

Future of Hampton Roads, Inc
Board Meeting
March 25, 2008
Portsmouth City Hall

MINUTES

Present: George Barnett, Judy Begland, Joe Bouchard, Doug Boyce, Jim Carr, Jim Chapman, Art Collins, Durwood Curling, Minette Cooper, Phil Damuth, Midge Eason, Lynn Gordon, John Hadfield, Clyde Hoey, Jack Hornbeck, Kim Humphrey, Bill Mann, Martha McClees, Suzanne Puryear, Bert Schmidt, John Stone, Ray Taylor, Vince Thomas, Harry Train, Jake Tobin, Bruce Williams, Ray White

Ray Taylor opened the meeting at 11:00. He welcomed five new members to the Board; Doug Boyce of Paul D. Camp Community College, Martha McClees of Virginia Beach Vision, Kim Humphrey of the Community Mediation Center of Southeastern Virginia, Bill Mann of Mannpower Enterprises, Inc., and Bruce Williams of Bruce Williams and Associates. Ray also recognized four new FHR Officers; Jim Babcock as Vice Chairmen, Phil Damuth as Senior Vice President, Clyde Hoey as 1st Vice President, and Suzanne Puryear as 2nd Vice President.

Chairman Thomas welcomed all and thanked the new members for joining the FHR effort. He additionally thanked the City of Portsmouth for hosting the meeting, noting that this was another in a series of meetings to be held at various venues throughout the Region. Vince went on to introduce Michael Townes, President and CEO of the Hampton Roads Transit since 1999.

Michael presented an overview of Hampton Roads Transit's capability in the region, noting the provision of public inter-modal transportation serving seven cities in Hampton Roads including Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach. Detail of the services provided can be found on the web at <www.gohrt.com>. He noted several new services coming on line. Shuttle service will start in Portsmouth in April. The Metro Area Express (MAX) will be introduced in mid-June. This service is designed to provide value priced service to business commuters. New hybrid-electric shuttle busses will replace those currently in service. The Advanced Communication System (ACS), a new radio system and an automatic vehicle locator (AVL) system with computer-aided dispatch (CAD) for the fixed-route bus fleet is being introduced. Finally, construction is underway in Norfolk for The Tide Light Rail commuter system. Tide will ultimately extend throughout the region to include the Naval Base, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, and perhaps to Newport News.

Michael noted that his main concern was to provide consistent funding for the system.

Public investment funds public transportation: 30% from local funding, 31% Federal funding, 15% State funding, and 23% from passenger revenue. Most local funds come from property taxes. Estimated rate of return on investment to the cities is six to one (for every dollar spent there is a six dollar return). Of the riders, 70% are commuting to work and 30% are going to school, health care facilities, or shopping. Fourteen percent of the HRT budget goes to diesel fuel. As the number 33 metropolitan area in the Nation, Hampton Roads is number 67 in public transportation investment. Michael noted that lack of investment makes public transportation a hard sell in Hampton Roads.

Following Questions and Answers, Chairman Thomas praised Michael Townes for his excellent work on HRT and thanked him for his presentation to FHR.

Ray Taylor reported on the status of work in progress on the FHR mission statement and revised by-laws.

Art Collins reported on the status of transportation in the General Assembly. The Governor is considering calling a special session to resolve the issue. The Hampton Roads plan has not changed since it was presented in 1997.

Jim Babcock announced that the Structures Project Steering Committee would hold its final session on Saturday, April 26th.

Clyde Hoey noted that HRCCE has raised \$31,000 toward its matching grant with the Norfolk Foundation. HRCCE will be moving into offices provided by WHRO in late March.

Ray White informed the Board that plans for the Mid-Currituck County Bridge are well underway. The bridge is scheduled to be completed in 2013. Motorists driving to Corolla could save an average of 89 minutes by the year 2025 by using the new bridge.

The Dismal Swamp State Park was recently opened in Camden County on US 17, just 1 mile below the Virginia border. Among the 200 attendees to the dedication were, Sen. Harry Blevins and Mayor Dalton Edge. Visitors can cross a new 80' long swing bridge across the historic Dismal Swamp Canal to visit the Park. The bridge, which will open only to pedestrians and bicyclists, will provide the only access to the 5,600 sq.ft. Visitors Center. It floats on the water and will remain in the closed position when not in use to permit boating traffic on the waterway. Adjacent to the bridge is a new canoe & kayak launch. The park eventually will include 20 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails, all of which will run along old logging routes throughout the swamp. Interpretive programs will take place throughout the year, covering a variety of topics on cultural and natural history of the Dismal Swamp. Park Rangers will guide visitors on exciting explorations to uncover fascinating natural surroundings and make great discoveries about the world in which we live. The vast swamp, which encompasses Chesapeake, Suffolk and northeastern North Carolina, is becoming a popular destination.

A study for a potential "Green" Industrial Park in Camden County is underway. The University of North Carolina is currently researching and will be preparing a study regarding the feasibility of a potential "Green" Industrial Park in the area where the Camden Landfill was proposed. The study may also look at a potential "Green" community just below the Chesapeake border surrounding the industrial park. There has been interest from Hampton Roads developers to participate in a possible "green" development project that would be on both sides of the Virginia/North Carolina line.

Ray White reminded the Board of a networking social to be held on April 10th from 5 PM to 8 PM at The Lesner Inn on Shore Drive in Virginia Beach. The event is being sponsored by the Committee of 1000, a group of business leaders located in northeastern North Carolina. All Future of Hampton Roads board members are invited to this event.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55.