

STONE MOUNTAIN MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION
January 26, 2009

A meeting of the Stone Mountain Memorial Association was held at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, January 26, 2009, at Evergreen Conference Center, Stone Mountain Park, Stone Mountain, Georgia.

ASSOCIATION MEMBERS PRESENT

Mark Baxter, Chairman
Greer Johnson, Vice Chairman
Brent Brown
Bill Chappell
Noel Holcomb
Carolyn Meadows
Mike Pentecost
Ray S. Smith, III
Joan Thomas

OTHERS PRESENT

Curtis Branscome, C.E.O.
Bob Cowhig, Director of Planning & Construction
Gail Durham, Director of Finance
Gerald Rakestraw, V.P. – Silver Dollar City Stone Mountain Park
Other SMMA staff
Other Silver Dollar City Stone Mountain Park staff

CALL TO ORDER

Mark Baxter, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Ray Smith, seconded by Bill Chappell, and unanimously approved to waive the reading of the minutes of the November 17, 2008 meeting and to adopt the minutes as printed. A draft copy of the minutes was sent to each Board Member prior to the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Durham reported that the Finance Committee had met earlier and reviewed a draft of the financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2008. Revenues for the year were approximately \$11.2 million compared to the budget of \$11.0 million.

Operating expenses year-to-date are \$6.3 million and about \$81,000 less than the budget. Net operating profit before depreciation was \$4.9 million compared to the budget of \$4.7 million. After depreciation expense the excess of revenue over expense is \$1.3 million compared to the budget of \$807,000 leaving a favorable variance of about \$502,000.

Cash generated from operating activities for the year was about \$4.7 million and almost \$11 million was invested in capital projects. A decrease in cash for the year of \$6 million left the Association with a cash balance at the end of the year of approximately \$19 million.

The Finance Committee report was accepted.

SILVER DOLLAR CITY/STONE MOUNTAIN PARK REPORT

Gerald Rakestraw said he wanted to share information with SMMA about Snow Mountain. He knows that several of the Board members have been out to visit this new event. He said the event had been all consuming for his staff and that each weekend was proving to be better than the previous. Mr. Rakestraw said that one weekend was lost to rain.

Snow Mountain has been extremely well received by the customer. Demand almost exceeds supply and they are looking at capacity expansion to accommodate requests.

Mr. Rakestraw said in all his years at the Park that Snow Mountain has been covered by the media more than any other event he can remember. He said the media had ranged from the AJC to ESPN. He stated Snow Mountain would run for another five weekends and that any Board member that had not experienced it could get with Ms. Durham to book a reservation.

On the journey to complete Snow Mountain, an opportunity to help someone in the community occurred. Before the project opened to the public, snow was delivered to a little girl's home nearby. This little girl has terminal cancer and her parents remembered how excited she was last year when Atlanta received snowfall. Friends of the family contacted HFEC to see if they could help with creating snow for this child. Thirty tons of snow was delivered to her home before daylight by HFEC personnel. The story was reported by CNN and many nice emails were received by HFEC. Mr. Rakestraw said his staff was very moved by the opportunity to help someone have a wish fulfilled.

Mr. Pentecost commended Mr. Rakestraw and their efforts to provide comfort and support for this family.

PRESENTATION OF 2009 EDUCATION PROGRAM

Mr. Branscome said that the Stone Mountain Memorial Association provides educational programs, and the HFEC Silver Dollar City Stone Mountain Park staff also offers historical education programs. These two programs dovetail nicely and today the two staffs will present an update on their planned programs for 2009. This will provide an overview for the SMMA Board on how the education mission is being fulfilled at Stone Mountain Park.

Mr. Branscome introduced Kerrie Anne Loyd who was most instrumental in starting the education department for SMMA. Ms. Loyd left SMMA to pursue her PhD and is about to complete her course work for that degree. Her thesis field work will be done in Africa.

Naomi Thompson worked with Ms. Loyd and is now the Supervisor in the Education Department. Naomi will address the 2009 education programs for SMMA and Ms. Cindy Horton with Silver Dollar City Stone Mountain Park will inform the group about their programs.

Ms. Thompson introduced two other full-time instructors, Brian McKnight and Alina Ruiz. Susan Meyers and Beth Rothermel were also introduced as part-time instructors.

Ms. Thompson discussed special displays and programs her group had completed in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of Stone Mountain Park. There was also a historical lecture at Memorial Hall earlier in 2008.

The Education Department has also done a lot of work in conjunction with the Land Management Plan (LMP). Larry Winslett has helped in this effort and provided the manual and documentation for the LMP. Invasive plants have been identified and a program to eliminate or control them has been implemented.

Alina Ruiz discussed the environmental and historical programs offered. She stated that some adjustments had been made to meet the changes in the State of Georgia standards. The staff taught 13,606 students in 2008 and about 3400 of those were from Fernbank. High school service learning included assistance with removal of invasive species at the Nature Garden. The Earth Day event was well received and will be repeated again this year in April. Rock Eagle 4-H Center, the Department of Natural Resources and AWARE are groups that participate with SMMA in this event.

Rock and Mineral Day is held during the Labor Day weekend and typically hosts around 500 public visitors. The Georgia Mineralogical Society participates with this event.

Susan Meyers discussed the Adopt a Stream, Our Shared Forests and the East DeKalb Boys and Girls Club programs. She also talked about the water monitoring programs that are taught as an outreach program at Druid Hills High School.

Beth Rothermel discussed continuing education programs offered and teacher workshops. She said that the staff participates in several state and national organizations and maintains certifications in environmental education areas.

Brian McKnight explained effort with trail assessment and maintenance at Stone Mountain Park. Regular work days are established for trail inspection and assessment. Restoration work was completed at the Nature Garden in 2008. Scout groups also assist with trail maintenance. The staff produced several new brochures including a new trail brochure. Mr. McKnight also discussed recreational and education partnerships with professional groups in the area.

Mr. Larry Winslett talked about the Land Management Plan. He stated that instead of using a scientific approach where the land is plotted in grids, SMMA has chosen to use natural boundaries to identify areas. Locations where endangered species are known to exist have been documented along with others that contain invasive species. The LMP is intended to be a working document as the Park moves forward and to provide a snapshot of the Park and the issues that surround its environment. Monitoring schedules will be implemented and updates will be documented.

Mr. Branscome said that the SMMA educational staff is primarily involved with environmental programs. There is a Confederate Memorial Day event and we will have a program for the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. Silver Dollar City Stone Mountain Park has more historical programs to offer and Ms. Horton will discuss these. Ms. Horton presented a slide show that highlighted special historical education programs. The most successful programs try to engage the guest. The Plantation offers authentic buildings and artifacts. Some of these historical buildings are unique and the slave cabins are very rare. The farmyard offers a glimpse at the types of animals that existed in the 1800's on working Georgia farms. The animals are trained and participate in shows, education programs and daily interactions with guests.

Ms. Horton stated that Memorial Hall offers the best view of the carving in the Park and features a historical museum with 12,000 years of history depicted in the permanent collection. Three temporary exhibits will be featured in 2009. The first is entitled "Courage of Conviction: The African-American Soldier" and will be hosted from January 31 – March 31. Paintings by the artist Ted Ellis depicting black soldiers from the Revolution through WWII will be displayed.

From April 5 – Labor Day weekend an exhibit in conjunction with the Georgia Music Hall of Fame will be featured. September 19 – November 30 will feature the “Pow Wow: Ritual and Regalia.” This exhibit will introduce guests to the celebration of the pow wow and showcase the artistry of participants.

Ms. Horton discussed the educational programs offered that are aligned with the Georgia performance standards for Social Studies. These programs are about 90 minutes in length and are interactive. The programs include 1800’s lessons at the Plantation, a Ride the Ducks: ‘Build Me A Truck That Can Swim’ WWII lesson with Rosie the Riveter, and several programs offered in conjunction with Peter Bonner. Mr. Bonner owns Historical and Hysterical Tours and has developed several lessons that will teach children with hands-on history. In 2009 outreach programs will be offered as an alternative to traveling to the Park.

Georgia Frontier Days are scheduled for April 30 – May 3, 2009. Demonstrations of Georgia’s history from the Spanish exploration to beyond the Civil War will take place in the meadow. School attendance in 2008 at this event was about 6,500.

The 10th annual Indian Festival and Pow Wow will take place from November 5-8, 2009. School attendance is expected to be in excess of 7,000.

In 2009 adult historic attractions tours will be offered. These tours will be based on the school tours, but geared toward an adult audience. Custom tours can also be designed to accommodate special group interests.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Mark Baxter, Chairman

Submitted by
Gail Durham, Secretary