

BUDGET REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2023 Interim

October 18, 2023

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 5th meeting of the Budget Review Subcommittee on Economic Development, Tourism, and Environmental Protection was held on October 18, 2023, at 9:00 AM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Chris Fugate, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Chris Fugate Co-Chair; Senator Gary Boswell Co-Chair; Senators Amanda Mays Bledsoe, and Brandon Smith; Representatives Russell Webber, Jason Petrie, Brandon Reed, Chad Aull, and Mark Hart

Guests: Margaret Bell, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Waterfront Botanical Gardens; Jeff Fortwengler, Chief Financial Officer, Waterfront Botanical Gardens; Kenneth "Mort" Brown, Horticulture Intern, Waterfront Botanical Gardens; Scott Smith, Executive Director, First Frontier Appalachian Trails; Jerry Stacy, Chairman of the Board, First Frontier Appalachian Trails; Steve Pike, Executive Director, Southwest Regional Recreation Authority

LRC Staff: Joseph Holt, Kevin Newton, Sara Rome, and Amie Elam

The minutes from September 20, 2023 were approved by voice vote.

Waterfront Botanical Gardens

Representatives from the Louisville Waterfront Botanical Gardens provided the committee with an update on the investments and the progress at the gardens.

In response to a question from Senator Boswell, Mr. Fortwengler stated the 50,000 customers referenced in the presentation may include repeat customers. He said the \$6 million price of the transformation includes drilling into the landfill's clay covering to put pilings down. He added that the offing of gas must also be maintained and monitored.

All-Terrain Vehicle Trails

Scott Smith and Jerry Stacy from First Frontier Appalachian Trails and Steve Pike from Southwest Regional Recreation Authority gave a presentation on what the trail system could mean for the future of Eastern Kentucky's economy.

In response to a question from Representative Petrie, Mr. Smith agreed to provide the committee with a Gantt chart for the project.

In response to a question from Chair Fugate, Mr. Pike said Spearhead Trails has seventeen employees and receives \$1.1 million a year from the Virginia General Assembly.

In response to a question from Representative Aull, Mr. Smith agreed to provide a specific budget request to the committee for the upcoming session.

In response to a question from Senator Boswell, Mr. Smith said that the goal is to open the trail system sometime next year. He added that the trail system will likely always need state funding. Mr. Pike said that Virginia's trail systems are not limited to just all-terrain vehicles. He said Virginia has motorized and non-motorized trails for biking, e-biking, horseback riding, and motorcycling.

In response to a question from Senator Bledsoe, Mr. Pike said that Virginia sells a \$60 annual permit. He added that residents, veterans, and youth may purchase permits at a discounted rate. Mr. Pike said the funding breakdown for the trail system is \$1.1 million from the state, \$185,000 from localities, and \$216,000 from permits.

In response to a question from Representative Webber, Chair Fugate said 35 counties are eligible to join the Kentucky Mountain Regional Recreation Authority. Mr. Smith said that Pike County is eligible to join the existing authority but is interested in starting its own stand-alone project.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the subcommittee, the meeting adjourned at 10:07 a.m.