

MINUTES
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON THE
SAGAMORE CREEK LAND
7:30 A.M. – Wednesday, March 4, 2015
City Hall – Conference Room A

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 Mikolajczyk, Resident
Lennie Mullaney, School Board Representative
Alison Pyott, Resident (via teleconference)
Kory Sirmaian, Recreation Board Representative
Allison Tanner, Conservation Commission Representative

Staff Advisors Present:

David Moore, Community Development Director, City Manager Designee
Peter Rice, Public Works Director
Peter Britz, Environmental Planner/Sustainability Coordinator

2. Consideration of Minutes – February 11, 2015

Ms. Tanner moved to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Councilor Dwyer. Motion passed.

3. Discussion of former Jones Avenue Landfill

a. Information about Jones Avenue Landfill construction

Michael A. Trainque of Hoyle, Tanner Associates Inc. explained that Hoyle, Tanner Associates was hired by the City to assist in the closure of the landfill and cap construction. He gave a brief history of the landfill site beginning as an open burn dump later adding a teepee burner which was removed in 1971. He continued that it was a sanitation landfill with mixed use for a brief period from 1971 - 1972. He stated that of the 66 acre parcel being discussed, 10 acres is landfill and, of that, 2.1 acres was used for incinerator ash from Pease from January 1986 to May 1987. He then described the closure/capping process of the landfill portion with 6" layer of fill, 6" layer of sand, 12" layer of clay, more sand for drainage, loam and finally on top is vegetation. He stated on top of the ash there is 12" of sand, a 40 ml polyethylene liner, clay, more sand, loam and also a vegetative covering.

Councilor Dwyer asked if that is the standard and also if there is any concern with leachates or contaminants from the incinerator ash that was brought in.

Mr. Trainque replied that it was state-of-the-art at the time of the closure. Regarding the incinerator ash, every container that was brought in was tested for a wide variety of contaminants and were within allowable limits and standards at that time.

Mr. Moore stated the landfill has been closed for 25 years now and asked what steps have been taken from that time to present.

Mr. Trainque stated that the settlement platforms are monitored 1-2 times a year to determine settlement compression as well as monitoring wells of groundwater which are located between the landfill and the Sagamore Creek. He stated that samples of methane gas are also monitored.

Ms. Mullaney asked if there is a way to know if the liner under the ash has been compromised. Mr. Trainque explained that the liner is impervious to water and does not decompose and the layer of clay keeps the water away from the liner.

Ms. Tanner asked about the erosion on the hillside towards the creek where there are 50 gallon drums, tires, etc. now visible. Mr. Trainque agreed that there may be erosion or the materials could be non- burnable cast-offs from its operating days.

Public Works Director Rice clarified that there is a leachate collection system in the liner and the testing is of the surface water and there has been no indication of failure and no contamination. He stated there is erosion and it is unsightly, but not a hazard.

Councilor Dwyer asked who gets the monitoring reports. Mr. Rice stated that the State gets the reports, but the City does get copies. Mr. Moore stated that there was a status report of the site completed in 2007 and the tests have yielded results acceptable within the closure permit guidelines and DES.

b. Examples of cap reuses from other communities

Mike Penny of Geolnsight began by suggesting that during this process, they try not to focus on the landfill, but on the site as a whole because whatever they decide to do, there is an engineering solution to deal with the landfill. He stated that of course there are costs involved and that would need to be part of the decision. He continued that this is not a new idea and that many places are built on landfills that people wouldn't even know such as many areas in Boston that are built on burning dumps that predated regulatory requirements, but they are safe because they are capped. He stated that there are lots of examples of reused sites since the 1970's, but not that many in the Northeast. He stated that the Dept. of Environmental Services in New Hampshire is more open-minded and willing to work with most creative ideas.

Councilor Dwyer asked if the site will have to be re-prepared for any new use. Mr. Penny stated that there would not be able to be any heavy driving on the site and erosion and settlement would have to be taken into account and accommodated in any design.

Chairman Spear asked if there are any special concerns in relation to Sagamore Creek. Mr. Penny stated that stormwater control and outlets would be a consideration of any new development and not just for landfill reuse. Chairman Spear continued that there is a wide spectrum of reuse including daycare facility to passive recreation but even with the passive recreation it would require adding lighting, etc. and would require digging into the soil. Mr. Penny stated that it can be done but then it would have to be resealed afterwards.

Councilor Dwyer asked if we just leave it as is and not do anything to the land can the fence around the landfill portion be taken down so that people can walk freely through the area. Mr. Penny stated no, it would still be considered a closed landfill and would continue to be monitored as such unless another design solution was proposed and accepted that achieved the same goal.

Chairman Spear stated that the DES would be involved in even a minimal reuse. Mr. Penny stated they are aware of the potential desire to reuse the site. Chairman Spear stated that he would like the committee members and the residents in attendance to begin talking with others in the community and educating people so as the process goes along they can accept the concept.

At the request of Councilor Dwyer Mr. Penny listed some other local areas of reuse including the Goffstown Athletic Complex, the Somersworth High School Football Field, Parking lots in Nashua. He stated he has reached out to the DES for a list as well.

4. Public Comment

Chairman Spear asked if any member of the public wished to speak:

Discussion ensued regarding monitoring wells and the wells recently drilled for landscaping purposes at Tidewatch Condominiums with Public Works Director Rice stating that the monitoring of wells is adequate already and people can contact the DES for the reports.

Discussion was held regarding the gate/fence around the landfill area with Public Works Director Rice clarifying that the fence is not broken, but the gate lock has been broken and people are entering via the gate. He stated there is minimal impact to people, but it is still a closed landfill site.

Discussion regarding potential use of the area as athletic fields was held with Ms. Tanner stating that from a conservation approach, turf management is detrimental to the environment with fertilizer runoff to the creek, mowing, etc. Councilor Dwyer stated that, if formal rec fields became a direction, she would prefer to see artificial turf used as we have had success with this at the High School.

Margot Doering – owner of Jones Avenue property – asked for clarification that even though there were no liners installed prior to the 1971 landfill usage, the testing is still being conducted at today's standards and is not causing any problems now. Mr. Trainque stated that is correct, testing is conducted at today's standards. Ms Doering also clarified that she understands that it has been stated that any reuse can be accommodated via engineering, but wants to be assured that anything that is brought forward with will be conducted in the public forum. Chairman Spear stated that is correct.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Chairman Spear closed public comment.

Chairman Spear asked if the area could be reforested. Mr. Penny stated that no trees with deep roots could be planted. Chairman Spear stated that the committee should be thinking of what types of uses it would like to see and to decide if the 10 acres are going to be treated differently than the rest of the property. If we do nothing with it, it will need to be re-fenced to keep people out, or reused. He stated his vision is for an open space area for snow shoeing, kite flying, etc.

Ms. Tanner stated she has the same vision to take down the fence, remove invasive species from the perimeter, and enjoy the area for various passive recreational uses.

Ms. Pyott asked if we go with passive recreation, what needs to happen. Mr. Penny explained that the DES would still need to be consulted, but it shouldn't be a big hurdle. He stated that more loam on top may be needed.

Ms. Mullaney stated that as the School Board representative, she will be meeting with the Athletic

Director as well as science teachers who have expressed interest in holding outdoor classrooms on the property. She stated that the Athletic Director has expressed there is a great need for more playing fields as we currently only have 17 fields and there is greater demand every year.

Mr. Sirmaian stated that traffic, parking, access points, are also major concerns and feels we should look at the previous Middle School plan for ideas. Mr. Moore stated that Incinerator Road is one access point, and there is land to the east that could be used as the access to US Rte 1. He stated the Recreational Needs Assessment from 2010 also has some ideas laid out.

Councilor Dwyer asked if we think of this as an open space, we need to keep in mind how large we want it to be, how many amenities, etc. She continued that many of the users are from outside of Portsmouth. Mr. Moore stated that the need for more athletic fields is indisputable and feels this is a good opportunity to thoroughly vet the city-owned land and make recommendations either way and move forward.

Ms. Doering from the audience asked if there is an equivalent study to the Recreational Needs Study regarding passive use areas. Mr. Sirmaian stated it is addressed in the Rec Need Study. Councilor Dwyer stated the Open Space Inventory is another resource.

Chairman Spear announced the next meeting would be held March 18 2015 in the evening and would include representatives from the School Board, Recreation Board, Conservation Commission and Sustainable Practices BRC to get ideas of what types of uses others have in mind for the property.

5. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie A. French
Recording Secretary