



MINUTES

WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Board of Directors Meeting

December 1, 2021

**Members Present**

Ollie Barber  
Terri Connolly  
Katy Delahanty  
Greg Fischer  
Chris Jones  
Troy Miles  
Ted Nixon  
Nicole Walton  
Gerina Whethers

**Members Absent**

Sam Aguiar  
Marianne Butler  
Kevin Fields  
David James  
Susan Moss  
Kerry Stemler

**Others Present**

Jeff O'Brien

**Staff Present**

Deborah Bilitski  
Emily Clayton  
Ryan Johnson  
David Karem  
Alex Laughlin  
Cordell Lawrence  
Richard Marion  
Bryan McKiernan  
Catie Nelson  
Gary Pepper  
Antonio Petty-Malone  
Kelley Runyon  
Ashley Smith  
Krista Snider



### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Chris Jones at 4:04p.m. on December 1, 2021. The meeting was held at 129 River Road Louisville, KY 40202.

### **Approval of the Minutes**

Minutes for the October 27, 2021 meetings were approved.

Chair Jones recapped yesterday's press conference re: Governor Beshear's announcement that he will propose a \$10 million contribution to Waterfront Park Phase IV in the Executive Budget. Deborah Bilitski emphasized that staff will work with the Board to reach out to state legislators to ensure the funding is passed in the next legislative session.

Deborah Bilitski introduced Emily Clayton, who was recently hired into the Waterfront Park Coordinator position. The position is jointly funded by Friends of Waterfront Park.

### **Executive Director's Report:**

#### **2021 Year in Review**

Deborah highlighted Waterfront Park's accomplishments during 2021, the list of which is attached to these minutes.

#### **Belle of Louisville Riverboats**

Krista Snider highlighted 2021 accomplishments for Belle of Louisville Riverboats, the list of which is attached to these minutes.

She also mentioned the Cookies with Santa events are sold out and a New Year's Eve event will close out the 2021 season on the Mary M. Miller.

#### **Park Maintenance**

Deborah introduced the maintenance crew in attendance at the meeting. Gary Pepper gave an update on park maintenance. He reiterated that 7 employees maintain the 85 acres of Waterfront Park, the Big Four Bridge and Phase IV, as well as several areas on the perimeter of the park. The park has been winterized for the season and the crew is working on equipment maintenance, tree planting, leaf removal and other winter projects. Deborah also mentioned that Antonia Petty-Malone came on board in January 2021.

#### **Phase IV Update**

Deborah Bilitski and Ted Nixon gave an update on fundraising progress for Phase IV. Ted has a goal of raising \$12 million for Phase IV construction by the end of 2021.

### **Development/ Fundraising**

Ashley Smith gave an update on development and fundraising. Ashley announced 100% of the Waterfront Park Board and Staff have contributed a donation toward the annual campaign in 2021. She is also working on the end of year giving campaign with an end of year mailing. Confidence is high that the FY22 fundraising goal will be met.

### **Friends of the Waterfront**

Nicole Walton gave an update for Friends of the Waterfront. Joshua Watkins and David Nichols will remain President and Vice President, respectively, for 2022. Five new Board members have been added to the Board as well, with a goal of adding diversification to the Board.

### **Events**

Catie Nelson gave an update on Waterfront Park events. There are two remaining events in Waterfront Park for 2021 – the Venardos Circus and Christmas Tree Lane. The event calendar is filling quickly for 2022. She also announced that OKI Bourbon raised \$5,000 for Waterfront Park.

### **2022 Board Meeting Schedule**

Kelley Runyon presented the 2022 Board meeting schedule.

### **Open Discussion on Revenue Generation**

Chris Jones reminded the Board that ideas are welcome for new ways to bring revenue to Waterfront Park. The General Assembly goes into session on January 4 and it would help reinforce our cause in regards to the Governor's proposed State contribution to Phase IV if additional private support can be shown. Please contact Ted if you have contacts who may be interested in contributing to Phase IV.

Pursuant to KRS 61.810 (b) and (c), the Board entered closed session at 4:57pm to discuss real estate actions.

No formal vote or action was taken, and the Board resumed open session at 5:05 p.m.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

## 2021 Highlights

- Produced the Louisville Orchestra Waterfront Fourth of July celebration in partnership with the Louisville Orchestra and Danny Wimmer Presents
- Produced 4 Waterfront Wednesdays in partnership with Louisville Public Media
- Premiered Live on the Lawn, a new concert series with 10 shows on the Great Lawn produced by Danny Wimmer Presents
- Launched a new event series – Fridays at the Front and Brunch by the Bridge
- Hosted a total of 97 events in calendar year 2021, including Juneteenth, Funk Fest, World Fest, Kentuckiana Pride Festival, and Venardos Circus
- Added 3 new park vendors (Big Moe’s Barbecue, Snack Box, Brain Freeze)
- 25 different organizations requested special Big Four Bridge lighting (85 days total), generating \$16,382.57 in bridge lighting revenue (compared to \$5,197 in 2020 and \$242 in 2019)
- Planted 73 new trees to complete a 280-tree multi-year replacement of Ash trees along River Road and Witherspoon Street
- Secured \$150,000 of ARP funds through Metro Government to fund the Waterfront Park Ambassador program from July – December
- Secured a new tenant for the restaurant building at 1201 River Road
- Closed on the sale of land to Waterfront Botanical Gardens and seeded a new operating endowment with the proceeds
- Began construction on the Paget House restoration
- Completed splash park expansion at Riverview Park in coordination with Councilman Blackwell
- Exceeded our fundraising goal in FY21 (\$364,488) and on track to exceed fundraising goal for FY22 (\$225,000+ raised to date)
- Finalized our agreement with Friends of the Waterfront for jointly funded position to expand capacity of both organizations and hired new Waterfront Park Coordinator

## **Waterfront Park Phase IV**

- Conducted the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of community engagement for PlayWorks
- Completed schematic design for PlayWorks
- Secured \$4 million matching appropriation from Metro Government in FY22 (adding to the \$2 million in FY21)
- Raised \$4 million to date in private donations for Waterfront Park Phase IV
- Secured a commitment from Governor Beshear to include \$10 million in his FY23/24 Executive Budget

## **2021 Accolades**

- ASLA Honor Award for PlayWorks at Waterfront Park design
- Voted Best Place for Free Entertainment in 2021 by LEO Weekly Readers
- Top 10 Riverwalks in the US – USA Today



## 2021 Season Accomplishments

### CRUISES

- Looking at June, July & August 2021 versus the same time period in 2019, passenger counts increased by 22%
- July 2021, in particular, was one for the record books, with 67% more passengers than July 2019 & 21% more revenue!
- In our first year participating in the Arts & Cultural Alliance's Cultural Pass program, we welcomed over 4,000 guests. 63% of these were children
- New special event cruises were successful, completely selling out, including Yacht Rock, Roaring 20s, two Pirate events (with live sword fighting!), Fall Foliage & Geology and two Halloween events
- All new low-cost cruise options were well-attended, often selling out, including a kids' cruise series, Throwback Thursdays, Anchors Away Friday trivia cruises & continuation of a long-time favorite, Harbor History excursions. All tickets just \$10
- Premiered new Boujie Brunch concept with 5 sold-out events & produced 7 sold-out Captain's Dinners

### VESSEL OPERATIONS

- Preparing the Belle for her annual USCG Inspection was more challenging than previous years following her required 5-year shipyard inspection last winter and the consequential repairs. Accomplished this task in March & went on to pass all 2021 USCG Inspections without a single discrepancy!
- Safely conducted nearly 300 cruises & dockside events
- Painted over 20,000 sq. ft of deck on the Belle's roof, third, second & main decks
- Replaced six 25 ft. bucket planks, eight 9 ft. supporting arms and various other smaller parts of the Belle's famous paddlewheel
- Participated in a Homeland Security exercise sponsored by the USCG along with LMPD, LMFD & other first responder agencies from both sides of the river

### EDUCATION & PROGRAMS

- Developed the program *What Makes the Belle Unique?* in collaboration with JCPS Social Studies
- Hosted dozens of live performances by 31 different local bands
- Education & Programs Manager Eric Frantz was invited to present at the Kentucky Social Studies fall conference
- In partnership with the (un)known Project, we hosted a total of four Floating Reconciliation Share-formances

### GUEST SERVICES

- Food & Beverage sold over 84,000 alcoholic beverages, 10,000 sodas, 5600 popcorns, 4000 soft pretzels, 3000 hot dogs, 2200 candies, 1200 burgers and much more, including new charcuterie boxes!



## 2021 Season Accomplishments

- In July, rolled out new branded boarding materials, including cruise itineraries, packages & upgrades & concession/bar information
- In October, added onboard screens to both vessels, which will be helpful for wayfinding, onboard promotions, sponsor recognition & event theming

### COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

- Generated \$68,957,876 in earned media in 2021 via TV, print and online news coverage with an audience of 192,709,497!
- Generated 1,011,044 webpage views & 331,640 sessions, 3/12/21– 11/28/21, from 226,256 unique users
- Created TikTok presence of nearly 45,000 followers and 1 million likes in just over one year!  
12% increase in Instagram followers to 5,619  
Grew email subscribers by 26% & over 10,000 new contacts
- Received \$5,000 grant from J. Mack Gamble for Broaddus paddlewheel wood
- Hosted first members-only cruise featuring a performance of *Romeo & Juliet* in partnership with Kentucky Shakespeare for 92 members
- Conducted first year-end solicitation campaign!

### GROUP SALES

- Hosted 185 groups & conducted 29 charter cruises
- Produced 18 weddings or related bookings, including proposals, rehearsal dinners, bachelorette parties & anniversaries
- Site of Louisville Wedding Network's Fall 2021 wedding show, hosted on both the Belle & the Mary

### MISC.

- Site of an episode of the new Netflix kids series, *Lost Ollie*, expected to launch in 2022
- Employed 30 seasonal workers over the course of 8 months
- Featured as a clue on *Jeopardy* in honor of the Belle's 107<sup>th</sup> birthday in October
- Selected as site of Kentucky Travel Industry Association's (KTIA) fall conference volunteer project (Nov.)
- Inaugural "First Mate's Market" on Small Business Saturday: 780 people attended this dockside event, which featured 31 local vendors; earned \$181,524 in local news coverage + over \$31MM more due to international Yahoo! News and national news pickup!



**2022 Waterfront Development Corporation Board Meetings**

**All meetings at 4pm**

**February 23, 2022**

**April 27, 2022**

**June 22, 2022**

**August 24, 2022**

**October 26, 2022**

**December 7, 2022**