

Council Agenda Report

Date: February 27, 2017

Prepared by: Brandon Hesson, Associate Director, Economic Development

Submitted by: Odie Wheeler, Director, Public Works

SUBJECT: Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor's Center

Recommendation that Council: Hear presentation by Amanda Fenstermaker, Director, Dorchester County Tourism Department

Discussion: The Grand Opening of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center will take place March 10, with the public opening on the weekend of March 11-12, 2017, with special public programs and activities.

Guests are invited to enjoy a weekend of activities exploring the life and legacy of Harriet Tubman here in the Choptank River region where she spent her early years, formed her ideals and strong family connections, escaped to freedom and returned to lead her friends and family out of bondage using the Underground Railroad. Provided will be family-friendly programs and explore the exhibits featured inside the visitor center.

The Grand Opening Weekend of March 11-12th will feature a number of speakers and special programs including a living historian, a talk and book signing by Tubman biographer and scholar Dr. Kate Clifford Larson. The lead architect for the project, Chris Elcock, will be sharing some of the hidden symbolism in the site plan and landscaping. Dr. Sonia Sanchez, the National Park Service's Centennial Poet Laureate, will present her award winning Haikus. Historian Tony Cohen will lead participants on a walk to discover the skills and knowledge a journey on the Underground Railroad would have required.

Fiscal Impact: None.

Approved by: 