

ACCEPTED SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

AFRICAN BURYING GROUND COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY

JULY 8, 2014 **MACLEOD BOARD ROOM, PORTSMOUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY** **2:00 P.M.**

Present: Vernis Jackson, Chair; Councilor Dwyer, Kelvin Edwards; Mary Bailey, Vice Chair

Also Present: David Moore, Community Development Director

Absent: Valerie Cunningham (e)

Chair Jackson opened the meeting and moved to consideration of the minutes from February 18, 2013; September 4, 2013; and December 12, 2013. Mr. Moore explained that these minutes had been drafted and posted on the City's website, but not previously formally adopted by the Committee. The minutes passed unanimously.

Mr. Moore was then recognized to give an update on the project fundraising and the recent vote by the City Council to make additional funds available to the project in order to let contracts on the project. These funds will be replenished by project fundraising, which will continue.

Mr. Moore also described the procurement process for the selection of Piscataqua Landscaping to carry out project construction. He reminded the Committee that the City initiated a Request for Qualifications process that resulted in short-listing several firms who then submitted responses to a Request for Proposals. A selection team consisting of members of the African Burying Ground Committee, members of the project design team, Deputy City Manager as well as representatives from the City's Community Development and Public Works departments participated in the selection process, which included interviews with the top firms.

Mr. Moore also addressed construction timing. He reminded the Committee that this project involves the reinterment of human remains from previous excavations, installation of original works of outdoor public art, as well as other detailed hardscape components such as blue stone pavers, granite seat and retaining walls, and other interpretative sculptural elements, also in granite. As a result of key project elements, including granite pieces, lead times for the delivery of these materials are significant determinants of the construction schedule. As a result, no ground breaking date has determined however he hoped to have more information soon.

He reminded the Committee that, as soon as construction begins, the portion of Chestnut Street between Court and State Streets will be closed to through traffic and a new traffic pattern will begin as previously approved by the City Council. The space made available by these changes will become space for the memorial. The City will continue work with project abutters and others to ensure this transition goes smoothly. The project has enjoyed widespread and deep support from the direct project abutters on Chestnut Street. Together, the abutters have contributed over \$45,000 to the project. Construction details have been reviewed with the abutters and additional coordination will take place in the coming months. City staff will be reaching out directly to the abutters.

Mr. Moore then moved to construction-related issues needing Committee input. He reviewed the proposal by Anna Nuttal and Jerome Meadows for the artist-in-residence program in the schools. In addition, the following other construction details were discussed.

The Committee discussed historic marker content and Mr. Moore said he would report out on the Committee's content priorities to Mr. Meadows. The Committee discussed proposals to create burial boxes for the project and decided to work with a local artisan on the burial boxes to ensure control over the sensitive nature of this project including ensuring the size of the remains and the need to ensure boxes can be assembled and sized correctly to fit in the burial vault. In addition, the Committee discussed final details for the Petition Line, Mr. Moore provided background on the issue and the Committee made suggestions for images to signal the separation of the phrases. In addition, the Committee discussed its preference for how the remains exhumed in 2008 as part of additional site investigations for the Memorial construction are re-interred. The Committee felt that it would be appropriate to reinter the remains in the burial vault along with the 2003 remains, and to ensure they were buried together in one burial box, but within that box, they be separated. Mr. Moore said he would follow-up with the guidance from the Committee with Mr. Meadows and explained that the State Archaeologist and Dr. Kathy Wheeler had already been consulted on this potential reinterment plan and he was supportive of it as long as the Committee was in favor.

Finally, the Committee discussed ground breaking and dedication events, very broadly. The Committee discussed an idea for ensuring some sort of ambassador program on site that would inform passersby during construction about the project and site history. Mr. Moore said he would follow-up with suggested interested parties, including individuals who may be interested in leading and organizing the effort.