

ACCEPTED FEBRUARY 25, 2015

AFRICAN BURYING GROUND COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY

JANUARY 15, 2015 MACLEOD BOARD ROOM PORTSMOUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY 2:00 P.M.

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

Also Present: Kathleen Wheeler; Ellen Marlatt; Morey Goodman; JerriAnne Boggis; David Moore, Community Development Director

Absent: Mary Bailey (e)

Chair Jackson opened the meeting and moved straight to the discussion of Ceremony preparations [no meeting minutes were distributed from the previous two meetings].

Chair Jackson recognized Kel Edwards to update the Committee on an African Burying Ground-related initiative that SAACC was sponsoring in partnership with the United States Postal Service.

Chair Jackson described the purpose of the meeting to review the outline prepared from the previous meeting and to fill in some of the details. Mr. Moore was recognized to give an overview of the outline.

For the Watch Night, Kel Edwards was identified as the Committee lead and JerriAnne Boggis offered to assist him. The Watch Night will begin in the evening and last through to the time when the remains are moved to the African Burying Ground site for the reburial. The outline of this event called for a very small number of initial speakers at the beginning, music, and readings from writings of Kathy Wheeler by volunteer actors, potentially at the beginning of every hour.

On Friday the 22nd, an event for school students was described that was suggested by Anna Nuttal who had coordinated the Middle School unit with Jerome Meadows in October. This would be the opportunity for the students to see the tiles on site with the artist.

For the reburial ceremony, the Committee spoke about various scenarios for revealing the artworks on the site. David Moore reported out on Jerome Meadow's suggestion and preferences that the art works be revealed prior to the reburial ceremony (but not the day before) on the site and in a way that allowed for community members to be able to "take it in" along with other members of the Committee and the artist. He suggested that the artworks be covered until the day of the reburial and that more decorative covering be put on in the early morning. There was some discussion about the timing of the removal of the covering with some present saying it should be done at the conclusion of the reburial ceremony. Views on the subject were shared but no conclusion reached. During this discussion it was agreed that the Committee should next meet with scholars and practitioners familiar with burial practices, particularly African customs. It was agreed that after the Committee has an

opportunity to consult with this group perhaps some light would be shed on the timing of the coverings.

For the Public Celebration, Councilor Chris Dwyer was identified as the Committee lead along with Chair Jackson. There was a discussion about potential invitees for speakers and that a historical context should be provided as well as information about how the community got to this point. Ideas were shared about potential presenters, speakers, and musical acts.

It was agreed that there would be no rain date.

Kel Edwards spoke about SAACC's interest in providing volunteers, space, and potential additional programming to complement the activities. Councilor Dwyer advised that other ancillary activities that complement the weekend would likely take place with other partners who want to participate.

It was agreed that, in preparation for an upcoming meeting, David Moore would work with volunteer Stephanie Seacord on a plan for public outreach that would ensure good communication about the events surrounding the reburial.