

VA 250 Committee Meeting
Portsmouth Economic Development
Conference Room
April 11, 2024

Present: Karen Washburn, Jarred Bobzien, Billie Cook, Rycy Godette, Councilman Mark Hugel, Jacqueline Johnson, James McCann, Pam McKittrick, Tom Sasso, Kathryn Tribble, and Audrey Lassiter

Absent: Dr. Michael Hogan, Wendy Mathias, Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Dan Schmit, and Keith Toler

Mrs. Washburn, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. A motion was made by Councilman Hugel to dispense with the reading of the minutes. Mr. Sasso seconded the motion, and it was approved by all.

Ms. Tribble from the Youth Virginia Regiment told the committee that “A Post Such as Portsmouth” will be held this weekend. She explained the schedule and locations for the event which portrays the 1781 occupation of Portsmouth leading up to the siege at Yorktown. She added that the organization is working on increasing the diversity of the reenactors. Mr. Sasso added that he has been reaching out to JROTC students to fill the Ethiopian Brigade. They have received the \$10,000 Virginia Humanities Grant, and have purchased the fabric and are working on sewing the uniforms. He explained the requirements to participate in the Youth Virginia Regiment events. They do at least one event per month as part of the Youth Virginia Regiment. Ms. Tribble offered to do a program at the Recreation Center for students 8 – 18 years old.

Mrs. Washburn showed the group the two pamphlets printed by The American Friends of Lafayette that included Portsmouth.

VA250 African American Advisory Council Meeting Take-a-ways

Mrs. Cook told the members that she and a group of other Portsmouth citizens went to Fort Monroe to meet with Mrs. Mamie Locke to learn stories to share during the VA250 events. She explained that Fort Monroe was built with slave labor adding that Robert E. Lee was one of the designers. Currently, Fort Monroe is erecting a monument to honor the 19 slaves who disembarked there. She noted that the dedication is scheduled for 2027. Carlie Fiorina, who is the National Honorary Chairman for the VA250 Commission spoke. She told the group that they need every single voice and every kind of voice to be involved. How do we make this sesquicentennial meaningful to all Virginians? Through a Common Cause to All.

Mr. McCann told the group that VA250 and Friends of Lafayette are promoting “A Post Such as Portsmouth”. They are also promoting more lecture series. He also added that they are being generous with the grants.

Subcommittee Reports:

Research and Story Development: Co-chairs: Dr. Newby-Alexander and Tom Sasso

Mr. Sasso told the group that Mr. Toler has the locations and they are working on the narratives for the Road to Revolution placards. Mrs. Washburn will assist with writing the narratives.

Education and School Outreach: Co-chairs: Rycy Godette

Ms. Godette gave Mrs. Washburn the contact information for her new supervisor. She has provided Mr. Sasso with the list of schools and contacts.

Museums, Public Art, and Exhibit Development: Co-chairs: Dr. Michael Hogan, and Dan Schmit

Mr. McCann told the group that Dr. Hogan was unable to attend. He told the group that the Lafayette panels are currently on display at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum from April 1 through April 30. He sent the information about the upcoming events.

Ms. Lassiter told the group that docents at the Hill House Museum have been doing extensive research on the Hill family and how they related to Lafayette. The museum will be decorated in honor of Lafayette and have an event every weekend in October including reanctors to portray the family members who were involved with the return of Lafayette in 1824. They will also demonstrate food and cultural items of the times such as decorative transparencies and cockades. She reminded the committee that the museum will also have a tea with Mr. Mark Snyder who portrays Lafayette on Saturday, October 26, 2024. She added that the museum had a broken china water pitcher commemorating Lafayette's return in 1824 and they have purchased a matching tea set to be displayed for the month of October.

Mrs. Washburn added that Mr. Mark Snyder will be here from October 24 – 26. Since the Bicentennial Ball in Norfolk is that night, she is planning to host him in Portsmouth. She added that he will be the guest of honor at the Hill House Museum tea.

Events: Co-chairs: Jacqueline Johnson and Audrey Lassiter

Mrs. Washburn thanked Mrs. Johnson for her assistance. She added that she has submitted a grant for the Lafayette Day event at the Main Library and the Churchland branch that will be geared to students with scavenger hunts, etc. She asked if the Recreation Center could be involved. Mrs. Johnson said they can bring students to the library. They want the students to do art and poetry to be displayed at the event on October 25.

Grants and Marketing: Co-chairs: Keith Toler and Wendy Mathias

Mr. McCann told the group that Mr. Toler has applied for six of the Road to Revolution placards and Smithfield has already received 12 of them.

Grass Roots Outreach: Co-chairs: Councilman Mark Hugel and Billie Cook

Mrs. Washburn asked to meet with Councilman Hugel concerning the Bonfires on the Bay. She wants to find a way to put the fires in the water. They will meet next week.

Councilman Hugel told the group that he met with the city manager, however he was not able to get answers to all of his questions. He added that he will meet with the budget directors next week.

Sites and Signage: Co-Chairs: Pam McKittrick and Keith Toler

Mr. McCann told the group that there is a new Sesquicentennial Grant through the National Parks Service that might be useful to some groups. He will send out the information. Councilman Hugel asked if there is an inclusive catalogue of sites that is available to visitors. Mr. McCann showed the group the Path of History brochure. Councilman Hugel suggested using grant funding to create a new brochure.

Old Business/New Business:

Mrs. Washburn welcomed Mr. Bobzien from Naval Medical Center Portsmouth and thanked him for his support. He offered military help for the events. He's going to check the cemetery on the Naval Medical Center grounds to see if there are any Revolutionary War soldiers buried there.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. McKittrick. Mrs. Cook seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 11:05 am.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 10 am in the Portsmouth Economic Development Conference Room.