

**VA 250 Committee Meeting
Portsmouth Economic Development
Conference Room
June 13, 2024**

Present: Karen Washburn, Jarred Bobzien, Billie Cook, Councilman Mark Hugel, Jacqueline Johnson, Wendy Mathias, Pam McKittrick, Keith Toler, and Audrey Lassiter

Absent: Chessie Bray, Rycy Godette, Dr. Michael Hogan, James McCann, Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Tom Sasso, and Dan Schmit,

Mrs. Washburn, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. A motion was made by Mrs. Cook to approve the minutes. Mrs. McKittrick, seconded the motion, and it was approved by all.

Lafayette Returns Updates

Mrs. Washburn informed the group that this will be tabled until the July meeting.

Subcommittee Reports:

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

Both chairs were absent. Mr. Toler told the members that the VA250 \$10,000 grant for the Road to Revolution Signage was approved and this subcommittee needs to write the text for the signage.

Education and School Outreach: Chair: Rycy Godette

Mrs. Washburn notified the group that she has met with the Portsmouth Public Schools representative to finalize the plans for the October 25th Return of Lafayette event. She was informed that two schools will send their 5th graders to Portsmouth City Park and they will not be attending the Olde Towne event.

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

Both chairs were absent however, Dr. Hogan emailed his report:

The city's history museums are currently working on two exhibits that will go up in January/February 2025 and are VA250 related. The exhibit at the Naval Shipyard Museum will look at the role of free and enslaved Black labor in the construction of Dry Dock No. 1 (the nation's first dry dock) at the NNSY. The exhibit at the Portsmouth Colored Community Library Museum (PCCLM) will explore the critical contributions of Black laborers in Hampton Roads to the economic growth of the region and country (from the 18th century to the present). Each of these exhibits is nearing the completion of its first draft (about 90% complete) and we will begin making edits to the text/narrative this month. These exhibits are on schedule and moving forward quickly.

Mrs. Washburn informed that committee that she has spoken with the owner of the MM Crockin building and he is agreeable to have a mural on the back of the building. She is meeting with John Joyce, Project Manager for Support Portsmouth Public Art today to discuss the necessary steps to proceed.

She added that the Hill House Museum will be hosting special events throughout the month of October and the Friends of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum will host two lectures on October 19 and 26.

Events: Co-chairs: Jacqueline Johnson and Audrey Lassiter

Mrs. Washburn shared with the group that the \$5,000 library grant was approved. She will meet with Ms. Johnson to put together the program. She is still working on the Bonfires on the Bay. The staff of Parks and Recreation has stated that no open fires are allowed on land. She is talking with the Coast Guard about fires on the water. The other option is a battery powered artificial flame.

She added that the DAR and Hill House Museum events will be put on the VA250 calendar, city events calendar, and the business association calendar. They will also be listed in the Community Guide. Ms. Johnson said the information is due in August for the October mailing. She will request it be put on the back cover. Mrs. Washburn also noted that she would like to have the mayor make two proclamations, one for the month of October and one proclaiming October 25th as Return of Lafayette Day. Councilman Hugel suggested sending a letter from the committee to Debra White with the details now so it can be on the mayor's calendar.

Councilman Hugel told the group that he attended the Uncorked Wine Festival at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth last weekend during HarborFest and Seawall Festival with Mr. Bobzien. He added that it was well attended. Mr. Bobzien explained that the hope is to expand the event next year in an effort to be ready for Sail250 in 2026. Hospital Point

is the ideal location to watch the parade of sail. They will have rock walls, Navy divers, as well as special operations staff from the Coast Guard. They are hoping that in 2026 if Naval Medical Center Portsmouth is not on a lock down, civilians will be able to be on an access list to attend. They would like to have open buses that will bring people from Olde Towne.

Mr. Bobzien asked about the end goal for 2025 and 2026. Mr. Toler responded that is something to be discussed. Mrs. Washburn asked the members to bring ideas to the July meeting. Mr. Toler reminded the committee that the group needs to make sure to work with Norfolk. He also suggested reviewing Mr. Sasso's list of historic events when planning for 2025. When a new event is established the committee can then move forward with a similar event in 2026.

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

Mr. Toler informed the committee that he has received confirmation of the VA250 \$10,000 grant award for the six Road to Revolution signs and the accompanying audio tour. His budget request for \$30,000 was also approved which means that the committee has \$20,000 to cover the cost of the signs including \$2,000 for the accompanying audio tour. Mrs. Washburn has applied for another one-to-one matching grant. She will find out if it is approved in August. If that grant is approved, she will have secured \$25,000 in grants for the committee.

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

Councilman Hugel informed the group that he has spoken with the regional VA250 chair of the Sail250 committee. The Sail250 committee is in the process of making decisions about placing the participating tall ships at various locations. Councilman Hugel is a member of the Port and Industrial Commission where he has discussed the need for the replacement of the permanent railing along to seawall which prevents many boats from being able to dock in Portsmouth. They have invited staff from the American Cruise Lines, which regularly docks here, to explain the challenges involved in docking along the Portsmouth seawall.. The committee would like to find a way to make the railings removable. Also, there is no power, water, or sewage infrastructure on the seawall. Their goal is to continue to make Portsmouth a stop for the American Cruise Lines ships, as well as having the seawall easily accessible for Sail250.

Councilman Hugel added that while the city is working through the waterfront redevelopment, it is important to make sure that docking locations are factored into the plan. Additionally, he has met with Tre Burke from the budget office to discuss the 2026 fireworks display and accompanying events.

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

No additional report.

Old Business/New Business:

No report.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Cook. Ms. Lassiter seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 10:36 am.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, July 11, 2024 at 10 am in the Portsmouth Economic Development Conference Room.