

Minutes

Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee
5th Floor Conference Room Richmond City Hall

Meeting: March 19, 2025

Call to Order: 12:05pm

Presiding: Katie Schmidt, Chair

Attending Committee Members: Katie Schmidt, Ralph Hambrick, Greg Velzy, Shawna Shade, John Heerwald, Will Isenberg, Tricia Pearsall, Alex Dahm, Lynn Crump, Justin Doyle.

Minutes: February 19, 2026 Move to approve – Lynn Crump, seconded – Ralph Hambrick. Unanimously approved.

Current Issues:

- **CRLC Richmond Updates:** Parker Agelasto, *Executive Director, Capital Regional Land Conservancy*
 - Parker not present
 - Greg announced that FOLAR was sponsoring an Appomattox Paddle on May 22, 2026. This is part of the Riverfront Champions Initiative.
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- **VA Scenic Rivers Update:** Joshua Bateman, *Environmental Program Planner, DCR* - Not present and no updates
- **James River Park Update:** Andrew Alli, *JRP and Richmond Trails Superintendent* - Not present but sent out Trails and Park Superintendent Report for February, 2026.
 - JRP Report accompanies the Minutes e-mail.
 - Tricia voiced interest in hearing about progress other than trails occurring in the JRP. She wanted to know how the NRMP is being implemented and adapted into practices.
 - Greg reported that Ross said that a major road overhaul on Riverside Trail from the Shelter to the Boulevard Bridge has been proposed and that Ross had asked JROC for \$12,000 to revamp road to include culverts, widening and large amounts of packed gravel. It was mentioned that many of the culverts in the park are clogging.
 - There are significant log jams from high water in the smaller creeks and passageways in the southside areas of the JRP. This poses a danger re: high water
- **JRA Update:** Justin Doyle, *Director of Community Conservation, James River Association*
 - Justin joined via Zoom. He said he had met Bob Hicks (former Falls of the James Scenic River Board member) at a James River Association event.
 - The JRA CSO Funding Advocacy at the General Assembly was successful.
 - The CSO regulator \$5 project is under construction next to the Buzzard Center. Excavation should occur soon. He has pitched ideas with DPU to post a sign giving educational signage about this regulator as well as the entire CSO system in Richmond.
 - The 50th Anniversary Gala at Tredegar Saturday, March 21, 2026 is almost sold out.
 - JRA will monitor the log island removal at the T-Pott Bridge by DPU mandated by the State of Virginia. He will have more information next month. There were many questions and concerns about the timeline, Army Corps of Engineers permits, etc. Alex Dahm said the removal permits depends on method of removal and timeline. DPU will try to get the job done this spring and they are looking at doing it via barges. A difficult situation for certain.
- **American Rivers:** Katie Schmidt, *Director, National Dam Removal Program, American Rivers* – present, but no updates
 - Katie said that work is continuing on the Wild and Scenic River proposal
 - Also Ralph asked about the Virginia Stream Barrier Task Force. It meets twice a year to discuss river connectivity such as dam removal and improving stream crossings.
- **DPU/RVA H2O Updates:** Scott Morris, *Director, Department of Public Utilities* – not present and no updates. April meeting for certain.

- **Scenic Virginia Updates:** Lynn Crump, *Viewshed Project Manager Planning* announced that a Scenic Virginia Resources Round Table is planned to be held at Montpelier. The panel and advisors are looking at state and landowner issues such as power lines, etc.
- **Friends of James River Park Report:** Shawna Shade, *Office Administrator, Friends of the James River Park* - present
 - Biggest news is the naming of Executive Director – Penelope Davenport Gorman.
<https://jamesriverpark.org/meet-our-new-executive-director/>
 - Penelope has been with the City and JRP for 11 years and hopes to attend the April meeting.
 - Shawna said the Belle Isle Nature Exploration Area (NEA) should be completed this Spring at a cost of \$100,000.
 - This year's Wood River Run will be on Saturday, April 25th in the Park!
- **James River Outdoor Coalition:** Greg Velzy, *Co-President*, - present
 - 14th Street steps and widening walk way is completed and funded
 - The Reedy Creek area around the air pump installation has been re-graveled and cleaned up. The fence in that area is due to come down and a split rail erected in its place.
- **Brown's Island Renovation Update:** Alex Dahm, *Operations Manager, Venture Richmond* - present
 - Construction is soldiering on at Brown's Island. On schedule.
 - Greg said he had noticed workers throwing stuff over edge into the river. Probably DPU workers. Alex said he would get on top of that.
 - Alex met with DPU about the Bayscapes area. It's going to be an important piece as it will have to be used for remediation for T-Pott log removal. They will probably have to use the ramp near the rope swing to the left of the current boat ramp and so will be cleaned up for the Brown's Island project at a later date.
- Mayo's Island - Bids are being taken for removal of the old buildings.

New Business:

- Graffiti
 - Tricia brought up that the graffiti along the River at the moment is particularly horrid, particularly on southside and the railroad bridge us horrid. We can bring it up with DPU at next month's meeting to see if we can get help with removal.
 - Will remarked that it got worse with the pandemic and pipeline is even worse because of no monitoring of that area. He suggested we take a 'learning to live with it' in a productive ways approach and added that there was a graffiti park proposal years ago. There have also been banners. He also suggested that we go to mural community see if they can be helpful and added that 'Paint is poison', so painting over it is not the solution.
 - Shawna, added to keep it out of the natural river corridor.
 - John Heerwald stated that the Game commission used to have a crusade to clean up boat ramps and worked with judiciary, arresting, fining perpetrators and finally got it clean.
 - Alex said that the City has to get involved. DPU has a task Force It's an economic impact + consequences. Enforcement is a Priority.
 - Will added that for many offenders it's the thrill of getting away with something. Will said he would talk with friends to see . Tricia will share Matt Lively's contact info to see if he has any suggestions of an approach.
 - Shawna suggested that we have a 'Take Back the Park Day' to eradicate graffiti.
- Camping on Goat Island
 - Greg brought up the concern that this was a dangerous place to camp with its proximity just above Williams Dam. This is a Henrico matter.
- Katie resigns as Chair: Katie is resigning from Chair of the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee. It is hoped that she will keep on the Committee as a member. Will Isenberg and Greg Velzy agreed to share the Chairmanship for now.

Reports:

Open Discussion:

- Ralph said that the River Management Society is having a book discussion of Robert Macfarlane's "Is A River Alive" .

- I think next month's meeting is at DPU - 730 E Broad St Fl 6th, Richmond, VA

Adjourn: 1:02PM

Next Public Meeting: April 16, 2026

Meetings usually begin at 12:00 noon in the Conference Room on the 5th floor of Richmond City Hall. Meetings are scheduled for the THIRD Thursday of each month. All meetings are open to the public. If you are not now receiving e-mail meeting notices and wish to receive them, please provide your name and e-mail address to kschmidt@americanrivers.org. If you would like to be removed from the list, so indicate at the above e-mail address.