no public comments.

### **V. Legislative Committee**

Glen Willard, Chair

No Report

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

Dale Atkins, Chair

- A. Alexa Hawkins presented the award of RFP #378 for Public Relations Agency Services to Lou Hammond Group - Atlanta (LHG), for consideration. RFP #378 sought a firm to support JIA's strategic national and regional media relations and public relations priorities, to cohesively represent Jekyll Island, the Jekyll Island Authority and its amenity facilities, and business partners on the island. JIA received fifteen proposals ranked through a series of seven categories and thirteen questions and criteria. The top three firms were interviewed, and the interview committee selected Lou Hammond Group – Atlanta as the evident winner. LHG impressed the committee with their in-depth knowledge of Jekyll Island's mission and vision and the long-term strategic needs for balancing visitation and operations through earned media coverage. Julie Hong the Senior Account Executive with LHG was present at the meeting.

A motion to recommend awarding RFP # 378 for Public Relations Agency Services to Lou Hammond Group - Atlanta as recommended by staff, was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Gross. The motion carried unanimously.

- B. Brian O'Neal, Director of Retail Operations, presented a Retail Operations Update. JIA operates ten retail locations across the island. During fiscal year 2023, the combined sales for these shops totaled \$4.4 million. Over the past ten years retail has added \$2.5 million in sales and has averaged a 13.9% increase in sales for every year over the past decade.

O'Neal then discussed several retail operations in more detail:

- The Georgia Sea Turtle Center (GSTC) gained over \$1 million in sales since 2013 and set a record high month in July 2023 with sales over \$286,000. 2023 was the first summer that the GSTC implemented timed-ticketing, and this change resulted in an improved shopping experience for guests.
- The Guest Information Center (GIC) had a record year for the fiscal year 2023 with \$587,000 in sales, beating the previous year's sales by 22%.
- The Mosaic Gift Shop recorded their highest volume year with \$460,000 in sales for fiscal year 2023, and revenues were 60% over the projected budget. In March 2023, the Mosaic set its the record for its highest monthly sales totaling \$54,000.
- The 2022 Shrimp & Grits Festival tent set the record for Shrimp & Grits sales, beating 2019 sales by 45.8%. The tent averaged \$4,753 in sales every hour of operation totaling \$109,337.25.

O'Neal ended his report with his fiscal year 2024 goals for JIA's Retail Division.

- Continue to improve the customer service standards in every JIA retail location.
- Continue to add more USA-made and recycled products into JIA operated stores.
- Continue hiring employees that are driven by sales and motivated to deliver exceptional customer service.
- Increase the Georgia Sea Turtle Center Gift Shop sales to over \$2 million.
- Increase the retail division's total sales to over \$5 million.

- C. Zach Harris, General Counsel, presented the second and final reading of the Codification JIA’s Ordinances. Following the first reading, a public comment period ran from September 19, 2023 through September 29, 2023, and no public comments were received.

This codification reformats the ordinances approved by the Board in 2022 so that the ordinances can be properly hosted on CivicPlus, formerly known as Municode. These reformatted ordinances include Ordinance No. O-2022-1 amending, restating, and revising the Code of Ordinances of the Jekyll Island State Park Authority and Ordinance No. O-2022-2 establishing a greenspace ordinance.

A motion to recommend codifying O-2022-1 and O-2022-2 as recommended by staff, was made by Mr. Gross and seconded by Mr. Joyner. The motion carried unanimously.

Additionally, Harris explained that adoption of a resolution codifying these ordinances would be appropriate.

A motion to recommend adopting Resolution R-2023-2 as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Joyner and seconded by Mr. Gross. The motion carried unanimously.

- D. Zach Harris, General Counsel, presented the lease assignment for 41 Main Street Suite 103 to Corridor Z Hospitality, LLC for consideration. Suite 103 in the Beach Village is the former location of the Juke Joint restaurant, and in July 2023 the Board approved assignment of the lease to Dipan Patel’s entity BA Jekyll Restaurant, LLC. Mr. Patel has negotiated the acquisition of the Restaurant and Lease by D.J. Zachry, a restaurateur and owner of Zachry’s Riverhouse on Jekyll Island, through his company, Corridor Z Hospitality, LLC, a Georgia limited liability company. Mr. Zachry proposes to operate a full-service restaurant at the Premises, subject to the customary naming, construction, and design approvals by JIA. Other than agreeing to allow Mr. Zachry to open by December 1, 2023, all other substantive terms of the Lease will remain in effect.

A motion to recommend approving the lease assignment for 41 Main Street Suite 103 to Corridor Z Hospitality, LLC as recommended by staff was made by Dr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Gross. The motion carried unanimously.

- E. Zach Harris, General Counsel, presented the lease amendment with Seaside Food Company DBA Larry’s Giant Subs for consideration. The proposed amendment will remove the exclusion of alcoholic beverages from the Permitted Use, allowing the sale of beer and wine at the restaurant.

A motion to recommend approving the first amendment to the commercial lease agreement with Seaside Food Company Inc. for the operation of Larry’s Giant Subs in the Beach Village as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Joyner. The motion carried unanimously.

- F. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, presented a Schematic Design Variance for the residential development, located at the former Buccaneer site, to be constructed by LNWA Developers LLC and Retreat Hotels and Resorts, LLC. The Board approved the

schematic design drawings at the August 15, 2023, Board meeting, but since then, Retreat Hotels and Resorts submitted a request to reduce the width of the main streets from 26 feet wide to 20 feet wide. After a review of the applicable International Fire Code sections, the Design Review Group (DRG) determined that a request for variance could be given if, as mitigation to that request, all residences will be constructed with residential fire sprinkler systems.

A motion to recommend approving the schematic design variance requested by Retreat Hotels and Resorts as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Gross. The motion carried unanimously.

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

- The Public Safety Complex is currently about 30% complete, with 100% completion expected at the end of August 2024.
- A new restroom facility is being built at the South Dunes picnic area with the same footprint of the new campground bathhouses with a few adjustments including replacing the shower rooms with a large porch that will overlook a pond. The former restrooms will be gutted and used as a covered pavilion.
- In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, JIA participated in an externship program with Glynn County schools. This program allowed JIA staff to meet with teachers and administrators in the school system to highlight careers on Jekyll Island that do not require a traditional college degree.
- Christmas lights are going up and will be complete in the next six weeks.
- The University of Georgia (UGA) will operate a weather station on Jekyll Island that will measure rain, wind, and soil temperatures. The station will be located at the Jekyll Island airport. The data gathered will be shared on UGA's website <http://www.georgiaweather.net/> beginning in December 2023.

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

- Mercer Medicine Jekyll Island held its ribbon cutting ceremony on Friday, September 29<sup>th</sup>. Mercer University's President, William Underwood attended along with many others.
- The Convention Center was quite busy during September. Groups included the Governor's Tourism Conference, GA Dept. of Behavioral Health, GA Association of Broadcasters, GA Commission on Family Violence, United Advanced Practice Registered Nurses of Georgia, Georgia Municipal Association's Robert E. Knox, Jr. Municipal Leadership Institute, Electric Cities of GA's Economic Development Summit, plus a few weddings and other smaller groups.
- The Banana Open was held at the Jekyll Island Tennis Center the last weekend in September.
- Jones the Sea Turtle, named after former Executive Director Jones Hooks, was released back into the ocean on September 28<sup>th</sup>.
- In collaboration with the Jekyll Island Citizen Association's President, Tim Kinsey, a Meet & Greet was held at the Mosaic which allowed residents to meet Mr. Williams and participate in a Q&A session.

- The hiring process for the Senior Director of Amenities is underway. Phone interviews are on-going with selected candidates moving on to in-person interviews.

Mr. Williams then provided an overview of the on-going discussions regarding the Historic Shops on Pier Road.

- On September 21, 2023, an expiration reminder was sent out to current leaseholders of the shops on Pier Road, noting the expiration term of the agreed upon lease.
  - A meeting was held on October 11, 2023 with JIA’s Executive staff, JIA Treasurer/Secretary, Bill Gross, and current leaseholders to discuss renovations for Pier Road including additional lighting, addition of seating and spaces for guests to linger, a new path connecting the Infirmary to Pier Road to include interpretation of the many lost buildings on that path, a community stage area to be used by civic organizations and non-profit partners, and evening activation to include a curated mix of dining, retail, and activities for visitors.
  - JIA staff will present a detailed plan including any budget allocations at a future meeting for Board approval.
  - With Board approval, a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be released for some of the spaces. It was communicated to the current leaseholders that they will have equal eligibility to submit a proposal along with any other interested business entity.
  - It has been communicated with the current leaseholders that JIA will review any requests for extension. The deadline to submit a written extension request is close of business on Friday, November 10, 2023.
  - The JIA has felt for some time that this part of the historic district needed re-imagining and the decision to move in a different direction with Pier Road was based on several factors, including extensive feedback from visitors. Often, visitors on the museum’s historic trolley tours pass by the historic shops with interest in visiting and frequently ask museum staff why they aren’t open or if anything new is planned for the area. While the area for commercial development is intentionally limited on Jekyll Island, it is imperative to the island’s operational success that every aspect of commercial space provide a compelling and productive experience to the three and half million people that come through the gate annually.
- I. Dale Atkins, Chair, thanked Mark and other staff members for their reports and the Board members for their attendance. He then opened the floor for public comments.

There were six public comments.

- Juliana Germano, leaseholder for The Island House and Commissary on Pier Road, spoke about her time as a business owner on Jekyll Island and asked that her two business leases be renewed.
- Mike McKinney, representing Glynn County’s Parkinson Support Group, advocated for leaseholders Van and Cheryl Hart, noting the extra difficulties they will face with the expiration of their shop lease due to their physical handicaps.
- Karen Catlett, Jekyll Island visitor, spoke in favor of the current shops and atmosphere on Pier Road. She also commented on the poor condition of interpretation boards along the Wanderer Memory Trail.

- Cheryl Hart, leaseholder for Just by Hand on Pier Road, spoke to her history with Jekyll Island, and noted that Just by Hand is open every day unless an emergency such as hurricane makes it unsafe to open the store.
- Van Hart, leaseholder for Just by Hand on Pier Road, spoke to the uniqueness of Pier Road and the current shops located there. He noted that the atmosphere of that area is and should remain different from that of Jekyll Island Beach Village.
- Kathryn Kinstle asked why the leaseholders were not given a space to operate out of while Pier Road is being improved. Mark Williams and Zach Harris explained the RFP process that will be utilized during revitalization of the area.

**The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board Meeting**  
**October 17, 2023**

The Board Meeting was called to order at 10:52 a.m., and all members were present in-person or via teleconference.

**Action Items**

1. Mr. Gross moved to accept the minutes of the September 19, 2023 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 accept the grant totaling \$1000 from the Georgia Tennis Association as presented by staff carried by unanimous approval.
3. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to award RFP # 378 for Public Relations Agency Services to Lou Hammond Group - Atlanta carried by unanimous approval.
4. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to adopt Resolution R-2023-2 carried by unanimous approval.
5. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the lease assignment for 41 Main Street Suite 103 to Corridor Z Hospitality, LLC carried by unanimous approval.
6. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the first amendment to the commercial lease agreement with Seaside Food Company Inc. for the operation of Larry's Giant Subs in Beach Village carried by unanimous approval.
7. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the schematic design variance requested by Retreat Hotels and Resorts carried by unanimous approval.

The motion to adjourn the Board Meeting was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Joyner. There was no objection to the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.