

# **RICHMOND COUNTY WETLANDS BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

April 26, 2018

The Richmond County Wetlands Board held a meeting on April 26, 2018 in the Public Meeting Room, Warsaw, Virginia.

Wetlands Board Members Present: David Gallagher, Michael Sisson, Wayne Morris, Nancy Finnegan (Absent – Greg Gruner)

Others attending the meeting were: Richard English (Environmental Compliance Agent), William Crouch (National Wildlife Refuge), Robert Mallory, Alison Wellford, Carol Wellford, Liz Hylan, and approximately 7 others.

Chairman Gallagher called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., welcomed members and guests, and read the opening statement.

## **MINUTES**

***“On a motion made by Nancy Finnegan, the Board unanimously approved the February 22, 2018 meeting minutes as written.”***

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

- Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, c/o William Crouch, 336 Wilna Road, Warsaw, VA 22572, has applied for permission to construct a public access pier along their Little Carter Creek shoreline, located at 232 Coates Lane and further identified as Parcel 1E of Tax Map 22. (VMRC#18-0498)

Mr. Crouch stated to the board that funding for this public access project was applied for 4 years ago and the grant was received 18 months ago to better access the Captain John Smith National Historic Water Trail along the Rappahannock River. Mr. Crouch mentioned he hoped to have this project completed by early summer if approved. Mr. Crouch noted he envisioned a floating canoe kayak launch that also has a floating dock that would have 6 pilings expanding 20ft from shoreline.

Chairman Gallagher mentioned there are an abundance of boat launches in Richmond County that could launch kayaks and canoes. Mr. Crouch noted most of those launches charge a fee; the Refuge launch will be free to the public. Mr. Crouch also stated that most of those launches you cannot access both the Wildlife Refuge and the Rappahannock River.

Mr. Sisson stated he is in favor of this project but does not like the idea of attracting powerboats. Mr. Crouch commented he did not see where a john boat would be able to fit under the small culvert at high tide as a canoe and kayak would. Mr. Crouch also mentioned this is a floating launch that will not have the set up for someone to back a john boat down to the creek which should eliminate the launch perspective. Mr. Sisson noted if jet skis and boats were able to

access from the rover side there is nothing in place to keep them from using this attraction and perhaps some signs need to be put up stating no gas-powered boats. Mr. Crouch stated he is not opposed to putting signs up to restrict certain activities or paddle craft use only.

Mr. English mentioned he agreed with Mr. Sisson that this will attract gas boats and suggested placing no mooring signs that could enforce boats and jet skis from coming up to the pier. Mr. English asked what the hours would be the public can use this access; Mr. Crouch stated it will be open dawn to dusk 365 days a year.

Bobby Mallory expressed his concern about hunters being disturbed in their private blinds when kayaks and canoers paddle by, and the wildlife being scared away to never return. Mr. Mallory also expressed his concern with people stopping on his property, disposing trash that he will have to clean up. Mr. Mallory noted this project is a bad idea and being put in a bad place; Mr. Crouch stated this location was not their first choice, numerous locations were approached but all had wetland issues.

Carol and Alison Wellford noted they appreciate this beautiful idea, but feel there is a number of health and safety issues, such as the waters are very dangerous if you do not know your way you can get lost easy especially after dark. Carol Wellford expressed the safety of people who will be paddling by private hunting blinds during waterfowl season; Mr. Crouch stated they have looked into safety issues and maps will be provided for the water trails with the different difficulty level, there also is cell phone service throughout the water for those who need help or assistance.

Mr. Sisson mentioned he appreciated the public comments that were addressed, but feels this project needs to be looked at further, by having no restrictions he is concerned people will abuse this over time. Mr. Sisson also is concerned this launch is going to be too accessible; Ms. Finnegan stated the overuse by motors will affect such a small area.

Mr. English added the board did not have to make a decision at this time; some options are they can continue with dialog or table this for 30 days before a decision has to be made. Mr. Crouch noted the funding will expire November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 for this project, and can't be reapplied for until after a year if denied; Mrs. Finnegan advised the board to open table for 30 days and give the refuge time to fix restrictions and come up with a better plan.

***“On a motion made by Nancy Finnegan, the board voted to deny continued discussion/ table of issue for 30 days. (David Gallagher-nay; Michael Sisson- aye; Wayne Morris- nay; Nancy Finnegan- aye)”***

***“On a motion made by Michael Sisson, the board voted to deny the proposed Wildlife Refuge project due to the possibility of major adverse impacts to the wetlands. (David Gallagher- aye; Michael Sisson-aye; Wayne Morris-aye; Nancy Finnegan-nay)”***

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted as observed  
Liz Hylan  
Acting as Secretary