

ACCEPTED SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

**AFRICAN BURYING GROUND COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY**

SEPTEMBER 17, 2014 MACLEOD BOARD ROOM, PORTSMOUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY 1:00 P.M.

Present: Vernis Jackson, Chair; Councilor Dwyer, Kelvin Edwards; Valerie Cunningham;

Also Present: David Moore, Community Development Director; Dave Allen, Deputy City Manager

Absent: Mary Bailey, Vice Chair (excused)

Chair Jackson recognized David Moore to provide several updates to the Committee prior to proceeding to other items on the agenda. He provided an update on construction progress and projected next actions on site. He reviewed the ongoing archaeological monitoring and protocols that have been discussed previously. Specifically, two very small clusters of bones were located on the site - one in the east sidewalk and one in the west sidewalk at midblock. As laid out in the project protocols, each team member responded appropriately and Dr. Boisvert was on site to consult with the City, IAC, and project team members. Vernis Jackson was also on site. Dr. Boisvert provided guidance on moving forward, removing the materials for future identification, and continuing to move forward with the careful digging protocols and monitoring. He advised that the locations and context of these two findings (whether the bone is human or not has not been determined) appear to be mixed in with fill and consistent with similar previous excavations where previously disturbances have taken place. IAC is in possession of the small fragments of material recovered.

Dr. Boisvert suggested that work continue and that if additional findings are located that they too be collected and, after the excavation phase is completed, identified by a forensic scientist to determine if they are human or not. Mr. Moore will work closely with Dr. Boisvert, the Committee, IAC, and the project team on this issue as we move forward. The City and the entire project team including Piscataqua, the construction clerk, and IAC will continue to follow the State Archaeologists lead on these issues and continue with the protocols. Dr. Boisvert said he was pleased that the protocols in place were working and was complimentary of the construction site organization, monitoring protocols, and coordination between the City and various construction team members.

Mr. Moore advised that he is working to create more signage to announce that the Memorial Park is moving forward. In addition, we will be placing boxes on the construction fencing for a one-page (double-sided) takeaway for passersby. We anticipate lingering onlookers will increase as more recognizable memorial components (hardscape) arrive on site and are worked on. A local graphic designer was again providing assistance on a no fee basis for this project. The Committee discussed the wisdom of providing a program for construction personnel and related contractors to learn more about the site history, context, and importance for their own information and for speaking with passersby. Chair Jackson agreed and said the Seacoast African American Cultural Center could host a presentation by the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail on the topic as offered by Ms. Cunningham; the Committee agreed. Mr. Moore said he would work with the teams and the Chair and Ms. Cunningham on dates and logistics.

In response to other discussions, Mr. Moore said he would be sure to work with the Chair on arranging a site tour for the Committee during construction with members of the Committee. Likely, this would take place after architectural materials had been delivered to the site.

The Committee had a discussion about formally involving New Hope Baptist Church in the project, potentially in connection with the upcoming visit by Mr. Meadows. Mr. Moore indicated he would follow-up with Dr. Hilson, a volunteer working with the Committee. Mr. Moore reminded the Committee that Mr. Meadows would be visiting the Portsmouth Schools for the community outreach program designed for the project with Anna Nuttal, Art Department head at the Portsmouth Schools. He advised the Committee Mr. Meadows would be in Portsmouth October 21 to 28. Mr. Moore advises that the City was now fully contracted with Mr. Meadows to provide the remainder of the works of outdoor public art, including the ceramic tiles, burial vault lid, and information marker (in addition to the previously contracted major sculptural elements of the community figures (8) and the entry piece). Mr. Moore provided an update on the petition line. He advised that during the final layout and shop drawing process for the petition line, it was determined that the five phrases would not fit in the space available given the need for an appropriate font size. He reminded the Committee that it had first selected four phrases from the petition, and later added a fifth after it was advised by staff and the landscape architect that the space may be available. He advised that the fifth phrase was the dropped phrase. The Committee understood and there was no further discussion.

Mr. Moore summarized current fundraising totals and efforts. He said a total of approximately \$63,000 has been raised towards the remaining \$165,000 needed to complete the project. The recent letters to past donors and new donors have increased the total amount received. A \$50,000 in grant funds from the Cogswell Benevolent Trust will be applied for. We are also working with TD Bank on another \$10,000 Community Grant.

Committee members debriefed on the Consecration ceremony held on August 17th. The Committee members agreed the ceremony was successful and thanked Ms. Cunningham, JerriAnne Boggis, and Mr. Moore for their work on it. Raw footage from the ceremony is available on the City's website and Mr. Moore is working with Atlantic Public media on a five minute video edit of the footage for the City. The Chair provided information about an event SAACC is holding in coordination with the Art Department at UNH with a Ghanaian coffin maker. At the end of the collaboration, SAACC will be given a coffin made by the visiting wood artisan.

The Committee reviewed content for the Information Marker that was provided by Mr. Meadows as a conversation starter. Specific and general recommendations were made. Mr. Moore was asked to work with one of the Committee volunteers to make the changes and report back to the Committee and Mr. Meadows for an upcoming meeting, set for September 29, 2014

The Committee briefly discussed the need to spend more time discussing project completion and celebration in November, the 2015 reburial ceremony, and the creation of coffins and involvement by the Community. Mr. Moore clarified the current direction he is working under, which is to complete the fabrication of construction wooden coffins to fit in the final vault. The Committee agreed that was the next step. In addition, the Committee discussed project completion planned for November 2014. The Committee expressed satisfaction that all memorial components, including sculpture, could be installed at the end of construction period and prior to winter and the reburial ceremony. The

Committee was comfortable with project completion as being defined in this manner and the reburial ceremony taking place separately.