



MINUTES

WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Board of Directors Meeting

April 27, 2022

**Members Present**

Chris Jones  
Susan Moss  
Kerry Stemler  
Nicole Walton  
Terri Connolly  
Kevin Fields  
David James  
Troy Miles  
Ted Nixon  
Gerina Whethers

Oliver Barber  
Marianne Butler

**Members Absent**

Sam Aguiar  
Katy Delahanty  
Mayor Greg Fischer

**Others Present**

Jeff O'Brien

**Staff Present**

Deborah Bilitski  
Emily Clayton  
David Karem  
Cordell Lawrence  
Catie Nelson  
Gary Pepper  
Kelley Runyon  
Ashley Smith  
Alex Laughlin  
Bryan McKiernan  
Krista Snider



### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Board Vice Chair Susan Moss at 4:05 p.m. on April 27, 2022. The meeting was held at Waterfront Development Corporation, 129 River Road, Louisville, Kentucky.

### **Approval of the Minutes**

Minutes for the February 23, 2022 meetings were approved.

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

Deborah Bilitski gave the following updates: Thunder returned and was a great success and it was a delight to see the community come together to celebrate. Waterfront Park was able to raise considerable funds as a result of being the venue for Thunder which accumulated to \$99,600 in user fees, boat dock rentals, mobile cellular stations, and parking for this one-day event.

Waterfront Park was nominated one of the nation's 10Best Riverwalks according to USA Today. Through the month of April people could vote daily for their favorite Riverwalk and Waterfront Park won #4 of 20 Reader's Choice travel award. The Men's Journal also wrote an article in their Travel section featuring Waterfront Park as #2 of 21 Best Urban Parks and Trails for City-Dwellers Seeking Green Spaces.

This Thursday the Mayor will give his budget address at 4:00 pm. In past years our operations funding was cut and we're hoping for an increase from the city budget. We are still working to hire new staff, specifically maintenance crew personnel. Deborah is also working to rectify the 8% raise that metro employees were granted but was not approved for Waterfront Park nor Belle of Louisville staff members. The team consistently works on creative opportunities to raise funds needed to operate.

### **Events**

Catie Nelson gave an update on the robust list of Waterfront Park events coming up this summer. We kicked off the Fridays at the Front and Brunch + Bark by the Bridge event series and have partnered with the Humane Society for the Sunday brunch events which have been very popular with families and dog lovers. The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Waterfront Wednesday returns tonight, and Kentucky Derby Festival's Chow Wagon and Fest-a-Ville starts this Thursday with the Balloon Glow on Friday and Pegasus Parade on Sunday. May 14<sup>th</sup> will be the International Food Truck Festival at the Big Four Bridge and Forecastle will be Memorial Day weekend this year. Our website lists a full calendar of events that spans through October including our Annual Fourth of July event, Big Four Arts Festival, and Venardos Circus.

## **Financials**

Cordell Lawrence presented the financials for the third quarter of FY2022 and explained variances on the income statement and balance sheet. Variances affected are due to not having events last year due to the pandemic and the rate of rising inflation for instance fuel costs for equipment. The Marshall Family Foundation renewed their annual gift that is used as a matching grant for operations. The Four Courses on the Bridge event was cancelled last year however, event sponsors will be encouraged to support our Annual Fourth of July event. The result of increase in our net-income is due to capital donations raised for Phase IV.

## **Phase IV Update**

Deborah Bilitski gave an update on Waterfront Park Phase IV. The capital project has received commitments of \$21.75 million, Ted Nixon has been an amazing leader of the Phase IV project. We have submitted a \$3 million request through Congressman John Yarmuth's earmark grant program. MSD should be off-site by October and we plan to have a fall groundbreaking for Playworks.

## **Belle of Louisville Riverboats**

Krista Snider gave an update for the Belle of Louisville Riverboats; notes are attached to these minutes.

## **Development/ Fundraising**

Ashley Smith gave an update on development and fundraising. Calliopes and Cocktails invites are out for the May 4<sup>th</sup> Great Steamboat Race watch party in Waterfront Park's boardroom and patio space. This is a ticketless friend-raiser and opportunity to thank our donors. In 2020 our membership program was launched, and any amount can make someone a member of the park. Waterfront Wednesdays are a perfect opportunity to encourage memberships and we incentivize visitors to sign up for ticket giveaways to popular events at the park. We continue to work with the Fund Development workgroup to strategize creative ideas to raise funds such as the Marshall Family Challenge grant which has garnered about \$500,000 in donations since its start.

## **Operations**

Kelley Runyon gave an update on park operations and park concession vendors. One of our new vendors is Amiraclade lemonade stand located at the base of the Big Four Bridge. It is important that we offer diverse food options for visitors at the park. Vendors pay 10% to operate within Waterfront Park. The Snackbox has closed and is for sale.

## **Park Maintenance**

Gary Pepper gave an update on park maintenance. We are down two maintenance staff and the consistency of events coming through can be hard on the park and maintenance crew.

Kerry Stemler asked how events at the park have caused strain on maintenance staff and the natural aspects of the park. In response, Gary explained the minimal crew size, rundown on equipment and the major importance of foundation funds to support the needs of the park. The team is constantly researching ways to minimize labor and maximize productivity.

Nicole Walton asked how the board can support the needs of staff and if volunteer opportunities would help. In response, Gary explained that although volunteers are great for the organization it can often be difficult and time consuming to train volunteers on tasks and ensure safety during projects. Some volunteer projects that have been successful have been flood-cleanup with group volunteers and litter cleanup opportunities after major events.

### **Friends of the Waterfront**

Nicole Walton gave an update for Friends of Waterfront Park. The Fund Development group has been instrumental in helping plan fundraising opportunities for Friends of the Waterfront. Workgroups have met to strategize and refocus on objectives, at the next meeting Nicole will report on the progress of the workgroups. If you would like to support FOWP in other ways, please sign up for Amazon Smile and select Friends of the Waterfront as your chosen charitable organization and a portion of your Amazon purchases will come back to FOWP.

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

Spring membership drive has launched. Some benefits to becoming a member: advance notice on ticket sales, opportunities to win tickets to popular events, and access to our monthly newsletter.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

3:26 PM

The Belle had their Spring Break special again-- \$5 tickets and rolled out new narrated content. Black Life on the Ohio and Women's History. Over 2700 people in 8 days.

Last week-- sold out Thunder event

First field trips with educational programming

This week-- Balloon Glow

Next week-- Boat Race

#### RETURNING

- Kids cruises-- hometown history & hometown music
- Low cost- throwback Thursday & anchors away Friday
- Yacht Rock, Roaring 20s, Pirates
- Captain's Dinner, Boujie Brunch

#### NEW

Also adding new programming such as a high-end Bluegrass & Bourbon series

Journeys to Freedom cruises with unknown project -- 4 events in June

2022 calendar maxed out

New volunteer program launched. New development manager.

Launching a mobile app in June-- extension of onboard experience with lots more historical content