

New Alton Riverfront Advisory Commission Has Kickoff, Mayor Goins Stresses Riverfront Is "Our Community's Front Door"

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ALTON - Alton Mayor David Goins today presided over the opening meeting of the new Alton Riverfront Advisory Commission. The Commission met in Alton City Hall and was formed for the purpose to help guide growth and development on the Alton Riverfront.

At the outset of the meeting, the Mayor said that this was a great first step in renewing Alton's relationship with the river.

Goins said that "The City of Alton has a long history of utilizing its riverfront for commerce, transit, travel, and the movement of goods and products. Access and use of Alton's riverfront are critical to the identity of Alton and to the entire region. The riverfront has long served as a focal point for Alton, since its founding as a major river commercial center."

Goins mentioned that Alton has long taken the position that our riverfront was important to the City: "It is our community's front door."

Alton had previously established the Lakefront Advisory Board to aid in the consideration of prior project development efforts and has since been disbanded by the prior administration, but they achieved some critical goals, namely steering the City through the reconstruction of the Lock and Dam and the new Clark Bridge, taking advantage of the federal funding made available to rehabilitate and grow the Alton area riverfront and bringing with it the cost share agreement the City now has with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Mayor Goins told assembled members that "our Alton riverfront serves as a gathering place to a variety of stakeholders and users and is an active part of the community and the region and we want to continue to enhance our riverfront as a gathering place, a place to provide transit services on the river and ensure the safe movement of commodities and provide a recreational centerpiece to the region".

The Mayor emphasized that "one of my goals as Mayor is for the City to refocus and redouble our efforts on our greatest natural resource, the river."

Through the work of this Commission, Alton will ensure that the development and redevelopment of the riverfront occur as a master-planned effort and in an orderly manner.

The Mayor said that "One of my primary goals is to develop a new plan for the riverfront, its activities, management, and operations. Working together with the US Army Corps of Engineers, we can make that a reality."

The Alton riverfront is home to many resources and activities within the community of Alton, including a public Marina, the Alton Casino, and Riverfront Park with its associated Amphitheater, which is home to many events and activities. The Mayor noted that all this activity will only increase with the addition of passenger cruise ships that will bring hundreds of people to Alton and the economic impact and jobs associated

with their visits. His hope is that these people will not only visit Alton but find that it is a place they may want to live and work.

Mayor Goins said that “It is critical that we prepare for these coming realities and opportunities.” With a word of caution, the Mayor also reminded members that “while the river brings forth opportunities, periodically, the river serves as a force to remind us that our plans and projects are vulnerable. Vulnerable to effects of the river’s high-water events and floods. We must plan for and review the opportunities on our riverfront through this lens.”

Goins said he proposed, and the Alton City Council has enacted the establishment of a new Alton Riverfront Commission, whose purpose is to make recommendations to the City Council on matters pertaining to riverfront utilization to foster expanded public use.

The Commission, which was recently formally approved by the Council, is made up of representatives from the various river and community-related industries and will have several important roles including; providing advice on riverfront issues, serving as a community sounding board for residents and businesses, regarding the use and development of riverfront property in an environmentally sustainable way and make advisory recommendations to the City on land uses on the riverfront and surrounding properties.

A key partner in this effort is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers which has a long history of Alton riverfront planning and coordination with the City. Their Design Memorandum 25, the planning documents associated with the construction of the new Lock and Dam, could serve as guiding documents with respect to reviewing and planning for riverfront activities particularly for planning for the mooring of cruise ships, park improvements, and improvements at the marina.

Members of the Commission include Cory Jobe, CEO of Great Rivers and Routes, former Alton Council member and area businessman Brian Campbell, John Simmons, local developer, Christine Favilla of the local Sierra Club, Mike Barker of the Casino, Alton residents Leo Portal and Alton Fire Chief Jesse Jemison.

The Commission will meet monthly, and its meetings will be open to the public. They are expected to examine various river-related opportunities and activities and provide advice and recommendations to the Alton City Council on the next steps for proper and sustainable riverfront management.