

STONE MOUNTAIN MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION
May 18, 2009

A meeting of the Stone Mountain Memorial Association was held at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, May 18, 2009, at Evergreen Conference Center, Stone Mountain Park, Stone Mountain, Georgia.

ASSOCIATION MEMBERS PRESENT

Mark Baxter, Chairman
Brent Brown
Bill Chappell
Chris Clark
Mike Pentecost

ASSOCIATION MEMBERS ABSENT

Greer Johnson, Vice Chairman
Carolyn Meadows
Ray S. Smith, III
Joan Thomas

OTHERS PRESENT

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

CALL TO ORDER

Mark Baxter, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mike Pentecost, seconded by Bill Chappell, and unanimously approved to waive the reading of the minutes of the March 16, 2009 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.

SILVER DOLLAR CITY/STONE MOUNTAIN PARK REPORT

Gerald Rakestraw said that the Memorial Day celebration in the Park had grown into an event much like July 4th. He stated that the laser show would include spectacular fireworks and this was a good time to present a message and educate the guests about the meaning of Memorial Day. The laser show includes the "Salute to the Troops" with narration by Norman Schwarzkopf (General, U.S. Army-Retired).

The rainy weather has dampened the attendance numbers for the start of the summer season, but everyone is hoping for good weather over the Memorial Day holiday.

Mr. Rakestraw distributed pictures of the new Market Place renovation that has taken the place of the chicken restaurant formerly at the Railroad Depot. The pictures depict the new look for Crossroads. This renovation is the first step in the Crossroads makeover. The Market Place features self-serve salads, sandwiches, drinks, and other food items for guests. This format allows more guests to be served in one day than the chicken and burger restaurants combined. The restrooms have been totally gutted and renovated. Another location will open around mid-June and will feature light fare and primarily drinks. This new facility is called Hydration and will take the place of several old concession stands. Mr. Rakestraw thanked Mr. Cowhig for his help during the depot construction and SMMA's financial assistance with structural issues.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT REPORT

Ms. Naomi Thompson distributed a new brochure developed by her department. This booklet is the history and self-guided tour of Stone Mountain Park. Alina Ruiz and Estelle Hendrickson, members of the education staff, were instrumental in putting the information together for this brochure.

A newsletter was also distributed and Ms. Thompson thanked Mr. Rakestraw's staff for their assistance in determining where this literature could be placed in the Park to be of the greatest benefit for our guests. The newsletter discusses programs that are offered by the Education Department as well as information about plants, animals, and the environment of Stone Mountain Park. This newsletter will be produced at least once a year.

Chris Clark asked if the Park had produced a podcast or other mode of information for guests. Ms. Thompson stated that she had been to several conferences where this form of communication was presented and seemed to be a growing trend for parks. She said that this is something her department would be interested in working on in the coming year.

The Education Department serviced about 10,000 students during the spring which included a lot of outreach programs.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Durham reported on the financial statements for the period ending April 30, 2009. Year-to-date revenues were \$3.8 million and the budget was \$3.7 million. Total operating expenses were \$1.9 million compared to the budget of \$2.0 million. Net profit before interest and depreciation was \$2.0 million and the excess of revenue over expense or "bottom line" was \$841,000 compared to the budget of \$758,000.

The Statement of Cash Flows indicates that \$1.9 million has been provided by operating activities and \$1.1 million has been used for capital projects year-to-date. The net increase in cash year-to-date is approximately \$819,000 and the cash balance at April 30, 2009 was \$19.9 million.

TENNIS FACILITY LEASE WITH GWINNETT COUNTY

Mr. Branscome reviewed the terms of the lease which was provided in the agenda materials. The lease provides for the operation of the tennis facility by Gwinnett County after the stadium is demolished. This is a 50 year lease which is permitted between governmental entities. The SMMA staff recommends the approval of the lease.

Finance Committee Chair Bill Chappell moved for the approval of the lease. Mr. Baxter stated that the Finance Committee has recommended the lease for approval, therefore no second is required. The SMMA Board unanimously approved the tennis facility lease.

DAILY PARKING RATE INCREASE

HFEC has requested that the daily parking fee be raised to \$10 effective July 3. The annual parking pass would remain at \$35 and there would be no up-charge for holidays.

Mr. Branscome stated that this item is brought to the Board without recommendation from the Finance Committee. The current rate of \$8 was set in January, 2005 and last spring the SMMA Board approved a \$10 parking fee for 10 days which included major holidays.

Mr. Rakestraw stated that the \$10 fee facilitated parking because it eliminated making change at the gate. A market analysis of the competitive venues around Atlanta indicates that Stone Mountain Park is below the market. In these challenging times, the increase in the parking fee would help to offset the down turn in the economy. The \$10 fee would still be in line with other attractions such as the Aquarium, the World of Coke, and Six Flags. State parks have also increased their parking fees. Mr. Clark asked if HFEC offered discounts for veterans or any special groups. Mr. Rakestraw stated that on attraction tickets there are discounts offered, but not on parking fees. School busses private and public are admitted free and tour busses with paid attraction tickets are admitted free.

Mr. Chappell made a motion to approve the increase in the parking fee from \$8 to \$10 effective July 3, 2009. Mr. Clark seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

BOATING HOURS ORDINANCE AND OPEN FIRES ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

Mr. Branscome stated that this is the first reading of the ordinances and they would not be presented for approval until a subsequent meeting. A draft of the revised ordinances was sent to the Board with the agenda materials.

Currently boating hours are restricted. The boat rental activity on the lake has ceased and SMMA would prefer to allow boats on the lake during daylight hours. The Public Safety Department recommends that the weekend/holiday restrictions be lifted and the Lessee agrees that this will not affect its operations.

The open fires ordinance amendment grants authority to the Public Safety Department to ban all outside fires if weather and ground moisture conditions are such that these fires could present a danger.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Branscome, the Chairman, and all board members present welcomed Chris Clark, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as the newest SMMA Board member.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Mark Baxter, Chairman

Submitted by
Gail Durham, Secretary