

VA 250 Committee Meeting
Portsmouth Economic Development
Conference Room
October 10, 2024

Present: Karen Washburn, Billie Cook, Rycy Godette, Councilman Mark Hugel, Jacqueline Johnson, Wendy Mathias, Pam McKittrick, Dan Schmit, Keith Toler, and Audrey Lassiter

Absent: Jared Bobzien, Chessie Bray, Dr. Michael Hogan, James McCann, and Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, and Tom Sasso

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

Lafayette Final Updates

Mrs. Washburn told the committee:

Everything is on track for the arrival of Lafayette on October 22. She has hired two companies to provide the cold spark machines. There will also be a laser light show which will be seen from the American Rover at 6:30 pm.

Additionally, the vocalists has been rehearsing, they have permits in place, and the boat to carry Lafayette on October 25 is reserved.

Beginning at 9 am at Portsmouth City Park, French Army liaison to NATO, Nicolas Durand will speak. The DAR State Regent, the National Chair from the Franco-American Memorial Committee, and Executive Director of the American Friends of Lafayette, Chuck Schawm, will be in attendance in addition to many members from different DAR Chapters around the area. Mayor Glover will make a proclamation. The city will provide chairs for the event.

A tour of Quarters A has been approved for October 25 from 4:30 – 5:30 pm. This will be a quick tour of the home with refreshments afterward. This event will be by invitation only and security will need a list of people in advance.

Sam Welty has agreed to paint a mural of Lafayette before October 25 and then add other elements to the mural commemorating the 200 anniversary of his return after the events are completed. Several locations are being considered.

She and James Fayette have been in 12 community centers and after school programs and will be in the schools starting next week.

Mr. Toler told the group that the city will spend \$1,500 or more for marketing. He added that Mr. McCann needs the number of attendees, revenue generated, money spent, and media coverage for his final reports. He has also created a banner for lectures to encourage visitors to attend.

Mr. Toler also informed the group that Mr. Glagola will be on the Sail250 Committee and explained that there are many opportunities for committee involvement.

Ms. Lassiter told the committee members that the city's brochures have been shared with the Mayor's Military Affairs Committee, the French Delegation at NATO, Daughters of the American Revolution, the Olde Towne Business Association, local merchants, and at tourism outreaches in Virginia Beach and Bracey Welcome Center for the whole month of October.

Councilman Hugel suggested promoting the route so people can line the streets.

Mr. Schmit told the group that Ogg Stone Works should have the commemorative stone installed in front of TowneBank on October 16.

Ms. Lassiter told the group that on the October edition of *Portsmouth Now*, Rob Lauer featured five different segments on the October Lafayette events. The show can be viewed on the Portsmouth YouTube channel.

She added that the Hill House Museum has set up an extensive five panel display in the lobby of the Portsmouth Welcome Center to make visitors aware of the importance of Lafayette in the Revolutionary War, Lafayette's Portsmouth events in 1824, and the upcoming October events.

She reminded the committee that the Hill House Museum was featured on the Hometown History segment with Myles Henderson on WTKR. It was aired on October 3 at 6:45 am and then repeated several times that weekend. It was also shared in the business association weekly newsletter.

Ms. Lassiter told the group that she has contacted the city and the needed brick and light repairs have been completed in Lafayette Park. She and other Hill House board members have planted 36 pansies beside the arch. Approximately 70 more plants will be added today. The volunteers will continue to make the needed improvements to the park area.

Additionally, she has reached out to Mark Palamarchuck with Parks and Recreation to ensure the empty planters at North Landing have been cleaned and have flowers.

She added that she has contacted Waste Management and no trash trucks will be there that afternoon. They will request the street sweeper that day. Mr. Sumler, the Waste Management Inspector will ride through after the truck has completed its route to ensure no trash or bulk items are on the street or sidewalk. She and another volunteer will walk the route and make sure no trash or trash cans are on the street.

Subcommittee Reports:

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

Neither chair was in attendance. Mr. Toler told the group that he wants to get the six signs installed by next summer but he does not have the complete information. He will ask Dr. Hogan to assist with this project. He added that all signs need to be on city property.

He described the current planned signs:

1. Benedict Arnold's American headquarters in Portsmouth during the British occupation of 1781 which is now The Coffee Shoppe.
2. General Cornwallis's American headquarters in Portsmouth and the African American spy who provided false information that led to the decision to travel to Yorktown for the last battle of the war. This location is now the Bain House on the corner of Court and North streets.
3. William Flora's livery stable. Flora was a free black and patriot known as the hero of Great Bridge for his role in the 1775 battle. The livery was located across the street from the Middle Street Garage.
4. Trinity Church would have a sign that focuses on the bell (same but now restored) that rang noting the end of the Revolutionary War. The sign would include the Revolutionary War heroes buried in the churchyard cemetery.
5. Ferry Crossing House (the house is gone but a sign will be placed on the site). The Ethiopian Regiment formed in Portsmouth and traveled across the river to participate in many local skirmishes. This sign would tell the story of the regiment and the impact Black soldiers had on the war.

6. The Agnew House – General Charles Lee oversaw the Patriot forces that burned this Tory home to the foundations as an example to colonists still loyal to the king. The current structure is built on the original foundation located on the corner of Crawford and North streets (formerly the Patriot Inn). The sign will tell the story of Loyalists and possibly the Queen's Rangers who were in Portsmouth during the 1781 British occupation of Portsmouth.

These six Road to Revolution sites would be linked with current Virginia Historic Markers (ten signs related to American Revolution) and current Portsmouth Path of History signage in a GPS-based, self-guided audio tour called Portsmouth and the Road to Revolution. (an example of the tour is the Underground Railroad Audio Tour that can be found on the Visit Portsmouth website). The signage and tour will continue long past the conclusion of the VA250 and will become a new tourism offering for visitors to the city.

Mrs. Washburn will ask Greg Eatroff to research the locations and events while he is working in the history room.

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

No report.

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

No report.

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

No report.

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

No report.

Old Business/New Business:

No report.

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