

**MINUTES
BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON
AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND
(CHESTNUT STREET)**

Wednesday, September 15, 2004
at 6:00 p.m.
held at the
3rd Floor Planning Conference Room

1. **Call to order:**

Meeting commenced at 6:07 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Councilor John W. Hynes, Chair Mary Bailey; Valerie Cunningham, Vernis Jackson, Councilor Laura Pantelakos; James Splaine; Suzanne M. Woodland (Ex-officio member) and John McGee who arrived at 6:13 p.m.

Steve Parkinson (Ex-officio member) and John Burke (Ex-officio member) were unable to attend.

2. **Review charge of the committee:**

Councilor Hynes stated broadly the Committee's goal: To do justice to those buried in the Chestnut Street area and to treat respectfully the remains found. There was general agreement with this broad statement.

A question was raised with regard to whether this Committee should be reviewing other sites in the City at which to inter the remains. Ms. Cunningham and Ms. Woodland assisted in providing an overview for other committee members regarding the State Archaeologist's role in the process regarding the decision to re-inter. The State Archeologist held a public meeting at which the public seemed to prefer re-interment at Chestnut Street.

The Committee's goal was then tailored to the consideration of efforts that could be made in and around Chestnut Street to do justice to those buried there. The Committee members discussed generally options that might include closing some portion of Chestnut Street, the erection of a marker or memorial, and a dedication ceremony.

There was discussion with regard to the difficulty/impossibility at this juncture of knowing the precise boundaries of the burial area.

Some Committee members identified contacts already made with Chestnut Street and area residents regarding their support or opposition to a partial closure of Chestnut Street.

There was some suggestion made that as the Committee go forward it might consider how to address "false starts" if there is a partial closure. The Committee might also want to consider alternative road surfacing (such as cobblestones) for Chestnut Street to flag the significance of the site. There was a concern about future utility work in and around Chestnut Street and how the City might want to factor the site into future maintenance and construction planning.

The Committee anticipates that it will make a report and recommendation back to the City Council.

3. **Organizational and scheduling issues discussed at the meeting:**

The Committee concluded that at the next scheduled meeting it would be helpful to commence with a presentation from City staff regarding the layout, parking, traffic, utility and fire safety issues in and around Chestnut Street. Ms. Woodland will coordinate with City Staff. Tentative dates for the next meeting: September 22, 2004 at 4:30 p.m. or October 6, 2004 at 4:30 p.m. The Committee also voiced an interest in meeting at the site at some time after the City staff presentation. One option will be to adjourn and reconvene at Chestnut Street that same evening, or, if time is short, schedule another opportunity to meet together at the site.

Councilor Hynes and Ms. Woodland will coordinate the scheduling of the next meeting. The next meeting will be scheduled in Conference Room A or Council Chambers so that the public can be accommodated readily.

After the City staff presentation and the site visit, the Committee members anticipate making a concerted effort to encourage Chestnut Street residents and other interested persons to provide input.

4. Motion made and seconded to adjourn with unanimous consent. Meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Submitted by: Suzanne Woodland

Minutes were approved at meeting on October 6, 2004.