

MINUTES  
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON  
THE SAGAMORE CREEK LAND  
7:30 A.M. – Thursday, October 23, 2015  
City Hall – Conference Room A

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**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Spear called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

**Members Present:**

Councilor Eric Spear, Chair

Councilor Chris Dwyer

John Mikolajcyk, Resident

Lennie Mullaney, School Board Representative

Kory Sirmaian, Recreation Board Representative

Allison Tanner, Conservation Commission Representative

David Moore, Community Development Director, City Manager Designee

**Member Absent:**

Alison Pyott, Resident

**2. Consideration of Minutes – October 1, 2015**

Ms. Tanner moved to accept the October 1, 2015 minutes. Seconded by Councilor Dwyer and passed.

**3. Discussion of Master Plan Elements and Report Back to City Council**

Chairman Spear stated the committee will be reviewing the draft report at this meeting and then will meet in the evening one more time for public comment on the report as well as one final time as a committee to finalize. He stated the report to the Council will be presented at the first Council meeting in December, December 7<sup>th</sup>.

Councilor Dwyer asked if other ideas that come up during the conversation can still be included or eliminated. Chairman Spear stated that is correct.

Community Development Director Moore apologized for not getting the report out sooner before the meeting. He also stated that this Blue Ribbon Committee has been one of the most thorough and well-thought out processes he has been involved with and was highly impressed with the input meeting held with the various boards and stakeholders early on in the process.

Mr. Moore then reviewed the Draft report section by section (See report for details).

Councilor Dwyer stated she would like to see the statement “in the spirit of caring for city property through stewardship of public land” added to the introduction. She stated that people were confused about why trees were cut down at the urban forestry center because they didn’t understand that they were diseased. She continued that there is no “umbrella” to educate the public on this type of information and activity on our public lands and although the Conservation Commission has done a lot of this work, there should be a larger frame for all outdoor spaces, i.e., Recreational Parks Board.

Chairman Spear agrees and stated this could be recommended through the next City Council.

Mr. Moore stated that on the bottom of page 4 other trails and assets are mentioned and feels it is an opportunity to inform people of the other categories of trails available to the public.

Councilor Dwyer stated that this should be in the foreground of the report.

Chairman Spear asked that the title of the paragraph be relabeled from "Overuse of facilities" and Ms. Mullaney suggested "Stewardship of Land".

Next, Councilor Dwyer stated she has appreciated the public comment throughout this process and heard that they have wanted input from experts. She stated she feels it is an important to include in the report that we have received such input and thinks that it is buried within it currently. Mr. Moore stated he will reduce the appendices and add a list in bullet form regarding the experts and the amount of public comment opportunities that were provided.

Mr. Sirmaian stated that on page 2, Improvements needed, Item #4, he feels that the parentheses portion regarding removing the fence in order to make the landfill cap more useable, should be eliminated as it is too early to make that determination.

Councilor Dwyer stated she agrees but feels that other parts should be expanded i.e., parking.

After further discussion, Mr. Moore stated he will rename Item 4, to state "Increase public access to cap".

Discussion ensued with various suggestions to add more information and specificity so that the recommendations are clear to the public who haven't been through the process.

Councilor Dwyer asked about the viewing platform concept that had been discussed. Mr. Moore stated that the kayak landing area and viewing area are outlined on the map, but not specific locations. Councilor Dwyer stated that most people cannot read maps and graphs so feels that they need to be spelled out in words. Chairman Spear agreed stating that we have pictures and those should be connected to the report.

Mr. Mikolajcyk stated he would hate to have worked on this for 8 months without having made specific recommendations. He stated what will be the reason for a public comment session if there is nothing specific or conclusions to comment on. It was also discussed that areas where boardwalks are needed should be identified specifically as well.

Mr. Moore stated that he understands what the committee is looking for, but to keep in mind that this report is meant to allow flexibility for future discussions as well.

Next, discussion ensued regarding toilet facilities and trash receptacles and it was decided to add on page 3, #8 composting toilet near the parking area.

Councilor Dwyer stated it is also important to include what the committee considered through the process but decided weren't appropriate, such as the pavilions.

Mr. Mikolajcyk stated he does not envision this as an all day destination as it is basically a walking trail that people will walk and maybe sit and rest a little bit, but not for more than a couple of hours.

Mr. Moore stated that at the last meeting various examples of pavilions and picnic tables etc were shown and some had a negative reaction, but thought that the picnic table with a cover was recommended for the top of the hill on the cap because it provided a shaded area.

Ms. Tanner stated she doesn't like the idea of any picnic tables, but natural benches instead.

Next, discussion ensued as to the use of the cap area and who may and may not be able to utilize it and for what reasons. Mr. Sirmaian stated he doesn't understand the viability of it other than in the winter for sledding.

Chairman Spear stated that putting a picnic table there or not will be a policy decision and can be added or removed as they move forward and see how the property is utilized.

Next, discussion ensued regarding the on-leash requirement for dogs with Mr. Mikolajczyk stating that people always let their dogs run loose all day, every day. He stated that there should be a \$200.00 fine and it should be enforced, but because it is such a vast area, doesn't feel it can be done. Ms. Mullaney stated she is worried about the bird and wild life when dogs are running loose. Mr. Moore stated he will add that concern to #12 regarding dogs.

Mr. Moore next addressed the issue brought up at the last meeting by resident, Roger Pittroff and a report presented by the DES regarding impaired waterways in the State. He clarified that this report was not a health risk assessment, but regarding water quality standards. He stated that there should not be swimming there, but kayaking can be allowed. He concluded that the city had focused on landfill water surface, but this information is important as well.

Councilor Spear stated that regarding policy, there needs to be some type of board to oversee future discussions and decisions and would like to see the Conservation Commission be the go-to committee for future issues and questions. He asked that this be made a part of the report as well. Ms. Tanner stated she agrees with that, but the Conservation Commission is advisory to the City and has no powers.

Councilor Dwyer stated she would like to put forth the recommendation that a more formal board to oversee the parks and lands be brought forth. She stated that the fields issue that was discussed at the beginning of the process also needs to be acknowledged in the report and that the recommendation was that the field belonged somewhere other than the cap.

Chairman Spear stated that these recommendations will be incorporated into the draft report and then the public comment meeting will be scheduled for an evening so that more people can attend.

Mr. Sirmaian asked what happens if we received contrary input from the public on this report, what happens then.

Councilor Dwyer stated if it is new information, then it can be considered, but if it they are the same comments that have been addressed, then it can be pointed to in the report that this was already reviewed and determined.

#### **4. Public Comment**

Roger Pittroff, Jones Avenue resident, stated he feels the Committee has done their job, but there still may be new ideas. He then asked when the report is presented to the City Council will there be an opportunity for the public to speak at that time. Chairman Spear explained that people can sign up to speak at the City Council meeting prior to 7:00 p.m. on the list provided in the Portsmouth Room. Councilor Dwyer stated she encourages the public to speak at that meeting.

Linda Bergeron, Jones Avenue resident, addressed #12, Dogs on Appendix A, stating that she would like to see the word “recommend” be changed to stronger language as people do not always have voice control over their dogs especially when they chase animals etc. She also asked about disability access and had anyone spoken with the Northeast Passage Group from UNH as they are a great resource. She stated that the toilet facility will also need to be handicap accessible. Finally, she stated that “trash in, trash out” concept is great, but it doesn’t work in reality.

Mr. Moore stated Northeast Passage Group is on the list to contact during the final design/implementation phase.

Margot Doering, Jones Avenue resident, suggested a pamphlet/booklet be created of all of the facilities etc. offered by the City so that no one spot becomes overused. She stated this has been done in other communities successfully. Councilor Dwyer suggested Conservation funds may be able to be used. Ms. Doering continued that the issue of the cap needs its own meeting and also suggested making an area where a fire pit is legal so that there won’t be illegal fires. Next, she discussed the dog issue stating that she stopped walking her dog at the Urban Forestry Center because people do not keep dogs on-leash and feels that a fine and enforcement are needed. She suggested using the cap as a fenced in ½ to 1 acre dog run area. She stated that people get offended if something is said about the dog being off-leash and this would be a place to be able to refer them to and a positive way to deal with the problem. Finally, she suggested putting the overlay of the proposed parking structure over the existing parking area so that people could see that it is not impacting too much of a change.

The committee briefly discussed the suggestions.

Mary Jane Beckwith, Jones Avenue resident – stated that people who are having fires on the property are partiers who are not going to use a legal area because they are trying to be secretive.

Mr. Pittroff stated that 2/3 of forest fires are caused by fire pits

## **5. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m.