

VA 250 Committee Meeting
Portsmouth Economic Development
Conference Room
September 12, 2024

Present: Karen Washburn, Chessie Bray, Billie Cook, Rycy Godette, Dr. Michael Hogan, Councilman Mark Hugel, Wendy Mathias, James McCann, Pam McKittrick, Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Dan Schmit, and Audrey Lassiter

Absent: Jared Bobzien, Jacqueline Johnson, Tom Sasso, and Keith Toler

Mrs. Washburn, called the meeting to order at 10:02 am. A motion was made by Councilman Hugel to approve the minutes. Mr. Schmit seconded the motion, and it was approved by all.

Updates

Mrs. Washburn told the group that Mr. Toler offered to let part of the \$10,000 be used on marketing if needed. Councilman Hugel suggested meeting with Mr. Glagola to find out what marketing the city has already planned. Councilman Hugel made a motion to spend up to \$2,000 for marketing if needed. Ms. McKittrick seconded the motion and it was approved by all.

Mrs. Washburn added that American Friends of Lafayette is also sharing the information.

Mr. McCann made the following points:

He shared the printed “The Marquis de Lafayette Returns to Portsmouth” brochure with the committee members. He also shared information from Ms. Johnson about the events at the library and Senior Station.

He noted that the locations for the Road to Revolution signs are due in three days.

Dr. Newby-Alexander told the committee that she has looked at the sites and sent a recommendation to Mr. McCann.

Mr. McCann told the committee that he offered to host the state VA250 committee meeting because none of their meetings have been held in Hampton Roads.

Dr. Newby-Alexander told the group that Luther P. Jackson was one of Virginia's most important civil rights activists. He produced several historical investigations including *Virginia Negro Soldiers and Seamen in the Revolutionary War* and *Negro Office Holders in Virginia* as well as *Free Negro Labor and Property Holding*. His works include all of Portsmouth's local African American history heroes. She explained that the HathiTrust Digital Library offers free access to the *Virginia Negro Soldiers and Seaman in the Revolutionary War*. She noted that Billy Flora was really William Flora and was not called Billy during his lifetime.

Ms. Washburn shared the following details for the Return of Lafayette events:

She plans to rent 10 – 15 cold spark machines and purchase the remainder. They will be located on the new seawall behind Harbor Tower Apartments.

She priced events for the evening of October 22. Fireworks are approximately \$40,000. A drone show is \$20,000 but a laser show could possibly be projected on 1 High Street for \$3,000. She has met with Mr. Glagola and he will assist with the laser show.

She explained that local artist Sam Welty has agreed to paint a mural of Lafayette before the event and then add details from the October 25 celebration afterward. He can have it completed quickly but the location is yet to be finalized. He will start as soon as possible.

She noted that both Norfolk and Portsmouth have City Council meetings on October 22 but Norfolk Mayor, Kenny Alexander will make a proclamation around 3:30 pm.

She also told the group that Portsmouth Public Schools will send a videographer on October 25.

Ms. Bray told the committee that there will be an invitation only tour of Quarters A on October 25 from 4:30 to 5:30 pm after Lafayette visits the arch on High Street. She noted that this will be a quick tour and security will need a list of people attending along with their social security numbers and the sponsor who will escort them into the event. Refreshments will be served.

Ms. Lassiter told the committee that she has been working with Mr. Schmit and other Portsmouth Historical Association board members to have repairs and landscaping completed as well as decorations planned for the October 25 event at the Lafayette Arch.

Councilman Hugel suggested sending the city the list of events to make sure all of the locations are clean. Mr. Schmit will send the information to the civic league. Ms.

Lassiter will ask at the Clean Communities Commission to make sure that the trash trucks are not working during that time and bulk refuse has been removed. She will give the list of events to the appropriate city departments.

Mr. Schmit told the group that WTKR will be doing an interview for the October events at the Hill House in September and the Hampton Roads Show will have a feature on all of the events on October 18.

Old Business/New Business:

No report.

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

Next Meeting:

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