

COUNTY OF YORK

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 28, 2018

TO: York County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Neil A. Morgan, County Administrator 

SUBJECT: Waterfront Operations Report and Recommendations

As you all remember, there was much discussion this past summer in regard to charging a fee for access to the Yorktown waterfront. While the idea for fees was not generally supported by the Board, it did provide an opportunity for staff to look at the operation of the waterfront in the context of parking, access, crowding, trash pick-up, and general service to our visitors.

Attached is a summary of the committee's review submitted to me by Brian Fuller, Director of Community Services. The report shares a historical perspective; and in it are some sound recommendations, many that we will be implementing as the 2018 season quickly approaches. Other recommendations will need more consideration and discussion with the Board, staff, and area stakeholders.

I am especially impressed with the idea of using Waterfront Ambassadors. It ties directly into your Strategic Priority for Excellent Customer Service, and I believe this program will not only keep our waterfront cleaner and safer, but will be a highly valued asset to all of our citizens and visitors.

NAM:ph

Attachment

COUNTY OF YORK

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 26, 2018

TO: Neil A. Morgan, County Administrator

FROM: Brian P. Fuller, Community Services Director

SUBJECT: Yorktown Operations Review

Last summer a Board member suggested that the County consider charging to use the Yorktown waterfront. This suggestion raised a lot of public comment, media attention, social media posts, and citizen comments to the Supervisors. After discussion by the Board at several meetings, the County Administrator suggested staff would look at the waterfront operations and make some recommendations to the Board before the summer season. He also noted the County should not consider charging for beach access, as that would not be feasible with the configuration of the waterfront, multiple entry points, and the mix of land ownership (county, federal, state, private) which would make it logistically impractical.

Department staff members had several meetings and discussions about this topic and then met at the conclusion of the tourist season as a group to discuss in detail. Staff meetings included: County Administrator, Deputy County Administrator, Director of Public Works, Director of Community Services, Director of Economic Development, and Captain of the York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office, as well as other support staff. Staff reviewed the 2016 and 2017 seasons, as well as the current operating plan and procedures for the Yorktown waterfront. A detailed discussion was held on these topics and alternatives put forth based on the comments made by Board members, citizens, and staff observations. Several themes consistently came to the top of the list. The Yorktown waterfront and Riverwalk Landing (RWL) are tremendous assets to the citizens of the County. Riverwalk is enjoyed by both residents of the County and surrounding localities as well as visitors from around the state and country. As presented in the RWL report published last spring, the County has made a significant investment in facilities, programs, and events in Yorktown. All this creates a central place where the public can gather for events, walk along and enjoy the waterfront, shop and dine at Riverwalk, or visit the beach. The executive summary of the Riverwalk Landing report is attached at the end of this memo, and the entire report can be viewed on the County's website.

Each year, there are approximately 50 County-sponsored or co-sponsored events that draw an estimated 95,000 visitors to Yorktown, plus there are many additional events conducted by the National Park Service, American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, Watermen's Museum, businesses, and civic and cultural organizations of Yorktown that bring additional guests to town. As with any popular venue, there are a few peak times that visitors can overwhelm the infrastructure of an area; and while you cannot build for these few peak times each year, you can manage those times better. A shopping center doesn't build parking based on holiday shopping crowds, just as schools do not build parking lots for back-to-school night. Likewise, beautiful early spring and summer week-

ends in Yorktown can result in times where parking is at a premium close to the waterfront. For a majority of the season, there is ample parking in the Village; however, there are days where the waterfront parking is full, but parking in the other lots remains available.

The staff looked at the entire Riverwalk and Yorktown operations, and offers these proposed operational changes to put into place for 2018 to measure their effectiveness in improving the visitor experience for all visiting Yorktown. As with any changes and operational plans, they will be reviewed and evaluated at the end of the season to see if they achieve the expected results.

Recommended Changes for the 2018 Season:

Parking

Staff discussed the previous study on paid parking as an alternative for parking at the Yorktown waterfront. The study determined the logistics and cost-benefit of charging were not worth the negative perception that charging would bring to Yorktown. Charging for parking at Riverwalk may also create a problem in some of the adjacent lots in the Village, such as York Hall, the Administration Building, or the Courts and Office/Finance Building as vehicles may park there to avoid paying. These lots are used by the public conducting business with the County and for County staff working in those buildings. Also, in conversations with Riverwalk Landing business owners about paid parking on the terrace, none of them were in favor of charging for parking. The committee recommends controlling the parking on the lower level of the Riverwalk Landing parking terrace on weekends and holidays as a way to ensure that parking is available for the public visiting Riverwalk businesses and not filled by visitors going to the beach.

The recommendation is to monitor and limit parking on the lower level of the Riverwalk Landing parking terrace from April through Labor Day on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays (Memorial Day, 4th of July, and Labor Day) from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., and limit parking to 3 hours per vehicle during these hours.

Individuals coming to Yorktown to go to the beach will not be allowed to park on the lower level during the monitored and controlled times. Signs would be placed before the entrance alerting visitors of the restrictions. Before entering the lower level of the parking terrace, vehicles would be screened, and individuals that are going to the beach would be directed to park in other locations in Yorktown by parking monitors/attendants. Previously, parking monitoring was performed by York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office Deputies; however, the recommendation is to use Work-as-Required part-time (WAR) staff, as this process can be done in a more cost-efficient manner with two WAR staff. At the end of this report, a chart details the cost savings by using WAR staff. It is estimated that by having WAR staff monitor the parking, a savings of \$7,774 will be realized that can be used to fund the Waterfront Ambassador programs as outlined in a separate part of this memo. Also, these monitoring hours can and will be adjusted in cases of inclement weather and if patterns change.

Employees of Riverwalk Landing businesses would need to park in their designated parking space, the upper level of Riverwalk Parking Terrace, or in other parking lots in town.

There has been some discussion as to restricting all of the parking underneath the Coleman Bridge to employee parking only. Currently, there are 23 spots under the bridge, including four handicapped; and 9 of the remaining 19 are already designated for businesses. If this lot is restricted, decals could be issued to employees, and it would require law enforcement to patrol the lot and ticket vehicles without decals. There are over 100 employees that work at Riverwalk Landing during the tourist season, so this measure would only provide limited relief.

The Watermen's Museum has a large gravel parking lot that could be used to add additional parking for visitors or staff; however, it is private property. The Museum does charge for parking on weekends and special event days which generate around \$15,000 in revenue annually, so this would need to be factored into any discussion with the Museum.

Oversight

Currently, there is no dedicated staff or department for the waterfront; several departments have responsibility for specific areas, and all departments work well together communicating about items as they arise. There are also contractors that have a responsibility for cleaning the restrooms, as well as trash collection in the Village. Over the years, staff and responsibilities have changed, the County has reorganized and, because of these changes, the committee believes it would be beneficial for an annual "all hands" staff meeting before the season. At this meeting, a well-defined plan of responsibilities could be reviewed to ensure that all parties understand the responsibilities, frequencies, and contacts for the various tasks in Yorktown. The key components of these areas are:

- York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office (Law Enforcement; Event Security, Beach Patrol)
- Public Works Department (Facility and Grounds Maintenance, contracted trash collection and restroom cleaning)
- Community Services Department (Event Management, Freight Shed Operations, Trolley Operations, Dock Operations, and Coordination with private, civic and community organizations)
- Economic Development Office (Riverwalk Landing businesses)
- Emergency Communication Department (Waterfront/Riverwalk camera oversight)

Community Services is currently working with the York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office to develop a patrol plan for the season and events. This plan will foster better communication and use of resources for coverage in Yorktown. To date, there has not been any written plan for waterfront patrol coverage.

With the savings created by having Community Services WAR staff monitor the parking at the Riverwalk parking terrace, the committee suggests having additional WAR staff on site in Yorktown. A pilot *Waterfront Ambassador* program is recommended to provide consistent staffing and oversight of the Yorktown waterfront area during the busy tourist season. This trial program would allow for better oversight and provide “ambassadors” on the waterfront who would assist visitors and the public with questions and information, oversee and report issues with trash and maintenance, and be the first line of defense in situations that may potentially require law enforcement. The staff would interact with the businesses and obtain feedback from them on any issues they are having and handle or communicate these issues to the appropriate department for assistance instead of these issues lingering for extended periods. The trial period would be from mid-April to Yorktown Day on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. A detailed chart is attached at the end of this memo that outlines the cost and duties.

As County-sponsored events become more popular, and there is a greater demand for community events to be held in Yorktown, there is also a need for additional staff to assist with the oversight of events and programs. Currently, there is only one full-time staff person in charge of events, and this staff person has to cover events in the town on nights, weekends, and holidays. These events, along with the proposed ambassador pilot program parking attendants, cannot all be covered by one individual. Staff has proposed a full-time position to help with oversight of events and waterfront coordination as well as the docking and pier operations.

Maintenance and Appearance

The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining the waterfront and Yorktown area and does a great job keeping Yorktown clean. Current staffing patterns have Public Works staff working during the week, while a contracted company is responsible for cleaning the restroom and emptying the trash throughout Yorktown and the waterfront. One area identified for improvement is in the contracted schedule for cleaning the waterfront. As we have seen an increase in the usage of the Riverwalk and beach area, we believe the contract needs to be expanded to provide better coverage for cleaning of restrooms and trash collection. Expansion of the contract should include an increase in the hours of operation and expanding the calendar weeks in which they have additional staff working. It is not uncommon for the contractor to empty the trash cans at night and return the next morning to many cans that are already full. An additional item that would help with trash collection is locating a dumpster closer to the trash containers or a larger vehicle to haul trash. The contractor is responsible for emptying over 80 trash cans in Yorktown, with the majority of them being along the waterfront; however, the contractor has to transport the trash to a dumpster at either the Administration Building or Finance Building. Golf carts can only carry a limited amount of trash so there are more trips driving up and down Ballard Street versus emptying trash or cleaning restrooms. One alternative would be to explore adding a dumpster to the Watermen’s Museum gravel lot or use their dumpster and pay to have it dumped more frequently, but this would need to be discussed with their staff. It is recommended that we increase the contracted trash collection and restroom cleaning in April, May, September, and October. Currently, during these months there is a four-hour gap from noon to 4:00 p.m. where there is no contracted coverage on the waterfront. We propose to have that gap filled on Fridays, Saturdays, and

Sundays which is estimated to cost \$3,500, based on the current contract. This increased level of service, along with some efficiency in trash collection, should provide better coverage as visitation has increased.

Trolley Service

Each year trolley ridership has increased, and the route and operation are reviewed. Any changes made are based on this review. For the upcoming 2018 season, the County will expand the season a little, as well as experiment with having the trolley run later during a few of the County's summer and fall concerts, and on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays through December. One unexpected item to note from this past season was a greater number of riders with disabilities requiring wheelchairs coming to the waterfront to take advantage of the handicapped-accessible beach mat. This does increase the route times; and, as a result, staff did adjust the times that two trolleys were running to shorten these routes. The County is also looking into purchasing a new trolley that will help reduce route times as it has modern loading features for disabled riders. Plus, the County will continue to promote our free trolley service so visitors understand that they can park in any of the lots in town and take the trolley to the waterfront, museums or Battlefield Visitor Center.

2018 Yorktown Trolley Operating Schedule

March 17 – May 24, 11am -5:00pm

May 25 – Sept 3, 10:00am – 5:30pm

September 4 – November 18, 11:00am – 5:00pm

Pilot/Test Program for off-season schedule: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, November 23 – December 30, 11:00 am – 5:00 pm

Fishing

There have been some comments made to the County about individuals fishing in various areas of the waterfront. Consistent signage and enforcement of fishing areas in Yorktown have been confusing and hard to enforce, as some areas prohibit fishing and some indicate "no fishing from rocks." Also, fishing near and around the Riverwalk Landing piers is dangerous for guests on the piers and visitors on the beach. The committee recommends that NO fishing be allowed from shore (grass, beach, or rocks) from the Coleman Bridge east to the Yorktown Fishing Pier. This would clear up any inconsistencies and make enforcement much easier on law enforcement. Current County Code 17-17 (c) allows the County to establish these no-fishing areas.

Sec. 17-17. Fishing/crabbing.

- (c) No fishing/crabbing areas established. Fishing from within one hundred feet (100') of any designated swimming area is prohibited. Fishing or crabbing from or within one hundred feet (100') of public boat docks, piers or bridges may be prohibited by the appropriate governing official by the posting of appropriate signs.

Permanent signage would be placed along the area, and maps could be placed on the website, social media pages, and in parking areas notifying the public of these restricted areas. During the trial ambassador program, one of the duties of the position would be to monitor fishing, as well as informing visitors where they can fish.

Signage

Over the winter, signage in Yorktown will be reviewed to ensure adequate directional signage is in place before April. Balancing the amount of signage with the historic nature of the Village is challenging, but we do believe that some improvements can be made to assist with parking locations and traffic flow. Also, informational signage will be revamped to indicate the rules and regulations of the waterfront and historic Village. The plan will be to inform guests and visitors as they park their vehicles, rather than try to have signs everywhere in the area dictating what is acceptable in the specific areas of town. Signage would indicate swimming areas, restroom locations, shops, restaurants, fishing areas, boating, etc.

Miscellaneous/Future Items

One of the difficulties on the waterfront is that there is a mix of federal, state, local, and private property, and the rules can vary depending on the property. In the future we will be working to make the rules consistent for National Park Service and County property along the waterfront, especially for areas the County manages under the lease agreement.

Riverwalk Landing opened in 2005, and many of the systems are approaching their useful life cycle and will need to be replaced or updated. The security cameras throughout Riverwalk and the Yorktown waterfront and the fire alarm and building security systems at Riverwalk Landing businesses will need to be replaced and addressed through the County's CIP budget.

Also, as the development of the waterfront continues to evolve, County staff has identified several projects in its CIP budget that will need to be considered to improve the waterfront. These projects are attached to the end of this memo.

In the late 1980s, the County and Yorktown Trustees staffed Yorktown beach with lifeguards, but the operation was discontinued when the Trustees returned operational control of the beach to the County. There was some discussion about whether the County should have lifeguards again on the beach. The committee decided that it would continue to discuss lifeguards; but because of the layout of the waterfront and the operational changes of the area, it would take a detailed evaluation to determine the cost and benefit of lifeguards on the waterfront. The York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office is evaluating the benefit of having some of its staff trained in water rescue.

Summary

The County departments will continue to coordinate operational duties on the waterfront and create a schedule of frequencies and staffing levels that will be communicated and

clear to all. Having dedicated staff resources for the waterfront will provide a level of oversight that should allow for better accountability.

The Committee is recommending the following:

- Meeting to coordinate operational aspects of the waterfront
- Monitoring the parking terrace by Community Services
- Implementing a trial *Waterfront Ambassador* program
- Coordinating event and waterfront patrol levels by Community Services and the YPSO
- Restricting fishing between Yorktown Fishing Pier and Coleman Bridge
- Expanding the contracted service level for cleaning and trash pickup
- Evaluating signage for consistent messaging

Please let me know if you have any questions on this proposed plan of action and if you wish staff to begin with its implementation in part or in whole.

Fuller/3504

Attachments:

- Ambassador Pilot Program Information
- Parking Monitoring – RWL Lower Level Parking Terrace
- Proposed CIP Projects for Yorktown Waterfront
- Executive Summary on RWL Report, Spring 2017

CC: Mark Carter, Deputy County Administrator
Mark Bellamy, Director of Public Works,
Jim Noel, Director of Economic Development,
David Barke, York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office
Kristi Olsen, Tourism Development Manager

**Ambassador Pilot Program
Yorktown Waterfront
Customer Service Initiative**

Mid-April through Yorktown Day
Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
8:00 am to 6:00 pm

Parks, Recreation and Tourism WAR Staff

26 Weeks

3 Days a week

10 Hours a day

1 Staff

\$12 Per hour per staff

\$9,360 Total

The Ambassador would:

- Provide personnel dedicated to the waterfront on the busiest days
- Assists guests and citizens on Yorktown waterfront
- Inform visitors of rules and regulations
- Identify maintenance areas that need to be addressed
- Monitor condition of trash and restrooms in Yorktown
- Communicate and provide information to Yorktown businesses
- Contact law enforcement, Public Works, public safety if issues arise

**Parking Monitoring
Riverwalk Landing Parking Terrace
Lower Level**

April through Labor Day
Saturdays and Sundays
8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Parks, Recreation and Tourism WAR Staff

23 Weeks

2 Days a week

9 hours a day

2 Staff

\$12 Per hour per staff

\$9,936 Total

Estimate YPSO Deputies

23 Weeks

2 Days a week

7 Hours a day (8am - 3pm)

1 Staff

\$55 Estimate per hour per deputy (OT-Extra Duty)

\$17,710 Total

\$7,774 Estimated Savings using PRT WAR staff versus YPSO Deputies

Hours could be reduced if weather or traffic reduces demand for parking as staff could leave early or not report.

**Capital Improvements Program
Yorktown Waterfront
Proposed Projects for Consideration**

Project	Estimated Cost
Yorktown Trolley Replacement	\$ 700,000
Yorktown Fishing Pier Improvements	\$ 550,000
Permanent Performance Area	\$ 137,500
Tourism Information, Dockmaster Office and Restrooms	\$ 500,000
Relocation of Tourism Activities and Facilities	\$ 450,000
Permanent Structure Behind Freight Shed	\$ 175,000
Yorktown Beach PWC Launch / Rental Facility	\$ 100,000

Riverwalk Landing Report

Executive Summary

April 2017

For many York County residents, as well as others on the Virginia Peninsula, Yorktown's Riverwalk Landing has become a favorite spot to bring family and friends to dine and shop, a safe and aesthetically pleasing place to enjoy a concert or some time on the beach and in the water, or an important part of a fitness and healthy-living regimen. Upon its opening in 2005, Riverwalk Landing became a focal point of activity in York County and when, to most people, the story of Riverwalk Landing began. However, the vision and concept of the development began to be formulated years before in the late 1980s when members of the Yorktown Trustees and York County officials made the choice to work together toward a common goal of improving the waterfront area. Their vision was to transform the area from a stagnant commercial district with shuttered businesses, no distinct character, and a serious lack of visual appeal, into the gathering place it is today for residents, visitors, shoppers, and diners.

This report begins with an overview and summary (Section I) of historical milestones in the planning and pre-construction period, and among the many attachments is a more extensive and detailed description of conditions and events leading up to the grand opening in 2005. While many residents and Board members may recall much about the specifics of the project development, there are various details that readers may find of interest. For example, the history of the waterfront from when it was under the purview of the Yorktown Trustees, the acquisition of the Mathews Estate properties following the passing of Miss Mary Mathews, as well as the involvement of various partners in the imagining of a vibrant community space. Much of this historical information has been included not only to inform our citizens, but also to have an archive of the project's history. The expanded history is included in Attachment 4.

Although the current Board of Supervisors' Strategic Priorities had not been articulated at the time Riverwalk Landing was developed, it is clear that the project complements and is consistent with the Priorities that are guiding County operations and activities in 2017. Section II of the report addresses the relationship of the project to those six Strategic Priorities.

The construction of Riverwalk Landing represented a considerable investment of public funds. Section III summarizes the main components of the \$31 million project, their associated costs, and the sources of non-County funding that assisted in the financing of the project. One of the significant events that assisted in the project implementation was the General Assembly's approval a Code amendment giving the County the authority to increase its lodging tax from two to five percent, provided

that the additional three percent increment would be devoted to tourism-related initiatives. The Board of Supervisors' decision to adopt that increase and to devote the majority of the new revenue to the effort reflected a position that the revitalization of the Yorktown waterfront was the County's highest priority tourism-related initiative. Attachments numbers 6 and 7 provide details on specific project elements, costs, and the flow of funding in and out during the project development. It is important to note that the three percent lodging tax increase continues to be vital to Riverwalk Landing, as those tourism-related funds are used to support various activities and events that occur at Riverwalk Landing throughout the year.

Section IV, and the related attachments, delve much deeper into the past and present financial aspects of the development and operation of the Riverwalk Landing project and the various funds that are used to track and account for expenditures. Also discussed are the arrangements for management and leasing of the commercial space, which continues to be under the purview of the Economic Development Authority, and the day-to-day involvement by the Office of Economic Development and the Tourism Office in maintaining communications with the RWL businesses and coordination for special events.

Section V discusses the various partnerships, both past and present, which have played a part in the successful development and implementation of Riverwalk Landing.

Section VI discusses the significance of the "place" that Riverwalk Landing has become for residents and visitors alike. Riverwalk Landing has become a premiere destination and civic space that is enjoyed and appreciated by thousands of individuals each year. Over 50 events are held at Riverwalk Landing annually (this number includes 28 Market Days and multiple outdoor concerts) with an estimated attendance of 95,000 visitors per year.

Section VII summarizes various current and future capital projects that are planned for implementation. These projects will ensure that the facilities and supporting components are maintained and operated in a manner consistent with the standards of quality that have exemplified Riverwalk Landing since it opened.

It is important to note that Riverwalk Landing was never meant as an economic development project. Rather, it was and is intended to be an attractive and vibrant central meeting place for the pleasure of all who choose to visit the area. While restaurants and shops are important aspects of the development that draw visitors to this location, the tax revenues that they generate were never expected to recoup the County's investment. The entire retail project, excluding the Freight Shed, amounts to only a little over 21,000 square feet of leasable floor area, and half of that area is devoted to one restaurant. There are a total of ten retail/restaurant spaces that are fully leased, and three of the spaces are occupied by businesses – Viccellio Goldsmith, Yorktown Onion, and Ben & Jerry's/Green Mountain Coffee – that have

been a part of Riverwalk Landing since it opened in 2005. In fact, given the relatively small amount of leasable space, Riverwalk Landing is a project that would not have made financial sense for a private sector developer due to the magnitude of required investment in infrastructure (shoreline stabilization, beach nourishment, streets and utilities, the parking terrace, the piers) and, even before that, the assemblage of the properties involved.

Riverwalk Landing can be thought of and analyzed in many different ways. As noted above, it was never envisioned as an economic development project, but rather as something that would, among other objectives:

- respect, complement and enhance Yorktown’s historical significance and its position as one of the three points of interest and visitation in the Historic Triangle;
- enhance the aesthetic and recreational attributes and opportunities of the waterfront setting; and
- create a “place” and focal point of activity that can be enjoyed and viewed with pride by Yorktown and York County residents, as well as visitors to the area.

The attendance at public events, the popularity of the Freight Shed for private events, the use of the docks by recreational boaters, the Schooners *Alliance* and *Serenity*, as well as regional cruise ships; the popularity of the Riverwalk and other public spaces as a “town center” gathering place for residents and visitors; the patronage of the shops and restaurants; and, the overall aesthetic improvement of the waterfront, all would support a conclusion that the vision and objectives have been achieved.