

HISTORIC ST. MARY'S CITY

A MUSEUM OF HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY AT
MARYLAND'S FIRST CAPITAL

Historic St. Mary's City Commission

Fiscal Year 2023 Operating Budget Response to Department of Legislative Services Budget Analysis

Appropriations Committee
Education and Economic Development Subcommittee - Budget Hearing
Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
February 2, 2022

Budget and Taxation
Education, Business and Administration Subcommittee - Budget Hearing
Senator Nancy J. King, Chair
February 3, 2021

Analysis

1. Increase in Visitors to Site

HSMCC aims to educate the public by increasing the number of visitors to its site. Exhibit 3 shows attendance levels from paid general attendance, scholastic tours, recreational use, paid member attendance, and free admission days. Total attendance increased by 33% in fiscal 2021 to over 35,000 visitors from fiscal 2020. Despite this, the total attendance HSMCC experienced in fiscal 2021 is still 27% lower than fiscal 2019.

HSMCC had previously seen a decline in attendance during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the closing of primary and secondary schools negatively impacting the number of scholastic tours in fiscal 2020 and 2021. Most notably, the commission saw nearly 19,000 school children for tours in fiscal 2019 as opposed to 4,439 in fiscal 2020 and just 279 in fiscal 2021. However, recreational use of the site has increased dramatically. In fiscal 2021, HSMCC had roughly 26,000 recreational visitors compared to prepandemic recreational use of the site peaking at roughly 11,000 in fiscal 2019. **HSMCC should comment on efforts to maintain the new levels of recreational use of the site and how it plans to remedy areas of visitor decline following the COVID-19 pandemic.**

HSMCC plans to maintain and increase the levels of recreational use through a variety of methods:

A. Capital Investment:

Thanks to Governor Hogan, his administration, and the Maryland General Assembly, HSMCC is able to invest significant funds into maintaining and enhancing the site to attract more recreational visitors. Throughout the two years of the pandemic HSMCC,

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like Maryland state parks, witnessed a significant increase in visitors who used its facilities to safely exercise and socialize with family and friends.

The FY2022 CIP provided \$2 million in capital funds that are being used to repair the Commission's main parking lot and 1.5 miles of paths through the museum grounds. The parking lot is the drop off point and the paths provide visitors who are seeking safe outdoor activities that link with the Commission's 3.5 miles of hiking trails.

The FY2023 CIP provides an additional \$2 million that will be used for additional site enhancements.

HSMCC also thanks the Department of General Services for its assistance to implement these projects. We are a small staff and we are grateful for their valuable expertise, guidance, and continued support.

With the support of grants from the National Park Service and Access MD, HSMCC enhanced its recreational assets at Chancellors Point (CP), a 66 acres site on the St. Mary's River. HSMCC installed ten campsites and an ADA compliant boardwalk to access the beach on the St. Mary's River, and repaired the CP access road and parking lot. We are in the planning stages for the design and installation of piers at CP to further enhance recreational use.

B. Increase on-site retail services:

In part, recreational visitation has increased because of the availability of quality food service on site. Enso's Kitchen rents a commercial kitchen from HSMCC. Enso's attracts hundreds of customers each day and generally sells out its baked goods by early afternoon every day. The activity demonstrates strong demand but Enso's is open Monday-Friday so no food option is available on weekends.

HSMCC is investigating opportunities for providing more retail services. In FY2021, we requested Maryland Stadium Authority to provide services to provide objective, research-based information to assist us while making decisions regarding potential economic and fiscal benefits associated with the recent discovery of the St. Mary's Fort in conjunction with the associated ancillary development contemplated in the Commission's master plan. Crossroads Consulting initiated the study in August 2021. They have consulted with leadership at St. Mary's College of Maryland, local business owners and The County's Department of Economic Development as part of the process. The completion of the feasibility study is anticipated during summer 2022.

C. Build partnerships with local non-profits:

HSMCC partners local non-profits to provide recreational programming at CP. Sail Center Chesapeake (SCC), a local non-profit that teaches junior high and high school

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students how to sail. The After-School Adventure program gets elementary- and middle-school aged sailing 3 afternoons a week during a 3-4 week spring session.

The high school sailing program allows students from schools throughout southern MD to participate in Varsity and Junior Varsity sailing in the Interscholastic Sailing Association (ISSA). Middle school students are also encouraged to participate in their practices and some lower-level competitions. SCC teams actively participate in fleet racing and team racing. Sail seasons run March-May and September-November. Any student is welcome to participate in the program.

The Southern Maryland Rowing Association also operates from CP. Participation is mixed gender and is based on level of ability: novice, recreational, and competitive. Depending on member interest, the club competes in nearby regattas. The SMRA season runs from March through November.

HSMCC will remedy areas of decline through:

A. Effective marketing and outreach:

HSMCC will market its educational programs to schools, teachers, and home school families to increase the number of scholastic visitors. HSMCC recently redesigned its website and developed free digital resources for teachers, students, and families to provide educational support and keep them interacting with us.

At the same time, we used social media to provided emotional uplift and fun educational activities for families. The success of this effort was recognized at the 40th Annual Maryland Tourism & Travel Summit in November 2021. HSMCC received an award for the “Best Use of Social Media” for its work over 2020. With the onset of the pandemic, we quickly pivoted to share positive and educational posts across the museum’s social media channels.

HSMCC sends email to teachers to inform them of the free digital resources and inform them that the museum is ready to book tours. As soon as possible, HSMCC staff will attend the annual MSDE and Mid-Atlantic Social Studies conferences to directly interact with teachers and administrators to promote our educational offerings.

We are also working closely with Visit St. Mary’s MD, our local tourism organization on promoting our educational and recreational assets.

Operating Budget Recommended Actions

1. Concur with Governor’s allowance.

HSMCC concurs with the recommended action.

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