

**VA 250 Committee Meeting**  
**Portsmouth Economic Development**  
**Conference Room**  
**August 8th , 2024**

Present: Chessie Bray, Rycy Godette, Councilman Mark Hugel, Jacqueline Johnson, Wendy Mathias, James McCann, Pam McKittrick, Tom Sasso, Dan Schmit, Keith Toler, and Audrey Lassiter

Absent: Karen Washburn, Jared Bobzien, Billie Cook, Dr. Michael Hogan, and Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander

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

### **Updates**

Mrs. Washburn sent the following information for Mr. McCann to share with the committee:

1. She has met with the Fire Marshall and he has approved the use of cold spark machines for the Bonfires on the Bay event. Mr. Sasso told the group that a cold spark machine will shoot 10 feet in the air and is safe to the touch. She still needs to get the approval from James Wright with the Department of Engineering.
2. She still needs to finalize the carriage route and will meet with Mr. Palamarchuck from the Department of Parks and Recreation next week to find out about the required permits.
3. She also needs to get an event permit for the Gosport Park reception. Ms. Bray informed the group that she has gotten permission to have visitors in Quarters A and will have more information soon. They will need funding for the event.
4. She sent information about the progressive dinner which will be held on Friday, October 25 from 7 – 9 pm. The three courses will be served at the Bain House, the Grice House, and the Hill House Museum. The cost will be \$75 until August 15 when it increases to \$100.

Mr. McCann made the following points:

1. He is creating a new PVA250 page [www.portsvacation.com/portsmouth-va250](http://www.portsvacation.com/portsmouth-va250) (work in progress) as well as a new blog post about Portsmouth's Lafayette events <https://portsvacation.com/lafayette-returns-to-portsmouth-va/>. He asked committee members to please check the website to make sure their name and information is correct and let him know. Also the meeting minutes are posted there.
2. He attended the state capital VA250 committee meeting, and the July 4<sup>th</sup> event which was well attended and excellent. The committee members expressed that they were disappointed to hear that Portsmouth's Museums did not participate in the Museums' outreach event that night (some other localities did not participant either). They are hoping "it was inspirational to make our localities just as grand." He urged committee members to view the VA250 site for ideas for our local events.
3. He stressed the importance for the committee to start focusing on Portsmouth's 2026 commemoration and start planning next month.
4. Erin Colston, Museum Manager, Children's Museum of Virginia and Rycy Godette with Portsmouth Public Schools are working on a plan to get the Mobile Museum to several schools on Friday, April 11, 2025 and to the Children's Museum of Virginia on Saturday, April 12, 2025 (to coincide with "A Post Such as Portsmouth" if possible).
5. He explained that the committee can use the PVA250 logo as needed, but he is required to reports by December 5, 2024 exactly how many times it has been used and in what context, such as on posters, brochures, website etc. The VA250 logo MUST only be used after permission is granted by the state committee at their quarterly meetings, and he must request to use it in each instance. As of now, he has requested it for use on the PVA250 website where it will specifically link to the state website.

Councilman Hugel informed the group that he has met with the City Manager and is going to have the permit fees waived. The fireworks are not scheduled yet.

Mr. Toler asked Councilman Hugel about having a representative for the Norfolk Sail250 Committee. Councilman Hugel will followup.

Mr. Toler thanked Mr. McCann for all of his work on the website and blog. He added that Mrs Washburn has set up a Facebook page for Portsmouth Bicentennial Lafayette Program. He added that the committee needs to plan for the 2026 celebration and suggested creating the events now so as to be able to test them in 2025.

## **Subcommittee Reports:**

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

Mr. Sasso explained that he is working on completing the drafts for the Road to Revolution signs. Mr. Toler wants them in the ground by April 1, 2025. He noted that there are quite a few steps in this process including: determine the sites, contact the property owners, have the history committee finalize the needed copy, locate images, submit the final draft to the Road to Revolution review committee, and finally fabricate and install the signs which takes some time. He added that there is a \$20,000 budget for this project and City Council has already approved accepting the grant. He added that his total budget is \$30,000 which leaves \$10,000 for other projects. He also asked Mr. McCann to play a portion of one of the current walking tours so the committee could hear the quality of the AI voice that is used. He explained that the city has its own recording studio and Mrs. Washburn and her group will be recording new audio tours soon.

### **Education and School Outreach:** Chair: Rycy Godette

No report.

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

No report.

### **Events:** Co-chairs: Jacqueline Johnson and Audrey Lassiter

Mrs. Johnson explained that she has discussed October dates and locations for the Lafayette education programs with Mrs. Washburn. It has been confirmed that one program will be presented at the Senior Station for their "Lunch and Learn". The program will also be presented at the recreation centers however, these dates have not yet been determined.

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

Mr. McCann told the group that there is a new VA250 Preservation Fund Grant opening soon which focuses on small museums.

Mr. Sasso suggested that the next grant be used to increase the size and scope of "A Post Such As Portsmouth". He suggested possibly adding a parade.

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

Councilman Hugel informed the group that he has completed everything Mrs. Washburn has requested.

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

Mr. Toler told the group that Mr. Schmit has been working with TowneBank and DAR to move the Lafayette stone which is now in the flower bed facing High Street. Mr. Schmit explained that the stone and a commemorative sign will be placed beside the handicapped ramp in the flower bed facing Crawford Street. This will make it more visible to visitors. He added that TowneBank and DAR are funding the project.

**Old Business/New Business:**

No report.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Kittrick. Mr. Sasso seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 10:36 am.

**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 12, 2024 at 10 am in the Portsmouth Economic Development Conference Room.