

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

Wednesday, May 9, 2007
at 4:30 p.m.
held in the
Conference Room B, City Hall

Meeting commenced at 4:35 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Councilor John W. Hynes - Chair, Councilor Laura Pantelakos, Vernis Jackson, Mary Bailey, Valerie Cunningham, and Jack McGee.

Also attending Suzanne M. Woodland (Ex-officio member). Public Works Director Steve Parkinson was unable to attend. Also attending were Deputy City Manager Cindy Hayden and David Moore of the Community Development Department.

Consultants attending were Roberta Woodburn, JerriAnne Boggis, Jonathon Ring and Kathleen Wheeler of Independent Archeological Consultants.

Mary Bailey made a motion to accept the minutes of the April 18, 2007 meeting, seconded by Vernis Jackson and all approved.

David Moore advised the Committee that the broadcast of the May 5th Design Forum will take place on May 12 and 26th at 7:00 p.m. The video runs for approximately 2 hours and 40 minutes.

Jack McGee thanked the staff and consultants for the success of the Design Forum.

At the request of Councilor Pantelakos, the Deputy City Manager agreed to explore the extent to which UDAG funds might be available to assist with the funding of any improvements.

Roberta Woodburn provided a brief summary of the questions posed to the public during the Design Forum. Thereafter, the Committee members provided their input with regard to various design elements and general concepts for the consultant's consideration.

Jack McGee indicated a preference for design elements that were traditional, enduring and meditative with some component providing an explanation of the significance of the site. There followed some discussion of different materials such as granite and bronze.

Vernis Jackson indicated a preference for peaceful and simple design elements. The individuals buried at the site led simple and difficult lives. There was further discussion of materials and whether bronze and granite would be appropriate.

Kathy Wheeler indicated that granite flagstones were found in the area and those buried at the site may have worked with granite in various capacities.

Councilor Hynes raised a question with regard to the type of stones found at the Episcopal Church and whether those were granite.

To the extent sculpture is considered, Councilor Pantelakos indicated she likes the statue which exists in front of the Fire Station on Lafayette Road. It gives a strong impression of the nature of the work.

Mary Bailey suggested design themes that were simple yet permanent. They would tell the story of the site and the people buried there. She did not have an opinion regarding a statue but if there is one, it should fit into the neighborhood.

There was a general discussion with regard to the area of re-interment. The precise areas will be discussed at another meeting.

Valerie Cunningham indicated that her preference was for simple and peaceful elements. The site should, however, convey a message about history and that message might be uncomfortable to some.

JerriAnne Boggis raised the possibility of a bronze relief as opposed to a statue.

Councilor Hynes indicated that as part of the design we should raise awareness of history and that it was also important to move this project forward.

Jack McGee described his vision of the memorial area as three separate places moving up Chestnut Street. He also questioned whether it would be appropriate to weave in Ona Judge's history (one of George Washington's slaves who fled to Portsmouth). There was discussion as to the appropriateness (or lack thereof) of that particular piece of history at this site.

There was some discussion as to what a statue might look like if one were to be placed at the site.

Suzanne Woodland shared certain ideas with regard to the creation of a meditative space. She also raised the possibility of raising the grade for example as in creating raised beds so as to delineate the space. There was also a suggestion of possible evergreen plantings for year round visual effect.

Jonathan Ring raised some potential engineering issues including possible changes in pavement and sidewalk materials.

There was further discussion with regard to whether to visualize/treat Chestnut Street as three distinct areas or as a whole with a connecting element.

Jack McGee raised the possibility of whether the site might incorporate the Petition to Abolish Slavery that was filed with the NH legislature.

There was further discussion as to what a statue, if any, might look like. Ms. Cunningham suggested that if a statue becomes part of the proposal it might focus on the daily life of the people located at the site, recognizing their hard work and families.

JerriAnne Boggis indicated that the area might be better for a relief rather than a statue because of the conditions of the site which might not allow an appropriate foundation for a statue of any size.

Roberta Woodburn reviewed her summary of the key elements that came out of the design forum held on Saturday and provided a handout.

There was then discussion among the Committee members regarding the possibility of the Committee meeting with the consultant to review preliminary sketches of design elements on May 29th or 30th. David Moore was charged with reviewing schedules and assisting with the scheduling of the next meeting of the Committee. The decision was made to push back the second public forum until after the Committee has had an opportunity to review some preliminary sketches of some of the ideas. Therefore, staff will be following up with the attendees of the first design forum and advising them that the May 30th public forum will not take place and will be rescheduled for a later date.

There was a unanimous motion to adjourn at 5:50 p.m. which was seconded and all concurred.

Submitted by: Assistant City Attorney Suzanne Woodland