

VA 250 Committee Meeting
Portsmouth Economic Development
Conference Room
May 9, 2024

Present: Jarred Bobzien, Chessie Bray, Billie Cook, Rycy Godette, Councilman Mark Hugel, Wendy Mathias, James McCann, Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Dan Schmit, Keith Toler, and Audrey Lassiter

Absent: Karen Washburn, Dr. Michael Hogan, Jacqueline Johnson, Pam McKittrick, and Tom Sasso

Mr. Toler, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. A motion was made by Mrs. Cook to approve the minutes. Mr. Schmit seconded the motion, and it was approved by all.

VA250 Related Updates

Mr. McCann informed the group that the committee needs to complete the pre-request reservation for the VA250 Mobile Museum by June. It will start traveling this fall. He added that Dr. Hogan will check with the schools for dates. He also noted that when the committee sponsors events related to the VA250, statistical and event information must be provided to the state by the end of the month in which the event took place.

Mr. Toler told the group that he attended meetings for Sail250 working groups for 1) history/storyline/events as well as 2) tourism and economic development. The meetings were held in Norfolk and had representatives from throughout the region as well as Richmond and Alexandria. He explained that this committee needs a representative with the power to make decisions to be on the Sail250 Executive Committee. For example, one of Portsmouth's challenges in participating is finding ships tall enough to bridge over the railing along the seawall. Peter Glagola, the city's Marketing Director, has been recommended for appointment to the Sail250 Executive Committee.

Subcommittee Reports:

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

Dr. Newby-Alexander informed the committee that she is ready to start working on the copy for the Road to Revolution interpretative signage.

Education and School Outreach: Co-chairs: Rycy Godette

No report.

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

Mr. Schmit told the group that every Saturday in October the Hill House Museum will have a Lafayette themed event and the Lafayette traveling exhibit will be there the entire month. On the first Saturday there will be a lecture exploring the Hill family's connection to Lafayette's 1824 visit. On the second Saturday the Tidewater Winds Quintet will play music written for Lafayette. The third Saturday will be Lafayette Day, and finally on Saturday, October 26, the Hill House Museum will host a Lafayette Tea with Mark Snyder in his role as the Marquis de Lafayette.

Mr. Toler informed the group that Dr. Hogan is developing a special exhibit for VA 250 at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum and will submit a VA250 Humanities Grant application at a future date.

Events: Co-chairs: Jacqueline Johnson and Audrey Lassiter

Ms. Lassiter informed the group that landscaping project with Chaplain Karl Gibbs, LT, on the USS George H. W. Bush really transformed Lafayette Park. Mr. Phillips with the Department Parks & Recreation furnished 50 plants and a large pile of mulch. She encouraged the committee members to visit the park and see the transformation.

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

Mr. Toler told the group that he has applied for the VA250 Marketing Leverage Grant for six Road to Revolution interpretive signs that will hopefully be completed by June 2025. He added that the \$10,000 grant includes 6 interpretive signs much like Path of History or Civil War Trails and a GPS based audio tour of the sites. Mr. Toler requested \$30,000 in the city budget and the \$10,000 match will come from those funds.

He added that Mrs. Washburn is applying for another VA250 Humanities Grant for the Lafayette educational library program in October which has programming for multiple days, at multiple libraries, as well as a progressive dinner at the Bain House, Grice House, and Hill House Museum.

Mr. Toler called for a vote to send a letter of support for both Mrs. Washburn's and Dr. Hogan's grants, and it was approved by all.

Dr. Newby-Alexander suggested talking to the grant administrator for the VA250 Humanities Grants to assure that these grants are being applied for by two separate entities. She also asked for information on the six signs planned with the VA250 Marketing Leverage Grant. Mr. Toler noted that he will send her a copy of the grant which includes the locations. He added that this will include three 2-sided signs and \$2,000 for an audio tour.

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

Mrs. Cook told the group that she serves on the African-American Historical Society and is meeting with them on possible future events.

Mr. McCann added that the VA250 Commission feels that it is important for localities to host a lecture series. Mr. Toler told the group that the Friends of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum currently has a lecture series and he will suggest they focus on VA250 when planning next year's speakers.

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

Dr. Newby-Alexander suggested having a printed map to accompany the audio tour. Mr. Toler told the committee that he felt the printed map should include the Road to Revolution interpretive signage.

Old Business/New Business:

Mr. Bobzien informed the group that there are no Revolutionary War soldiers buried in the Naval Medical Center's cemetery. He added that he does not think he will be able to assist with the bonfires. He is going to continue to pursue the event and would like to know how many fires they would need to provide.

Dr. Newby-Alexander asked about using the illusion of fire. Mr. Bobzien responded that since there is no available electricity, they would have to use battery powered devices. He cited the cost for just a one time use.

Ms. Bray with the Norfolk Naval Shipyard explained that she has been working on a reception for several weeks. The problem she is having is finding a location. Trophy Park is in disrepair and not adequate for holding an event, and Gosport Park also needs maintenance. Mr. Toler suggested asking the Commander who lives in Quarters A to

have an open house as part of the event. Ms. Bray was not sure about making that request and added that the Shipyard would not be able to provide funding. Mr. Toler said the city may be able to cover the cost of food but could not sponsor any alcohol. Mr. McCann told the group that Mrs. Washburn is still hopeful about the fireworks. Since she was unable to attend today's meeting, she sent a list of events that are being planned for the Return of Lafayette in October.

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, June 13, 2024 at 10 am in the Portsmouth Economic Development Conference Room.