

*Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park
Federal Advisory Commission Meeting*

September 19, 2013

Strasburg Town Hall
174 East King Street
Middletown, Virginia

- 1) General Introductions
Patrick Farris
- 2) Adoption of Minutes
Patrick Farris
- 3) Update—Status of FAC Members/Nomination Process
Jim Northup
- 4) Update—Impacts of Sequestration/FTE Ceilings
Jim Northup
- 5) Update—New Park Brochure
Amy Bracewell
- 6) Update—Highway Directional Signs
Amy Bracewell
- 7) Update—Report on Visitor Contact Station and Bookstore
Amy Bracewell
- 8) Update—Shared Graphic Identity
Amy Bracewell
- 9) Update—Development on Park Trails
Amy Bracewell
- 10) Update—U.S. 11 Bridge Project
Amy Bracewell
- 11) 150th Anniversary Planning
Amy Bracewell and Patrick Farris
- 12) Cooperative Agreements
Jim Northup

- 13) Elevating the Park Profile
Amy Bracewell and Jim Northup

Meeting Notes

Commission members in attendance: Jim Northup, Designated Federal Official (DFO); John Adamson, Belle Grove, Inc.; Carl Bernhards, Middletown; Patrick Farris, Warren County and chair; Stanley M. Hirschberg, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation; Eric Lawrence, Frederick County; Rob Nieweg, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Nicholas Picerno, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation; and Richard Redmon, Strasburg.

Commission members absent: Mary Bowser, private landowner; Katie Donahue, USFS; Jeanne Frink, Commonwealth of Virginia; and Pam Sheets, Shenandoah County

Others in attendance: Matt Armstrong, *Winchester Star*; Amy Bracewell, NPS; Bob Grogg, NPS volunteer; Kristen Laise, Belle Grove, Inc.; Dave Stegmaier, District Office, U.S. Representative Frank Wolf.

Chair Patrick Farris opened the meeting at 8:37 a.m. Farris asked that everyone present give their name and affiliation.

The meeting notes from March 21, 2013, were accepted as corrected.

Amy Bracewell and Jim Northup are working on the nomination process to replace those members whose terms have expired; they have not heard from Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, a citizen's interest group, Town of Middletown, National Trust, private landowners, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, and Warren County. The nominations need to be vetted at the White House and then approved by the Secretary of the Interior. Northup suggested that all members whose terms have expired continue to serve until replacements are approved. Patrick Farris will continue to serve until the new members are in place and elections can be held. Diann Jacox had been both the designated federal official (DFO) and an ex-officio member. Northup suggested dividing the function so that he will be the DFO and Amy Bracewell will be the ex-officio member.

A motion to allow Patrick Farris to continue to serve until a replacement is found was approved with seven yeas and one abstention.

Carl Bernhards and Stan Hirschberg reported that their organizations were planning to renominate them for a second term.

Northup has asked the Regional Office for one additional employee to fill the cultural resources position. All units have been told to expect a 3 percent reduction in FY 2014.

The park currently has two lapsed positions, so the cuts would not result in lost employees. Currently there is no budget resolution, and a government shutdown is possible on October 1, 2013.

Bracewell thanked everyone for the comments on the brochure. A meeting with the design staff is scheduled for October 3, 2013, and all is moving along well.

The estimates from Virginia Logos on the sign production have been received: \$104,000. The papers arrived too late for the work to be contracted for this fiscal year, so the contract will be submitted after October 1. With the closure of the Wayside Theater, that hanging panel has been deleted. Signs for I-66, though appealed, have still not been approved. The request for reconsideration is moving to a higher level. Everyone was concerned that the signs get into the ground as soon as possible. Northup is working closely with Virginia Logos and will pass on the commissioners concerns to them, so that the NPS and FAC are represented by one voice.

The visitor contact station (VCS) has averaged 450 visitors a month since its opening; 1,500 have attended ranger programs. Beginning in November the VCS may close one day per week. Shenandoah National Park Association is now the park's cooperating association, and they have installed two bookcases full of items. In July sales were \$635 and in August \$650.

Early in FY 2014 Bracewell will submit a contract to begin work on the shared identity.

The trails charette on June 27 went well. Discussion centered on a variety of trails and solicited advice from Ursula Lemanski of the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. The goals in creating trails are to connect park units, collaborate with partners, and be sensitive to park resources. Access will be pedestrian only, but all trails will be accessible to wheelchairs and motorized wheelchairs. The park cannot support horse traffic, off road vehicles, or mountain bikes. Liability, maintenance, agricultural leasing, and livestock are major concerns for planning the routes. Possible trails would be: the Vermont Monument, the Entrenchment line to Belle Grove, Belle Grove to the Heater House, and a CCBF trail. The trail crew from Shenandoah NP, led by Steve Printz, walked the ground in July. They will do a similar walk once all the leaves are off the trees. The ultimate goal—on the distant horizon—is to create a trail system that is fully linked.

The plans for the U.S. 11 bridge will proceed pretty much as VDOT has planned the construction. They believe that their plans cause no adverse impact on the cultural resources. Patrick Farris wondered if the rights of way for the older bridges might be turned over to the park or to the SVBF so that the land is protected. John Adamson suggested that seeking a use permit from the state might help give the land a protected status.

Planning for the 150th anniversary has begun. Park staff have met with the Key Partners. All are trying to figure out what everyone can handle. The events that have taken place

during 2013 are being reviewed for approaches that could be of use here. Talks have been had with Harpers Ferry NHP, the Civil War Defenses of Washington group, and Monocacy NB to link the commemorations that all are doing in 2014. This is an obvious approach since the actions 150 years ago were all parts of the same story. Terry Heder, SVBF, is also assisting and advising in this endeavor. The NPS Sesquicentennial Office has publications that the parks can use as well as advice on how to present information. Over the course of the fall the group will be moving to more concrete ideas and will be able to report on what will be done by the December meeting. Virginia is sponsoring mobile exhibits that move around the state. In February 2014 they will be at Lord Fairfax Community College.

Northup reported that he is working on developing cooperative agreements between the NPS and the Key Partners. The agreements will facilitate the transfer of advice and resources between the individual groups and the NPS.

Bracewell and Northup are working with the public affairs specialist at Shenandoah National Park to discuss methods for heightening the awareness of the park in the local area and beyond.

Other Business

Carl Bernhards reported McDonalds may be coming to Middletown. Initial plans call for the three-story structure at the intersection of I-81 and Reliance Road. A planning meeting will be held soon, and the location and time will be advertised. Should anyone have any comments, they are free to attend to voice any concerns or support that they might have.

Northup thanked the Town of Strasburg for its hospitality.

The next meeting will be at the Middletown Town Hall, December 19, 2013.

Handouts

Agenda

Letter from the Department of Transportation, Commonwealth of Virginia. September 3, 2013