

JEKYLL ISLAND – STATE PARK
AUTHORITY

April 23, 2024 – Approved Minutes

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board of Directors met in Public Session Tuesday, April 23, 2024, 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. Glen Willard
 Mr. Ruel Joyner
 Ms. Joy Burch-Meeks
 Commissioner Walter Rabon
 Mr. Joseph B. Wilkinson Jr. (Via Teleconference)

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 9:31 a.m. All members were present in-person or via teleconference.

JIA received two online public comments for this meeting:

- Jim Reed – New Golf Course
- Karen Gleason – Pickleball and Pickleball Status

I. Historic Preservation/Conservation Committee

Bob Krueger, Chair

- A. Andrea Marroquin, Historic Resources Museum Curator, presented a department update, highlighting the Tiffany Window Preservation and Rededication. This was a three (3) year conservation project with financial support from the Friends of Historic Jekyll Island. This project was conducted by Restoric LLC, a company which specializes in preserving historic, stained-glass windows. She gave background information on the Tiffany Window and explained that the window was originally installed on Easter Sunday in March of 1921. She noted that during the preservation process, added paint was removed from the glass, cracks were repaired, extra added glass causing moisture was removed, and the stabilization work was completed. The preservation team improved and returned the window to the artist’s original intent. An improved shutter system was also installed to protect the window from future storm damage.

Andrea Marroquin, Historic Resources Museum Curator, highlighted the celebration of events following the completion of the restoration of the historic Tiffany window. These events included, but not only, the ceremonial unveiling of the window that took place 103 years after it was originally installed on Good Friday. She completed her departmental update encouraging the public to visit the fully restored window at Faith Chapel.

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

- Prescribed Fire Season: The Jekyll Island Authority burned a total of sixty-two (62) acres this season, which is more than double the best season to date. Mr. Moore highlighted that this was due to staffing, adding ten (10) fully certified burners to the staff, comprising of three (3) staff members in the Conservation department and seven (7) staff members in the Fire Department. Additional factors that contributed to this large burn area include support from the Roads and Grounds Department, fire breaks, and the closure of Pine Lakes. He noted that the blocks at Pine Lakes had never been burned to knowledge, but only under brushed until the year 2000 and left to grow until now.
- Alligators: The alligator survey for the year began this month. The survey includes catching the alligators, marking, and measuring them, drawing blood, assessing their health, studying for abnormalities, and releasing them. This survey has taken place since 2011 and was noted that this process instills hunting pressure for the alligators to fear humans. Since 2011, alligators have not been removed from the island and the population has managed itself, decreasing over time. Approximately 42% of the gator population on Jekyll Island are under three (3) feet, 30% are up to six (6) feet, and 25% are more than six (6) feet.

Yank Moore, Director of Conservation, highlighted several locations for alligator sightings, including a residential pool, a residential front yard, the Great Dunes Golf Course cart barn, the beach, and several road crossings. He highlighted the alligator on the beach as a “new to the island” alligator which was surveyed and placed in the Oleander Big Pond.

C. Michelle Kaylor, Director of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center, presented a department update, highlighting the following items:

- Loggerhead Sea Turtle Nesting Season: The Turtle Crawl Race fundraising event for the beginning of the season will be on Saturday, April 27, 2024. She gave a recap from last year’s nesting season highlighting that it was Jekyll Island’s second largest nesting season with 217 nests. The JIA Georgia Sea Turtle Research Department calculated that 14,000 sea turtles were returned to the ocean from the 217 nests.
- Summer Programs: JIA staff has begun training for the morning and nighttime sea turtle walks, as well as the dawn and night patrol ride-a-longs. Over 1,000 guests participated in these programs in 2023. She highlighted that 70% of participants on the ride-a-long program see a sea turtle hatchling and/or nesting sea turtle mom and 40% experienced this on a walk.

- Cold Stunned Sea Turtle Release: Four (4) collaborative partnership institutions transported their rehabilitated Cold Stunned Sea Turtles to Jekyll Island for a historical Sea Turtle release. The Georgia Aquarium also brought their eight (8) rehabilitated Cold Stunned Sea Turtles for a separate release this year. The release with the Georgia Aquarium was significant as the entity requested the help of the Jekyll Island Georgia Sea Turtle Center to tag the animals with Inconel tags. The staff utilized this opportunity as a training experience for the Georgia Aquarium staff and guests of Jekyll Island.

Michelle Kaylor, Director of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center, noted that professional colleagues favor releasing their animals on Jekyll Island for many reasons, including the short drive to the beach from the airport. The number one reason that these entities come to Jekyll Island is that the Georgia Sea Turtle Center is there to support them.

- Vet Externship Program: This program began in 2007, with 171 vet students from 23 universities completing the program to date. The program began in March and two students have joined the program from the University of Minnesota and the University of Georgia.

D. Brad Ballard, Senior Director of Amenities, introduced the new Director of Historic Resources, Will Wagner. Mr. Ballard highlighted that Mr. Wagner has worked in the Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites for the past thirteen years, managing four sites.

Will Wagner, Director of Historic Resources, thanked the board for having him there. He gave an overview of his background, working in Parks and Historic Sites for twenty (20) years, the past thirteen (13) with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. He started working at James Floyd State Park and had the honor of opening Don Carter State Park. He also worked at the Smithgall Woods State Park and managed the Hardman Farms State Historic Site.

II. Finance Committee

Bill Gross, Chair

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

- Revenues were \$3,231,908.
- Expenses were \$2,845,223.
- Net Operating Cash Income was \$386,684.
- Total Traffic Counts were 116,563 vehicles.
- March hotel revenues totaled \$6.5 million.

Mr. Gross provided additional details for the monthly financials.

- The largest variances from the budget revenue were seen from the Business Leases, which was \$213,000 more than budget, Interest Income, which was \$78,000 more than budget, the Convention Center revenue, which was \$83,000 more than budget, and Golf revenues, which was \$91,000 more than budget.
- The largest variances in expenses for March were the Human Resources expenses, which were \$120,000 less than budget, due to vacant full-time and part-time positions. Also included were the Contract Expenses, which were \$107,000 more than budget, due to a timing issue that will offset in April.
- The Net Operating Cash Loss for March is \$386,684, which is \$340,000 better than the budgeted net operating Cash Loss of \$46,000.
- The Year-to-date Net Operating Cash Income reflects a \$3.8M favorable budget variance and a favorable \$987,000 variance from Prior year to date Income.
- The total traffic count for March was 116,563 vehicles, which was 11,629 less vehicles than March 2023. Mr. Gross noted that the visitation to Jekyll Island was impacted due to rain. Year to date traffic count is 320,584 vehicles, which is 29,377 less cars than last year.
- The March 2024 hotel revenues reported was \$6.5 million, which is \$396,000 less than the March 2023 revenue. The occupancy rate was 72%, which is down from 75.9% in March 2023. Revenue per available room was \$156.96, which is down from \$167.26 in March 2023. The average daily rate was \$217.89, which was down slightly from \$220.23 in March 2023.
- The Year-to-date Hotel Statistics reported was \$13.1 million, which is \$1.6 million less than the same time period for last year. The occupancy rate was 58% which is down from 64.3% last year. Revenue per available room was \$108.14, which is down from \$122.64 last year. Average Daily rate is \$186.35, which is down from \$190.66 last year.

B. Marjorie Johnson, Chief Accounting Officer, presented the capital request for the Tire Balancing Machine for \$5,681.33.

A motion to recommend approving the Capital Project Request totaling \$5,681.33 for a replacement Tire Balancing Machine as recommended by staff was made by Ruel Joyner and seconded by Glen Willard. 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 and Communications, presented a department update.
- Cold Stunned Sea Turtle Release: The Jekyll Island Authority partnered with several organizations out Northeast United States for the rehabilitation of Cold Stunned Sea Turtles. The Cold Stunned Sea Turtles were recently released, making state history as the largest sea turtle release to record. She noted that there was an impending storm system during the release, but NOAA and DNR permitted the release. Due to the storm system this was a private event, although four media outlets joined the release, including ABC, PBS News Weekend, Fox, and regional media. Alexa Hawkins, Director of Marketing and Communications, explained that in attendance there were 35 total media heads, equating to over 1.4 million unique media views, which adds over \$800,000 in ad value.
 - The Island Treasures Giveaway: March 1-March 31 the Marketing Department hosted an Island Treasures Giveaway for the five (5) unclaimed Island Treasures of 2024. Over 12,800 people entered the giveaway and over 8,000 people became new subscribers to the email list through the giveaway. During this period, there were over 23,000 social media engagements and 11,000 clicks to the landing page. She noted that if this was a paid campaign, it would have cost \$10,000 to generate this kind of return.
 - Turtle Crawl: April 27, 2024, JIA will host the Turtle Crawl fundraiser event. The number of participants for the race this year has surpassed that of last year. She noted that this is the second largest race in the county.

There were no public comments.

V. Legislative Committee
Glen Willard, Chair

- A. Mr. Willard, Legislative Committee Chair, gave a legislative update. The legislative 2024 session ended on March 28, 2024. The governor is given 40 days to sign the bills in the law or choose to veto any and make any new additions. The governor estimated \$48.4 million to invest in pre-k, lower class sizes, increased teacher pay, funding of new schools, state employee pay increases remain, more money for law enforcement, education, and mental health programs. \$200 million was dedicated to school districts for transporting kids and \$100 million was dedicated to school security upgrades and Medicaid. House Bill 581 for property tax relief and House Bill 1019 for increased Homestead Exemption from \$2,000 to \$4,000 are also included.

Mr. Willard, Legislative Committee Chair, gave a few highlights:

- Senate Bill 189 is designed to challenge a voter's eligibility easier. Ballots can no longer be counted with QR codes and there will be stricter rules for handling ballots.
- House Bill 974 will allow fewer voting machines.
- House Bill 1105 will require local law enforcement to check inmates' immigration status and impose financial sanctions on agencies that don't comply with immigration officials.
- House Bill 496, preserving history and the economy. This bill will extend the sunset on the Residential Historic Rehabilitation tax credit from 2027 to 2029.
- Senate Bill 351 requires that children under the age of sixteen (16) have permission to create social media accounts.

There were no public comments.

VI. Committee of the Whole

A. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, presented the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement Ratification. Every four (4) years, the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA) requests that the JIA ratify a mutual aid agreement. This is a statewide mutual aid and assistance agreement that allows Jekyll Island to partner with Glynn County, City of Brunswick, and the Joint Water and Sewer Commission for assistance during a natural disaster. He noted that GEMA defines assistance as personnel, equipment, facilities, services, supplies, and other resources furnished to a requesting party pursuant to this agreement. The request to ratify this agreement is from GEMA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This is to expire on March 1, 2028, unless otherwise acted upon by the JIA Board of Directors.

A motion to recommend approving the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement Ratification as recommended by staff was made by Ruel Joyner and seconded by Bill Gross. The motion carried unanimously.

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

- Great Dunes Golf Course Fence: This new fence is being installed in association with the upcoming Great Dunes restoration and the combination of Oleander. The fence will protect the public from the construction site. It will then remain upon completion of construction as there will be no cause to enter Great Dunes at this location. He explained some details of the construction plans. These include that the current starter shack will become a halfway house at holes eight and nine. There will also be a new putting course and the driving range will double in size N/S.

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- Lead Service Line Inventory: Olivia Hancock, Operations Specialist, applied for funding through Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) for a lead service line inventory. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has mandated an inventory submittal due October 16, 2024. Mrs. Hancock was successful in completing the first round of funding to receive over \$99,000 to pay for this inventory. Noel Jensen, Deputy Executive Director, noted that the JIA Board of Directors approved \$54,000 to hire a civil engineering firm to assist the JIA in this inventory. If awarded this \$99,000 in the second round of funding, the \$54,000 will be placed back into the capital/SPLOST budget. The additional \$40,000 will be contingency.
- SeeClickFix: This application was implemented in 2017 to internally report issues in JIA buildings or on JIA property. He noted that the program is reporting that JIA is processing the same amount of work orders that a town with a 7,000-person population would report. The JIA has hit a milestone with SeeClickFix at 10,000 repairs and commended the Facilities Maintenance Department for their hard work.
- Summer Waves Parking Lot: The entire parking lot at Summer Waves Water Park was designed to be rehabilitated and expanded. During the off-season, the main entrance, traffic circle, and entire left-hand side was rehabilitated and expanded. The entire expansion will account for 123 new spots, although only 60 have been added thus far. The entire perimeter of the left-hand side is made with true grid which will help capture rain and stormwater runoff, rather than running off into the ditches and marsh.
- Airport: The Jekyll Island Airport is on the cover of the 2024 Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Airport Directory. He also highlighted the all-time fuel sales since 2019, at almost 62,000 gallons of fuel in the amount of \$357,901. With this fuel tank, the airport is now self-sustaining.

There were no public comments.

- C. Mark Williams, Executive Director, introduced Dan Hoffman, the Executive Vice President of Convention Centers at ASM Global. Mr. Hoffman commended the Jekyll Island Convention Center for not only the architecture and design of the building, but also the success in creating revenue. He also commended Tabitha Mayers, General Manager, and her team for their hard work and dedication. Mr. Hoffman also gave a company update, explaining that the company was acquired by Legends. The new food service supplier for ASM Global Convention Centers will change over in July.
- D. Mark Williams, Executive Director, presented his report highlighting the following:
 - Mark Williams, Executive Director, thanked Dan Hoffman, Executive Vice President of Convention Centers, for attendance to the meeting and for a great update.

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- Spring break on Jekyll Island was a successful milestone for the Georgia Sea Turtle Center and the Mosaic. The Georgia Sea Turtle Center broke their record on April 3rd, with more than \$16,083 in retail sales in one day and the Mosaic broke their record on April 17th, with \$5,391 in retail sales in one day.
- Mr. Williams commended Taylor Davis, Historic Preservationist, and Andrea Marroquin, Museum Curator, and the Historic Resources Team for their hard work on the Tiffany Window Restoration. He also thanked the Friends of Historic Jekyll Island for their financial and labor contributions. He noted that the Tiffany Window rededication on Good Friday was a wonderful event for the entire community.
- The Jekyll Island Authority has received the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Grant for \$1.6 million to develop the new wildlife corridor on Oleander Golf Course at hole nine (9). Mr. Williams thanked Walter Rabon, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and his team for hosting the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship program. Mr. Williams also thanked Yank Moore, Director of Conservation, for his hard work on the project.
- The Jekyll Island Authority is hosting The Georgia Department of Natural Resources board meeting at the Convention Center this month. Mr. Williams introduced two members of the board, Trevor Santos, Deputy Commissioner, and Thomas Benard, Deputy Commissioner.
- Mark Williams, Executive Director, welcomed the 2024 Class of Leadership Georgia to Jekyll Island. Their event will be focusing on coastal resources and economic development on the coast. He also welcomed the Georgia Economic Development Board to Jekyll Island.
- Mark Williams, Executive Director, formally announced the opening date of the 3181 Lifestyle Brand store as May 21, 2024, in the Historic Infirmary building. A ribbon cutting ceremony will be held directly following the May board meeting.
- Mark Williams, Executive Director, paid tribute to Woody Woodside, the former head of the Brunswick Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce for 34 years, retiring in 2019. Mr. Williams highlighted the accomplishments of Woody Woodside including his involvement in the Sydney Lanier Bridge, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, the Brunswick Harbor Deepening, the Southeast Georgia Regional Health System, and the College of Coastal Georgia. Mr. Woodside was also involved in the Jekyll Island Foundation. Mr. Williams sends his condolences to Mr. Woodside's family and friends around the community who are feeling this great loss.

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- E. Chairman Dale Atkins presented his comments on the April 23, 2024, Board Meeting. Mr. Atkins offered his condolences to the family of Woody Woodside. Mr. Atkins proposed that the Jekyll Island Authority Board of Directors adopt a resolution honoring Woody Woodside.

There was one public comment.

- Al Tate, Jekyll Island Resident, commented that he was discouraged about the preparations of the April 23, 2024, board meeting. Mr. Tate noted that the agenda was not posted online and there were no copies of the agenda summary printed and available for the public.
Mark Williams, Executive Director, responded and apologized for the inconvenience and explained that the Executive Assistant role was not filled, but the normal Board Meeting process will resume once the position is filled.

The Jekyll Island State Park Authority (JIA) Board Meeting
April 23, 2024

The Board Meeting was called to order at 9:31 a.m., and all members were present in-person or via teleconference.

Action Items

1. Mr. Krueger moved to accept the minutes of the March 19, 2024, Board Meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Evans. There was no discussion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.
2. The recommendation from the Finance Committee to approve the proposed Capital Request as presented by staff carried by unanimous approval.
3. The recommendation from the Committee of the Whole to approve the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement Ratification 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 9:31 a.m.