

JEKYLL ISLAND – STATE PARK AUTHORITY
February 20, 2024 – Approved Minutes

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board of Directors met in Public Session Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at the Jekyll Island Club Resort Morgan 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 (Via Teleconference)
Commissioner Walter Rabon (Via Teleconference)
Mr. Joseph B. Wilkinson Jr. (Via Teleconference)
Mr. Glen Willard

Key Staff Present: Mark Williams, Executive Director
Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director
Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer
Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources
Zachary Harris, General Counsel
Alexa Hawkins, Director of Communications & Marketing
Brad Ballard, Senior Director of Amenities

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

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

Chairman Dale Atkins announced a proposed addition to the meeting agenda for a capital request for the purchase of the VivaTicket software and programing for \$150,000 from current year funds. Chairman Dale Atkins called on Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, to present an explanation for the additional agenda item, who explained that quotes for the purchase were not received until Monday, February 19, 2024, and because the go-live date for VivaTicket is in April, this item could not wait until the regular Board meeting in March without delaying the VivaTicket implementation. With no objection, Chairman Dale Atkins amended the agenda to include the VivaTicket capital request.

JIA received one online public comment for this meeting:

- Karen Gleason – Graffiti in the Amphitheater

I. Historic Preservation/Conservation Committee

Bob Krueger, Chair

- A. Yank Moore, Director of Conservation, presented a department update, highlighting the following items:

Vegetation Management on the Jekyll Island Causeway. Yank Moore, Director of Conservation, presented a timeline of vegetation management over the years. Starting in 2007, with the GSTC research of the Diamondback Terrapin species on the causeway. In 2009, Cliff Gawron, Director and Landscape and Planning, and

Ben Carswell, former Director of Conservation, held a workshop with stakeholders including the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Environmental Protection Division, the Wildlife Resources Division, and CRD on causeway management. He noted that Davide Zailo, Research Program Manager, provided him with the past twelve (12) years of Diamondback Terrapin encounters and the research behind the encounters.

The plans for rotational vegetation management began soon after. He highlighted that the JIA learned that Diamondback Terrapins are more likely to cross a road if they see vegetation on the other side. The vegetation was so high, he described the causeway as a tunnel, with no view of the marsh. Rotational Vegetation Management began, and JIA installed a pollinator strip on the causeway. The goal was to provide native habitats and increase biodiversity for a balance between bird and pollinator habitat, wildlife, and road mortality.

Cliff Gawron, Director of Landscape and Planning, presented the rotational map. He explained the herbaceous dominated areas are to be mowed five (5) times per year. The successional, shrub dominated areas are on a five (5) year rotational cut. The permanent buffers are only managed for road safety concerns.

Yank Moore, Director of Conservation, continued his timeline for causeway vegetative management. Georgia Power rebuilt their infrastructure and replaced wooden structures with concrete structures. Georgia Power then took over the vegetative management of the shrub layer on the south side of the causeway within 50ft of their structure. Ga Power installed a pollinator strip on the south side of the causeway, from Cedar Creek Bridge to the Jekyll Island Guest Information Center.

Cliff Gawron, Director of Landscape and Planning, noted that the JIA is held to higher standards than Georgia Power in terms of our permitting process. Every five (5) years an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan is renewed through Glynn County for Jekyll Island. Each year, a written letter of approval for an exclusion review on a buffer variance is received from the Environmental Protection Division. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources marks the high marsh for a Letter of Authorization each year. He highlighted staff member Phillip Kidney, Roads and Grounds Superintendent, who clears the highest shoulder up to five feet of the Georgia DNR marking, which is then cleared by hand. He also highlighted that before the Georgia Power rebuild, the JIA was clearing an average of 2.1-2.5 lineal miles of the causeway and now the JIA only clears three quarters to half a mile of the causeway.

Yank Moore, Director of Conservation, presented an update on the prescribed fire season. The JIA has burned twenty-five (25) acres this year. He noted that this has taken place at night to avoid disturbing golf course operations, particularly the Oleander Golf Course. The Georgia Forestry Commission attended these night burns.

There was one public comment.

- Al Tate thanked the Conservation Department for enhancing the natural environment. Mr. Tate also recommended that the JIA try using ecological principles to manage the diverse life on the island, referring to the causeway trimming as an example.

II. Finance Committee

Bill Gross, Chair

- 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 \$2,330,722.
 - Expenses were \$3,038,268.
 - Net Operating Cash Loss was \$707,496.
 - Total Traffic Counts were 97,977 vehicles.
 - January hotel revenues totaled \$2.5 million.

Mr. Gross provided additional details for the monthly financials.

- The largest variance from the budget revenue was seen from the Human Resources expense, which was \$96,000 more than budget. This increase is due to the one-time supplemental payments to employees as recommended by the Governor's office for all State employees. The total impact of the payments was \$245,000, however the impact on the financials was minimized due to savings from vacant positions and lower health care costs for this month.
- The largest variances in expenses for January were insurance expenses and repairs and maintenance. Insurance expenses were \$253,000 less than budgeted. The variance is due to timing as the quarterly insurance invoice from the State was not received until after the financials had closed for the month. This amount will be offset in February. Repair and maintenance expenses were \$96,000 less than the budget. This variance was also timing related and is an offset to expenses from the previous month. This account is currently on target with budget for the year.
- The Net Operating Cash Loss for January is \$707,496, which is \$321,000 better than the budgeted net operating Cash Loss of \$1M.
- The Year-to-date Net Operating Cash Income reflects a \$3.4M favorable budget variance and a favorable \$1.4M variance from Prior year to date Income.
- The total traffic count for January was 97,977 vehicles, which was 15,945 less vehicles than January 2023. Mr. Gross noted that the visitation to Jekyll Island was impacted due to rain.
- The January 2024 hotel revenues reported was \$2.5 million, which is \$606,000 less than the January 2023 revenue. The occupancy rate was 40.9%, which is down from 49.5% in January 2023. Revenue per available room was \$62.23, which is down from \$76.88 in January 2023. The average daily rate was \$152.14, which was down slightly from \$155.40 January 2023.

- B. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented a consideration of an MOU with Glynn County and the City of Brunswick and matching funds for the 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant. Mr. Gross clarified that if the grant was awarded, the Jekyll Island Fire Department would receive thirteen (13) radios and be responsible for contributing matching funds of \$26,171.02. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, added that each radio is valued around \$14,000, totaling \$192,000.

A motion to recommend approving the MOU and matching funds, totaling \$26,171.02, for the 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant as recommended by staff, was made by Mr. Evans, and seconded by Mr. Krueger. The motion carried unanimously.

- C. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the capital request for a new UTV for the Conservation Department for \$17,000. She explained that the current UTV is twelve (12) years old and has had the engine replaced twice. The UTV has held up well but is now failing.

A motion to recommend approving the Capital Project Request totaling \$17,000 for a new UTV for the Conservation Department as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Willard. The motion carried unanimously.

- D. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair, presented the capital request for HVAC replacement for the Campground Community Center. Mr. Gross explained that the two units work in tandem and were used units when originally purchased in 2016. It is no longer feasible to repair these units and emergency replacements were purchased in January 2024, for \$25,915. This request is for the ratification of this purchase to approve funding from this year's income to cover the expense.

A motion to recommend approving the Capital Project Request totaling \$25,915 for a new HVAC replacement for the Campground Community Center as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Willard. The motion carried unanimously.

- E. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair, presented the consideration of a resolution approving the intergovernmental contract with the Brunswick, Glynn County Development Authority for repayment of revenue bond proceeds and proposed bond resolution for issuance of revenue bonds for the Golf Improvement Plan. He highlighted the November 14, 2023, resolution requesting the Brunswick, Glynn County Development Authority to issue revenue bonds in the approximate amount of \$20,305,000 for the purpose of financing the renovation, construction, and equipping of recreational facilities, including the Jekyll Island Golf Course. He noted that this is the second largest expenditure that the JIA has ever endeavored, behind the Convention Center. At the end of the revitalization process, 50% of the turfed areas for the golf course will be eliminated, restoring the golf course as close to the Walter Travis design as possible. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair, highlighted key points in the resolution as follows:

- Eight (8) banking institutions were invited to participate, with two (2) providing positive offers
- Ameris Bank negotiated the best deal for the JIA's interest
- An annual variable option rate of between 4%-9%, with an initial rate of 5.55% and an estimated all-in-total interest cost of approximately 4.1183%
- Two (2) year drawdown period with all principal advance, no later than April 1, 2026.
- Debt service reserves fund is not required
- The total estimated cost of the debt service reserves fund required, at a total estimated cost of the debt service at 20-year maturity, is forecasted at approximately \$30,556,318

Zach Harris, General Counsel, clarified that this is a resolution that will allow the JIA to execute and enter an intergovernmental contract with the Brunswick, Glynn County Development Authority for their issuance of these revenue bonds that are backed by the revenue pledge of the JIA. He explained that the bonds will be issued based on the terms agreed to by the JIA, the Brunswick, Glynn County Development Authority, and Ameris Bank, as brokered and negotiated by Stifel. He pointed out that the placement agent, Trey Monroe, was in attendance at the meeting. He also explained that the JIA is not issuing these bonds, but is, however, the obligor on the bond who will be repaying the bond proceeds that are received from the sale of the bond. The bond is anticipated to close at the end of March 2024, with a funding date of April 1, 2024. The drawdown period is between April 1, 2024, and April 1, 2026, which will include interest only payments. The first interest only payment is May 1, 2024. The basement for the interest rate is about 4.1%, subject to adjustment, annually, on April 1st, capped at 9%. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Chair Committee Chair, noted that this is the most studied topic for the JIA this decade.

A motion to recommend approving the consideration of the resolution approving the intergovernmental contract with the Brunswick, Glynn County Development Authority for the repayment of revenue bond proceeds and proposed bond resolution for issuance of revenue bonds for the Golf Improvement Plan as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Willard. The motion carried unanimously.

- F. Mr. Bill Gross, Finance Committee Chair, presented the capital request for the purchase of the VivaTicket software and programming for \$150,000 from current year funds. The server licensing and terminal server licenses are \$83,000 and the estimated cost of data support for setup is \$35,000. Data support and set up includes IT Support, support to configure that server, installation of the VivaTicket Software on the new Point of Sale terminals, and set up of credit card machines, printers, turnstiles, etc. Staff is requesting an additional \$32,000 for additional equipment for the new 31.81 retail store and unforeseen costs. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, noted that this was added to the agenda due to the go live date in April.

A motion to recommend approving the Capital Project Request totaling \$150,000 for the purchase of the VivaTicket software and programming as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Evans. The motion carried unanimously.

There was one public comment.

- Ben Carswell, Jekyll Island Resident, commented on the budgeting season for the JIA. His concern and focus expressed that the JIA should focus this budgeting season with the idea in mind to make revitalization lasting, not additional revitalization. He noted that the JIA should shift its focus on capital investments and become more fiscally conservative to not only maintain balance, but to continue to succeed in its mission of revitalization.

III. Human Resources Committee

Buster Evans, Chair

- A. Jenna Johnson, Director of Human Resources presented a Records Management Policy Update. She explained that this update meets standard of practice for electronic updates and the expectation of the Georgia Archives, providing additional information concerning electronic records.

A motion to recommend approving the Records Management Policy Update as recommended by staff was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Gross.

There were no public comments.

IV. Marketing Committee

Joy Burch-Meeks, Chair

- A. Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing and Communications, presented a department update.
 - The 2023 Annual Progress Report: This was shared with all JIA's legislative Representatives, and a copy was handed out to each Board of Director Member. This report includes a note from the Governor, an overview of the Fiscal Year 2023 Financials, and highlights some of the completed and ongoing projects. This document can be found on the JIA website.
 - The Island Guide: This is an informational tool for visitors that the JIA has shared with all hotel partners on Jekyll Island. This guide will now be distributed to neighboring visiting centers, such as the Saint Mary's I95 Welcome Center, August, Macon, Port Wentworth, and Dublin. A new on-island guide will be shared with JIA's on-island partners. This new guide will be a foldout map, including business listings and contact information, which will save the JIA approximately \$25,000 per year and align with the sustainability mission.

- Media Highlights: She highlighted that a feature, through the partnership with Southern Living, was released titled “15 Spring Break Destinations.” Lonely Planet named Driftwood Beach as the number one best beach for 2024. Lonely Planet also included Driftwood Beach in their publication “Best Beaches: 100 Beaches in the World” as one of three on the East Coast, and only six in the country.
- The Color Purple: Filmed for two weeks in the Spring of 2022 and was released on “Max” in December of 2023. This film production took place on Driftwood Beach and on a private residential road used for employee housing.

There were no public comments.

V. Legislative Committee

Glen Willard, Chair

Mr. Willard, Legislative Committee Chair, spoke on the session that is halfway through and discussed a few key points.

- The mid-year budget passed through house and is being taken to the senate now, including \$5 billion in state funding and \$1.5 billion on infrastructure such as roads.
- Senate Bill 26 carried over from the last session, to establish the Georgia Electric Vehicle Manufacturing Commission.
- Senate Bill 349 passed out of committee. He explained that this Bill would cap increases on homeowners assessed property value at 3% per year, as long as the owner maintains a homestead exemption.
- The Senate will hear House Bill 1019, passed a week prior to lower property taxes by doubling the state’s homestead exemption to \$4,000.
- House Bill 940 was accepted to require physical storefront retailers to accept cash payment.

Mr. Willard, Legislative Committee, completed his report with a fun fact that the official state greens is collards, the official state sauce is potlikker, and the official state bread is cornbread.

There was one public comment.

- Al Tate urged the legislative committee to review House Bill 370 in comparison to the Marshlands Protection Act of 1970 to prevent private owners from encroaching on the coast.

VI. Committee of the Whole

- A. Zach Harris, General Counsel, presented the consideration of request by Innisfree Hotels, Inc. to approve the 50% ownership units of HAMJI Hospitality, LLC to Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority (CIEDA). He noted that Innisfree hotels joined Jekyll Island in 2023 with the acquisition of the Hampton Inn and Suites. He gave a background introduction on the Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority being the economic development division of the Porch Band of Creek Indians, a tribal government based in Alabama. Their long-term focus is on long-term investments in retail, tourism, hospitality, government services, contracting, manufacturing, and projects to grow and maintain economic sustainability.

Innisfree requests a 50% partnership with CIEDA to retain 50% of the LLC memberships. Through this request, Innisfree will continue to manage HAMJI Hospitality, LLC and continue to operate the Hampton Inn and Suites. Zach Harris, General Counsel, noted that JIA, being the ground lesser, has approval rights on the contingency of a new management entity or LLC manager.

A motion to recommend approving the request by Innisfree Hotels, Inc. to approve the 50% ownership units of HAMJI Hospitality, LLC to Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority (CIEDA) was made by Mr. Gross and seconded by Mr. Kreuger. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, presented an operations update.

- Pine Lakes Golf Course Renovations: The contractors have removed the old drainage course and are now replacing it with a new drainage course. This includes 6"-8" of gravel and interior drain lines. During the demo, the contractor found two drainage courses instead of one, revealing that the original drainage course was not removed during renovations in the 1990's. He noted that the contractor has meticulously placed flags on a grid across the course for elevation to contour the subgrade.

Clyde Johnston visited the island the day prior to the February Board Meeting and is approving each green individually. Clyde Johnston redesigned the number 13 green, moving it 35-40 yards into the sun to improve grass growth. This opportunity became available due to the loss of a Heritage Live Oak Tree due to Hurricane Irma.

- A new entrance road was added into the golf course from the landfill for construction work to avoid traffic issues on the island. This work was completed by Phillip Kidney's Roads and Grounds staff and included adding a new culvert across a significant drainage canal. The culvert consists of 20' sections of pipe at 36" in diameter. The culvert was topped with recycled materials collected at the Jekyll Island Landfill.
- Oleander Golf Course Renovations: A controlled burn was conducted between number one and number nine. The Roads and Grounds staff completed clearing out what was left of the underbrush afterwards. He noted that similar work will be completed during the Great Dunes Golf Course renovations to restore it back to the Walter Travis design.
- The Vehicle Maintenance department was recognized by the Director of Office Fleet for their eighteen (18) Tier One Ranks in a row. He highlighted the "agency average maintenance dollars per vehicle" category showing that the JIA is at 24% of the state average, as well as the peer group average. This recognition indicates that JIA has safe driving vehicles, and that maintenance is completed timely and cost effective.

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- Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, introduced the new Georgia State Patrol Post Commander and Assistant Post Commander for Post 35. Sergeant James Metz, Post Commander, and Sergeant Ty Brooks, Assistant Post Commander, both spoke and expressed that they were honored to serve Jekyll Island.

Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, answered a question from Mr. Dale Atkins, Chairman, on the October 2024, opening of the Pine Lakes Golf Course. He also noted that the range would be returned to the original size.

There were no public comments.

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

- He thanked the Georgia State Patrol for their service on Jekyll Island.
- The Pine Lakes Golf Course renovation costs are between \$6 million and \$7 million. He noted that this project is moving on schedule.
- He thanked the staff for managing expenses and Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing and Communications, and her staff for their targeted marketing efforts to make budget for the month.
- The Tiffany Window will be returning to Faith Chapel after a restoration project that began in 2021. He thanked the Friends of Historic Jekyll Island for their support, membership, and financing to make this a reality. A formal invitation for the ceremonial un-wrap on Friday, March 29, will be received shortly. This event is on Good Friday, coinciding with the original installation by Lois Tiffany on Easter weekend.
- Mark Williams, Executive Director, and his wife, Pam, attended the Friends of Historic Jekyll Island Gala at the Jekyll Island Club Hotel.
- Vivaticket final Q&A, testing, and rollover will take place at the beginning of April for all amenities with the JIA.
- He thanked the guests and residents for their support in the silent auction and craft sale fundraiser for the Tideland Nature Center on the previous Saturday.
- He thanked Olivia Hancock, Operations Specialist, for her hard work as interim Executive Assistant as a replacement is being hired.
- Mark Williams, Executive Director, invited the JIA Board Members to join him at the Capitol on March 5th to meet with the governor.

There was one public comment.

- Doc Dougherty, owner of the Island Sweet Shoppe, addressed the plans to re-develop the Historic District, focusing on the Island Sweet Shoppe. Mr. Dougherty requested the opportunity to sit down with the JIA staff to discuss the RFP plan for a new Sweet Shoppe in the Historic District

D. For the sake of time, Chairman Atkins chose to forgo his comments.

There were no public comments.

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board Meeting
February 20, 2024

The Board Meeting was called to order at 11:09 a.m., and all members were present in-person or via teleconference, except for Mr. Ruel Joyner

Action Items

1. Mr. Willard moved to accept the minutes of the January 19, 2024, 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 the MOU with Glynn County and the City of Brunswick for the 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant and a total of \$26,171.02 in matching funds as presented by staff carried by unanimous approval.
3. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to approve the proposed Capital Requests as presented by staff carried by unanimous approval.
4. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to approve the Resolution Approving (i) Intergovernmental Contract with Brunswick Glynn County Development Authority for repayment of revenue bond proceeds and (ii) Proposed
5. Bond Resolution for Issuance of Revenue Bonds for Golf Improvement Plan projects as presented by staff carried by unanimous approval.
6. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the request by Innisfree Hotels, Inc. to approve sale of 50% ownership units of HAMJI Hospitality, LLC to Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority (CIEDA) as presented by staff carried by unanimous approval.

The motion to adjourn the Board Meeting was made by Mr. Krueger and seconded by Mr. Willard. There was no objection to the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:09 a.m.