

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

Tuesday, May 29, 2007
at 3:05 p.m.
held in the
Conference Room A, City Hall

Meeting commenced at 3:05 p.m.

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

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

Consultants attending were Roberta Woodburn, Wendy Anderson, Debra Mack and JerriAnne Boggis and Ellen Marlatt.

Minutes of May 9, 2007 were unanimously approved.

David Moore provided a recap of the design efforts to date. The task for this meeting was to review the preliminary design Sketches prepared by Woodburn & Associates. He indicated the Committee may want to schedule a second design forum for the public in follow up to today's meeting and the May 5th forum.

Robbi Woodburn summarized the design themes and presented 5 preliminary design sketches of the memorial park area.

Vernis Jackson liked Sketches 3, 4 and 5 in that they centered the memorial area.

Jack McGee favored Sketches 1 and 2 because the design options did not vary the original layout scheme approved by the City Council and more likely approximates the original cemetery area.

Valerie Cunningham raised a question with regard to whether there was any way to acknowledge those who were interred under the sidewalk. She also inquired with regard to whether the design would be appropriate for all seasons.

Robbi Woodburn said with regard to those who were interred under the sidewalks there could be an acknowledgement on the bollards, or some other marker, with regard to the burial locations.

Mary Bailey liked the symbols of trades and skills found in Sketch 4. Robbi Woodburn indicated that the occupational element could be incorporated into any of the other landscape designs with the possible exception of #3.

There was some discussion with regard to the depiction of the trade routes shown on Sketch 4.

Jack McGee favored the traditional approach reflected in Sketch 1 and questioned to what extent the monument could be centered in the middle.

Ellen Marlatt indicated from historical records we know that there were interments on the westerly side of Chestnut Street.

Valerie Cunningham was attracted to Sketch 5 because of the concept of flow and integration and the use of color. She liked the centering of the driveway access but did not have a strong feeling about it.

Mary Bailey found Sketch 5 to be too modern and liked number 4.

There was some discussion about how the Black Heritage Trail would be incorporated into the memorial park.

Deborah Mack indicated that the Committee needs to remember who are the likely visitors to the site. Visitors may not have the same level of understanding that the members of the Committee do. There are guidelines relating to reading level, quantity of information etc.

There was discussion as to how many of the sketches to present to the public during the second design forum and whether it would be helpful to show all 5 or more effective to show a smaller number.

There was discussion that the City Council will need to approve the different configuration if the centering approach is used. Followed by a discussion that the design has to go back to City Council for approval and funding anyway and the configuration could be reviewed at that time.

Deborah Mack indicated her willingness to look at other memorial parks and see how they have accommodated the need to travel over certain of the interment areas.

Valerie Cunningham indicated that she was looking for an African connection in the design and noted that there were some very traditional English elements to the design, for example the proposed lighting.

There was general interest in the wrought iron fencing. Valerie Cunningham also liked the occupational tiles.

There was some discussion on what symbols might be appropriate and a general discussion over whether to tell the story of the site and of the people in the contemplative space.

There was general interest in sculpture on the State Street end of the park to capture attention.

Jack McGee was interested in something vertical in the contemplative spot. There was further discussion with regard to Sketch 4 and how that might be refashioned.

There was then further discussion with regard to what to show the public at the design forum. There discussion regarding the role of sculpture. That led to a discussion on how to choose a sculptor and the possibility of integrating artistically the sculpture with the entire memorial park area.

Jack McGee made a motion to show all 5 Sketches to the public at a design forum to be scheduled by staff in June along with any additional design alternatives that Woodburn & Associates might create reflecting the Committees' input. That motion was seconded by Vernis Jackson for purposes of discussion. The motion, after discussion, was later withdrawn.

There followed further discussion and the motion was remade, but failed 2 to 2 with Jack McGee & Valerie Cunningham voting in the affirmative and Vernis Jackson & Mary Bailey voted in negative. The Chairman did not vote and had to leave at 5:00 p.m. to deal with an emergency matter. He suggested that perhaps there should be another meeting of the African Burial Ground Committee prior to the second design forum.

Discussion continued on the possibility of a second design forum.

Thereafter, there still being a quorum, the Committee appointed Valerie Cunningham as temporary chair and the meeting continued.

Cindy Hayden advised the Committee that it would be best to hold the second public design forum in June so as to maximize the input from the original design forum participants rather than delay. As such the Committee resumed discussion regarding the sketches and Jack McGee made a motion to show all 5 Sketches to the public at a design forum to be scheduled by staff in June with Woodburn & Associates conveying that the Committee members were inclined to Sketch #4 but emphasizing that public input was sought. The Motion passed unanimously.

There was a unanimous motion to adjourn at 5:10 p.m.

Submitted by: Assistant City Attorney Suzanne Woodland