

Board Meeting Minutes June 20, 2005

A meeting of the Stone Mountain Memorial Association was held at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, June 20, 2005, at Evergreen Conference Center, Stone Mountain Park, Stone Mountain, Georgia.

ASSOCIATION MEMBERS PRESENT

Tom Gilliland, Chairman

Greer Johnson, Vice Chair

Mark Baxter

Brent Brown

Bill Chappell

Mike Pentecost

Noel Holcomb

Ray S. Smith, III

Joan Thomas

OTHERS PRESENT

Curtis Branscome, C.E.O.

Bob Cowhig, Director of Planning & Construction

Gail Durham, Director of Finance

Jerry Spicer, Director of Administration & Public Safety

Other SMMA Staff

Ned Stancliff, VP HFEC

Gerald Rakestraw, General Manager, SDC Stone Mountain Park

Ray Lerer, Attorney General's Office

Alison Spencer, Attorney General's Office

Members of the Public

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Tom Gilliland called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mike Pentecost, seconded by Ray Smith, and unanimously approved to waive the reading of the minutes of the May 16, 2005 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

Ms. Jill Mattingly of Stone Mountain, Georgia addressed the SMMA Board about the fencing that is being installed next to her property. She described the property and the way the fence will impact her property value and the natural beauty and views that she currently enjoys. She said that the fence will run across at the end of her street and the storm water will cause brush and debris to gather there and be unsightly. This may also result in flooding of her property. She asked the Board to consider to alternatives to fencing this area near her property and presented several possible solutions.

PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE MASTER PLAN

Mr. Branscome stated that the current Master Plan completed in 1992 anticipated the 1996 Olympics, but did not contemplate the privatization of Stone Mountain Park in January of 1998. The staff of SMMA decided that the 1992 plan needed to be amended to reflect changes since 1992. Mr. Branscome stated that Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation, the private operator of the Park, has not requested an amendment or changes to the Plan. SMMA staff has consulted with them in developing the recommendations because HFEC is bound to conform to the Master Plan. Under the terms of the lease, HFEC can develop certain areas of the Park with the scope of the Master Plan. Mr. Branscome emphasized that the triangle picnic area had been approved as a parking lot and incorporated in the 1992 Master Plan. What has been proposed in the current amendment is to take the 1992 Master Plan which shows the entire area as a parking lot and put limitations on the area if there are proposals for development in the future. This proposed amendment was presented to the Board at the last meeting as an information piece and it is now being reviewed again. The purpose of this meeting today is to hear public comments, then there will be a recommendation from the Development Committee and the Board will act on the proposal at some future meeting.

Mr. Branscome asked Robert Benson of Robert & Company to present an overview of the proposed amendment to the Master Plan. In the 1960's when the State of Georgia became involved with the Park, Robert & Company participated in the first state sponsored Master Plan for Stone Mountain Park. Today we have Robert Benson who helped lead the 1992 Master Plan and is going to present an overview of the amendment that is proposed.

Mr. Benson presented the highlights of the proposed amendment to the Master Plan and a brief history of the 1992 Master Plan. A summary of this amendment which was published in the legal organs of both DeKalb and Gwinnett counties is presented below.

The division of the Park into four districts (Natural, Park Center, Events, Recreation/Resort) is continued. It is clarified that "no development" in the Natural District means no commercial development and no development that promotes group activity. Support facilities such as

restrooms, educational exhibits, trails and simple benches and shelters are permitted but must be designed to have minimal impact on the natural environment. On September 18, 2000, SMMA approved the "Stone Mountain Park Long Range Plan" submitted by HFEC. That approved plan is to be incorporated into the amended master plan as having already been evaluated and approved by SMMA.

All public works facilities are to be consolidated into one new building to be located in the area of the old prison site. The Children's Playground stays in the Natural District. Property acquired by SMMA is placed in a "reserved" category for future determination as to use. The 1992 plan provision for closing the road around the mountain is removed and the current configuration (one-way vehicular traffic plus dedicated bicycle/pedestrian lane) is endorsed. The main Park entrance will remain the east entrance from the Stone Mountain Freeway (Main Gate) and the North Gate will be modified to help it better function as a Park exit. Three specific transportation improvements are recommended to correct particular bottlenecks: correct the pedestrian/vehicular conflict at the Robert E. Lee/Old Hugh Howell Road intersection (tunnel or bridge), increase capacity of Old Hugh Howell Road as an exit by making both lanes into exit lanes, and improve the exiting capacity of the Main Gate by rearranging ticket booths and improving lane markings. Park-wide improvements include the construction of a parking lot in the Triangle Picnic area, construction of a new parking lot north of John B. Gordon Drive at its intersection with Jefferson Davis Drive and construction of a new connecting road from the intersection of old 78 Highway with Robert E. Lee Boulevard northward to intersect with the existing Service Drive.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Branscome stated that if there were further public comments not expressed during the Public Hearing portion of the SMMA Board meeting on the proposed amendment to the Master Plan that everyone would have an opportunity to comment by email at masterplan@stonemountainpark.org.

Mr. Gilliland requested that everyone limit their comments to five minutes.

Ms. Nan Nash of Stone Mountain, Georgia stated that she was addressing the Board not as a Stone Mountain City Council member for the City of Stone Mountain, but as one of the closest neighbors living in the fourth house from the West Gate. She has read the entire comprehensive plan and has no problems with most of it. The plans for the Triangle Picnic area disturb her because it is full of families on any given day and should remain open for them. These people cook on the grills and stay all day long. Having picnic tables in this area of the Park and a central location should remain their option. Many tons of gravel have already been placed in this area to control mud. But, paving a large area and removing the picnic tables would leave the area barren. There is a creek at the bottom of this location and she is concerned about where the storm water would end up if this area were paved. The paving would have an impact on this waterway and it would be negative. Many government entities have already called for the paving of large areas and storm water utility fees are being imposed on the citizens to control pollution of our water. The Stone Mountain Memorial Association has always been a good neighbor to the City of Stone Mountain and Curtis Branscome could not be more cooperative. Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation, formerly Silver Dollar City, has made many contributions to the

community as well. The management of the Park operations have donated items for use at silent auctions, tickets for underprivileged children, and equipment for use in City parades and many other actions as well. Ned Stancliff and Gerald Rakestraw have made every attempt to employ local people and that is certainly appreciated. Perhaps instead of another parking lot, it would be a good idea to continue negotiations with MARTA to bring patrons to the Park so that cars can remain at home. There have been times when the entire City of Stone Mountain has been turned into a parking lot, such as the Fourth of July and Yellow Daisy Festival. Remote parking lots utilizing shuttle buses is another suggestion for the parking situation. In closing, she reiterated that the City of Stone Mountain would like to continue to work in partnership with SMMA for the betterment of the community and the preservation of Atlanta's "Central Park". Stone Mountain Park is more than ten times larger than Central Park. Please explore other options for parking.

Ms. Nash stated that she understands comprehensive plans as the City of Stone Mountain is also working on their plan with Robert & Company and Day Wilburn on a traffic study.

Mr. E. W. Timmons of Stone Mountain, Georgia concurred with the comments presented to the Board by Ms. Nash and the Friends of Stone Mountain Park. He added additional comments and suggestions regarding parking and protection of natural resources. His written submission is attached.

Ms. Jan Martinez stated that the Park has never looked better and the Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation should receive all the accolades for this. Ms. Martinez stated that there is nothing in her statement against HFEC. She stated that the events of September 11, 2001 had impacted all travel and tourism related economic activity. The SMMA granted HFEC a rent reduction because of their economic losses. Writing Herschend's plan into the Master Plan would be very presumptuous. What if something happens again? Will the rent be reduced again? What if they decide to leave?

We now realize that the Park will always be privatized. But if their plans are incorporated into the Master Plan then another possible future company will have to follow this plan. This is thinking very small range. Don't put their plan in the Master Plan. Work around their plan. No one knows what the future holds in ten years and HFEC may not be operating the Park. Think broadly. Think about where we need to be and what you want for this Park.

Mrs. Mary Owens, Mr. Jim Reddick, Marie Hall, and Mr. Larry Winslett of the Friends of Stone Mountain Park organization all submitted written comments for the public record and they are attached hereto.

Mr. Branscome clarified some factual information for the public attendees. There are no plans to close any of the smaller parking lots that Mr. Timmons addressed.

Mr. Gilliland stated that the Development Committee should review the proposal for the amendment to the Master Plan and present its findings to the Board at the next meeting.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Johnson said the Finance Committee had met earlier and that for the five months ended May

31, 2005 the total operating revenues were \$4.5 million and slightly better than budget. The percentage rent payment that HFEC makes each year for a minimum of \$600,000 totaled \$621,608 this year. Total operating expenses are \$2.1 million year-to-date and about \$145,000 less than budget.

Net operating income before depreciation is \$2.3 million compared to the budget of \$2 million or about \$310,000 better than budget. After depreciation expense, the excess of revenues over expenses is \$450,000 which is about \$307,000 better than budget.

Cash provided from operating activities in the first five months of operation was \$2.3 million. The investment and cash balance at the end of May is \$22.7 million.

Ray Smith made a motion to accept the Finance Committee report, Mr. Chappell seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

STONE MOUNTAIN PARK REPORT – HFEC

Gerald Rakestraw discussed the gospel celebration to be held in the Park and that this event looked to be a promising one for the Park. The Stone Mountain Park web site has recently been updated and Mr. Rakestraw encouraged the Board to visit online at www.stonemountainpark.com.

ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Mr. Gilliland stated that SMMA's by laws provide that the Vice Chair is to be elected in the June meeting. He asked if there were any nominations.

Mr. Pentecost nominated Ms. Greer Johnson stating that she had performed her duties well as the current Vice Chair. Mr. Brown seconded the motion and Ms. Johnson was elected unanimously.

Ms. Johnson stated that she was pleased to be able to continue to serve as Vice Chair and would like to see someone else assume her role as Chair of the Finance Committee. Mr. Gilliland said that this would be addressed at the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Branscome presented Brent Brown and Joan Thomas with framed resolutions from Governor Sonny Perdue recognizing them for their appointments to the Stone Mountain Memorial Association Board.

Mr. Branscome stated that the Board had been acquiring property that adds to the natural beauty of the Park. He was pleased to announce that a purchase option to acquire approximately 32 acres of vacant property adjacent to the Park had been signed by the owner of that land today. The Finance Committee discussed this purchase today at its meeting and the appraisal is approximately \$650,000. The Finance Committee has recommended approval of this purchase.

This property is undeveloped wooded land located across the road from Evergreen Conference Center.

Mark Baxter moved to approve the purchase of this property and Noel Holcomb seconded the motion. The motion to purchase the approximately 32 acres was approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Tom Gilliland, Chairman

Submitted by

Gail Durham, Secretary